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Post-Contemporary Interventions
A Series Edited by Stanley Fish & Fredric Jameson

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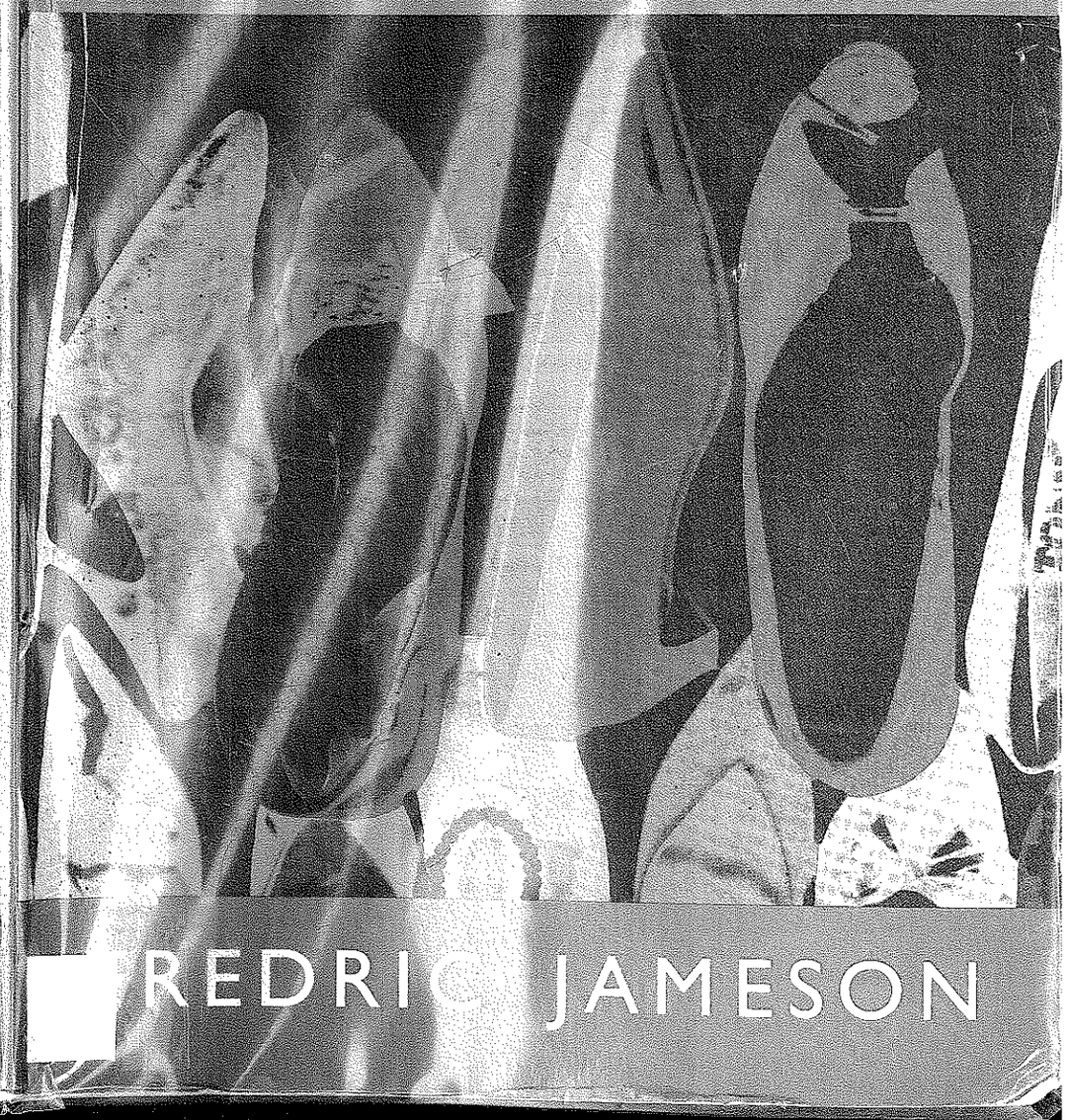

FREDRIC JAMESON

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POSTMODERNISM,

or,

The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

FREDRIC JAMESON

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Introduction

It is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place. In that case, it either "expresses" some deeper irrepressible historical impulse (in however distorted a fashion) or effectively "represses" and diverts it, depending on the side of the ambiguity you happen to favor. Postmodernism, postmodern consciousness, may then amount to not much more than theorizing its own condition of possibility, which consists primarily in the sheer enumeration of changes and modifications. Modernism also thought compulsively about the New and tried to watch its coming into being (inventing for that purpose the registering and inscription devices akin to historical time-lapse photography), but the postmodern looks for breaks, for events rather than new worlds, for the telltale instant after which it is no longer the same; for the "When-it-all-changed," as Gibson puts it,[1] or, better still, for shifts and irrevocable changes in the *representation* of things and of the way they change. The moderns were interested in what was likely to come of such changes and their general tendency: they thought about the thing itself, substantively, in Utopian or essential fashion. Postmodernism is more formal in that sense, and more "distracted," as Benjamin might put it; it only clocks the variations themselves, and knows only too well that the contents are just more images. In modernism, as I will try to show later on, some residual zones of "nature" or "being," of the old, the older, the archaic, still subsist; culture can still do something to that nature and work at transforming that "referent." Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good. It is a more fully human world than the older one, but one in which "culture" has become a veritable "second nature." Indeed, what happened

to culture may well be one of the more important clues for tracking the postmodern: an immense dilation of its sphere (the sphere of commodities), an immense and historically original acculturation of the Real, a quantum leap in what Benjamin still called the "aestheticization" of reality (he thought it meant fascism, but we know it's only fun: a prodigious exhilaration with the new order of things, a commodity rush, our "representations" of things tending to arouse an enthusiasm and a mood swing not necessarily inspired by the things themselves). So, in postmodern culture, "culture" has become a product in its own right; the market has become a substitute for itself and fully as much a commodity as any of the items it includes within itself: modernism was still minimally and tendentially the critique of the commodity and the effort to make it transcend itself. Postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process. The "life-style" of the superstate therefore stands in relationship to Marx's "fetishism" of commodities as the most advanced monotheisms to primitive animisms or the most rudimentary idol worship; indeed, any sophisticated theory of the postmodern ought to bear something of the same relationship to Horkheimer and Adorno's old "Culture Industry" concept as MTV or fractal ads bear to fifties television series.

"Theory" has meanwhile itself also changed and offers its own kind of clue to the mystery. Indeed, one of the more striking features of the postmodern is the way in which, in it, a whole range of tendential analyses of hitherto very different kinds—economic forecasts, marketing studies, culture critiques, new therapies, the (generally official) jeremiad about drugs or permissiveness, reviews of art shows or national film festivals, religious "revivals" or cults—have all coalesced into a new discursive genre, which we might as well call "postmodernism theory," and which demands some attention in its own right. It is clearly a class which is a member of its own class, and I would not want to have to decide whether the following chapters are inquiries into the nature of such "postmodernism theory" or mere examples of it.

I have tried to prevent my own account of postmodernism—which stages a series of semiautonomous and relatively independent traits or features—from conflating back into the one uniquely privileged symptom of a loss of historicity, something that by itself could scarcely connote the presence of the postmodernism in any unerring fashion, as witness peasants, aesthetes, children, liberal economists, or analytic philosophers. But it is hard to discuss "postmodernism theory" in any

general way without having recourse to the matter of historical deafness, an exasperating condition (provided you are aware of it) that determines a series of spasmodic and intermittent, but desperate, attempts at recuperation. Postmodernism theory is one of those attempts: the effort to take the temperature of the age without instruments and in a situation in which we are not even sure there is so coherent a thing as an "age," or zeitgeist or "system" or "current situation" any longer. Postmodernism theory is then dialectical at least insofar as it has the wit to seize on that very uncertainty as its first clue and to hold to its Ariadne's thread on its way through what may not turn out to be a labyrinth at all, but a gulag or perhaps a shopping mall. An enormous Claes Oldenburg thermometer, however, as long as a whole city block, might serve as some mysterious symptom of the process, fallen without warning from the sky like a meteorite.

For I take it as axiomatic that "modernist history" is the first casualty and mysterious absence of the postmodernism period (this is essentially Achille Bonito-Oliva's version of postmodernism theory):[2] in art, at least, the notion of progress and telos remained alive and well up to very recent times indeed, in its most authentic, least stupid and caricatural, form, in which each genuinely new work unexpectedly but logically outtrumped its predecessor (not "linear history" this, but rather Shklovsky's "knight's gambit," the action at distance, the quantum leap to the undeveloped or underdeveloped square). Dialectical history, to be sure, affirmed that all history worked this way, on its left foot, as it were, progressing, as Henri Lefebvre once put it, by way of catastrophe and disaster; but fewer ears heard that than believed the modernist aesthetic paradigm, which was on the point of being confirmed as a virtual religious doxa when it unexpectedly vanished without a trace. ("We went out one morning and the Thermometer was gone!")

This seems to me a more interesting and plausible story than Lyotard's related one about the end of "master narratives" (eschatalogical schemata that were never really narratives in the first place, although I may also have been incautious enough to use the expression from time to time). But it now tells us at least two things about postmodernism theory.

First, the theory seems necessarily imperfect or impure:[3] in the present case, owing to the "contradiction" whereby Oliva's (or Lyotard's) perception of everything significant about the disappearance of master narratives has itself to be couched in narrative form. Whether, as with Gödel's proof, one can demonstrate the logical impossibility of *any* inter-

nally self-coherent theory of the postmodern—an antifoundationalism that really eschews all foundations altogether, a nonessentialism without the last shred of an essence in it—is a speculative question; its empirical answer is that none have so far appeared, all replicating within themselves a mimesis of their own title in the way in which they are parasitory on another system (most often on modernism itself), whose residual traces and unconsciously reproduced values and attitudes then become a precious index to the failure of a whole new culture to come to birth. Despite the delirium of some of its celebrants and apologists (whose euphoria, however, is an interesting historical symptom in its own right), a truly new culture could only emerge through the collective struggle to create a new social system. The constitutive impurity of all postmodernism theory, then (like capital itself, it must be at internal distance from itself, must include the foreign body of alien content), confirms the insight of a periodization that must be insisted on over and over again, namely, that postmodernism is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order (the rumor about which, under the name of "postindustrial society," ran through the media a few years ago), but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself. No wonder, then, that shreds of its older avatars—of realism, even, fully as much as of modernism—live on, to be rewrapped in the luxurious trappings of their putative successor.

But this unforeseeable return of narrative as the narrative of the end of narratives, this return of history in the midst of the prognosis of the demise of historical telos, suggests a second feature of postmodernism theory which requires attention, namely, the way in which virtually any observation about the present can be mobilized in the very search for the present itself and pressed into service as a symptom and an index of the deeper logic of the postmodern, which imperceptibly turns into its own theory and the theory of itself. How could it be otherwise where there no longer exists any such "deeper logic" for the surface to manifest and where the symptom has become its own disease (and vice versa, no doubt)? But the frenzy whereby virtually anything in the present is appealed to for testimony as to the latter's uniqueness and radical difference from earlier moments of human time does indeed strike one sometimes as harboring a pathology distinctively autoreferential, as though our utter forgetfulness of the past exhausted itself in the vacant but mesmerized contemplation of a schizophrenic present that is incomparable virtually by definition.

However, as will be demonstrated later on, the decision as to whether

one faces a break or a continuity—whether the present is to be seen as a historical originality or as the simple prolongation of more of the same under different sheep's clothing—is not an empirically justifiable or philosophically arguable one, since it is itself the inaugural narrative act that grounds the perception and interpretation of the events to be narrated. In what follows—but for pragmatic reasons I will disclose at the proper time—I have pretended to believe that the postmodern is as unusual as it thinks it is, and that it constitutes a cultural and experiential break worth exploring in greater detail.

Nor is this a merely or basely self-fulfilling procedure; or rather, it may well be that, but such procedures are by no means as frequent occurrences and possibilities as their formula suggests (they thereby themselves, predictably enough, become historical objects of study). For the name itself—postmodernism—has crystallized a host of hitherto independent developments which, thus named, prove to have contained the thing itself in embryo and now step forward richly to document its multiple genealogies. It thus turns out that it is not only in love, cratylism, and botany that the supreme act of nomination wields a material impact and, like lightning striking from the superstructure back to the base, fuses its unlikely materials into a gleaming lump or lava surface. The appeal to experience, otherwise so doubtful and untrustworthy—even though it does really seem as if any number of things had changed, perhaps for good!—now recovers a certain authority as what, in retrospect, the new name allowed you to think you felt, because you now have something to call it that other people seem to acknowledge by themselves using the word. The success story of the word *postmodernism* demands to be written, no doubt in best-seller format; such lexical neoevents, in which the coinage of a neologism has all the reality impact of a corporate merger, are among the novelties of media society which require not merely study but the establishment of a whole new media-lexicological subdiscipline. Why we needed the word *postmodernism* so long without knowing it, why a truly motley crew of strange bedfellows ran to embrace it the moment it appeared, are mysteries that will remain unclarified until we have been able to grasp the philosophical and social function of the concept, something impossible, in its turn, until we are somehow able to grasp the deeper identity between the two. In the present instance it seems clear that a range of competing formulations ("poststructuralism," "postindustrial society," this or that McLuhanite nomenclature) were unsatisfactory insofar as they were too rigidly specified and marked by their area of provenance (philoso-

phy, economics, and the media, respectively); however suggestive, therefore, they could not occupy the mediatory position within the various specialized dimensions of postcontemporary life that was required. "Postmodern," however, seems to have been able to welcome in the appropriate areas of daily life or the quotidian; its cultural resonance, appropriately vaster than the merely aesthetic or artistic,[4] distracts suitably from the economic while allowing newer economic materials and innovations (in marketing and advertising, for example, but also in business organization) to be recatalogued under the new heading. Nor is the matter of recataloguing and transcoding without its own special kind of significance: the active function—the ethics and the politics—of such neologisms lies in the new work they propose of rewriting all the familiar things in new terms and thus proposing modifications, new ideal perspectives, a reshuffling of canonical feelings and values; if "postmodernism" corresponds to what Raymond Williams meant by his fundamental cultural category, a "structure of feeling" (and one that has become "hegemonic" at that, to use another of Williams's crucial categories), then it can only enjoy that status by dint of profound collective self-transformation, a reworking and rewriting of an older system. That ensures novelty and gives intellectuals and ideologues fresh and socially useful tasks: something also marked by the new term, with its vague, ominous or exhilarating, promise to get rid of whatever you found confining, unsatisfying, or boring about the modern, modernism, or modernity (however you understand those words): in other words, a very modest or mild apocalypse, the merest sea breeze (that has the additional advantage of having already taken place). But this prodigious rewriting operation—which can lead to whole new perspectives on subjectivity as well as on the object world—has the additional result, already touched on above, that everything is grist for its mill and that analyses like the one proposed here are easily reabsorbed into the project as a set of usefully unfamiliar transcoding rubrics.

The fundamental ideological task of the new concept, however, must remain that of coordinating new forms of practice and social and mental habits (this is finally what I take Williams to have had in mind by the notion of a "structure of feeling") with the new forms of economic production and organization thrown up by the modification of capitalism —the new global division of labor—in recent years. It is a relatively small and local version of what I elsewhere tried to generalize as "cultural revolution" on the scale of the mode of production itself;[5] in the same way the interrelationship of culture and the economic here is not

a one-way street but a continuous reciprocal interaction and feedback loop. But just as (for Weber) new inner-directed and more ascetic religious values gradually produced "new people" capable of thriving in the delayed gratification of the emergent "modern" labor process, so also the "postmodern" is to be seen as the production of postmodern people capable of functioning in a very peculiar socioeconomic world indeed, one whose structure and objective features and requirements—if we had a proper account of them—would constitute the situation to which "postmodernism" is a response and would give us something a little more decisive than mere postmodernism theory. I have not done that here, of course, and it should be added that "culture," in the sense of what cleaves almost too close to the skin of the economic to be stripped off and inspected in its own right, is itself a postmodern development not unlike Magritte's shoe-foot. Unfortunately, therefore, the infrastructural description I seem to be calling for here is necessarily itself already cultural and a version of postmodernism theory in advance.

I have reprinted my program analysis of the postmodern ("The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism") without significant modifications, since the attention it received at the time (1984) lends it the additional interest of a historical document; other features of the postmodern that have seemed to impose themselves since then are discussed in the conclusion. I have also not modified the sequel, which has been widely reprinted and which offers a *combinatoire* of positions on the postmodern, for and against, since while a great many more positions have been taken since then, the lineup remains essentially the same. The more fundamental modification in the situation today involves those who were once able to avoid using the word, out of principle; not many of them are left.

The remainder of this volume turns essentially on four themes: interpretation, Utopia, survivals of the modern, and "returns of the repressed" of historicity, none of which were present in these forms in my original essay. The problem of interpretation is raised by the nature of the new textuality itself, which, when mainly visual, seems to leave no room for interpretation of the older kind, or, when mainly temporal in its "total flow," leaves no time for it either. The exhibits here are the videotext as such and also the *nouveau roman* (the last significant innovation in the novel, about which I will also argue that, within the new reconfiguration of the "fine arts" in postmodernism, it is no longer a very significant form or marker); on the other hand, video can lay some claim to being postmodernism's most distinctive new medium, a medium which, at its best, is a whole new form in itself.

Utopia is a spatial matter that might be thought to know a potential change in fortunes in so spatialized a culture as the postmodern; but if this last is as dehistoricized and dehistoricizing as I sometimes claim here, the synaptic chain that might lead the Utopian impulse to expression becomes harder to localize. Utopian representations knew an extraordinary revival in the 1960s; if postmodernism is the substitute for the sixties and the compensation for their political failure, the question of Utopia would seem to be a crucial test of what is left of our capacity to imagine change at all. Such, at least, is the question addressed here to one of the most interesting (and least characteristic) buildings of the postmodern period, Frank Gehry's house in Santa Monica, California; it is also addressed, around and behind the visual, as it were, to contemporary photography and installation art. At any rate, *Utopian*, in First World postmodernism, has become a powerful (left) political word rather than its opposite.

But if Michael Speaks is right, and there is no pure postmodernism as such, then the residual traces of modernism must be seen in another light, less as anachronisms than as necessary failures that inscribe the particular postmodern project back into its context, while at the same time reopening the question of the modern itself for reexamination. That reexamination will not be undertaken here; but the residuality of the modern and its values—most notably irony (in Venturi or DeMan) or the questions of totality and representation—offer the occasion for working out one of the assertions of my initial essay that most troubled some readers; namely, the notion that what was variously called "poststructuralism" or even simply "theory" was also a subvariety of the postmodern, or at least proves to be that in hindsight. Theory—I here prefer the more cumbersome formula "theoretical discourse"—has seemed unique, if not privileged, among the postmodern arts and genres in its occasional capacity to defy the gravity of the zeitgeist and to produce schools, movements, and even avant-gardes where they are no longer supposed to exist. Two very lengthy and disproportionate chapters examine two of the most successful American theoretical avant-gardes, deconstruction and the New Historicism, for traces of their modernity and postmodernity alike. But Simon's old "new novel" could also be the object of this kind of discrimination, which will not take us very far unless—for the urge to classify objects once and for all in the modern, or the postmodern, or even Jencks's "late modern" or other "transitional" categories—we build a model of the contradictions all these categories stage within the text itself.

In any case, this book is not a survey of the "postmodern," nor even an introduction to it (always supposing such a thing was possible in the first place); nor are any of its textual exhibits characteristic of the postmodern or prime *examples* of it, "illustrations" of its principal features. That has something to do with the qualities of the characteristic, the exemplary, and the illustrative; but it has more to do with the nature of postmodern texts themselves, which is to say, the nature of a *text* in the first place, since that is a postmodern category and phenomenon which has replaced the older one of a "work." Indeed, in one of those extraordinary postmodern mutations where the apocalyptic suddenly turns into the decorative (or at least diminishes abruptly into "something you have around the home"), Hegel's legendary "end of art"—the premonitory concept that signaled modernism's supreme anti- or transaesthetic vocation to be more than art (or religion either, or even "philosophy" in some narrower sense)—now modestly simmers down into the "end of the work of art" and the arrival of the text. But this throws the chicken coops of criticism into commotion fully as much as it stirs those of "creation": the fundamental disparity and incommensurability between *text* and *work* means that to select sample texts and, by analysis, to make them bear the universalizing weight of a representative particular, turns them imperceptibly back into that older thing, the work, which is not supposed to exist in the postmodern. This is, as it were, the Heisenberg principle of postmodernism, and the most difficult representational problem for any commentator to come to terms with, save via the endless slide show, "total flow" prolonged into the infinite.

The same holds true for my penultimate chapter, on some recent films and some recent representations of history of a new and allegorical type. The word *nostalgia* in my title, however, does not mean what I normally want to make it mean, and I will therefore exceptionally (other objections being dealt with at some length in the concluding section) comment in advance on an expression, "nostalgia film," about which I have some misunderstandings to regret. I don't remember any longer whether I am responsible for this term, which still seems to me indispensable, provided you understand that the fashion-plate, historicist films it designates are in no way to be grasped as passionate expressions of that older longing once called nostalgia but rather quite the opposite; they are a depersonalized visual curiosity and a "return of the repressed" of the twenties and thirties "without affect" (in another place I try to term it "nostalgia-deco"). But one can no more alter a term like this retroactively than substitute some altogether different word for postmodernism itself.

The "total flow" of associative conclusions then takes up, in passing, some of the other inveterate but more serious objections to or misunderstandings of my positions and also comments on politics, demography, nominalism, media and the image, and other topics which ought to figure in any self-respecting book on the subject. In particular I have tried to remedy what (rightly) struck some readers as a crucial missing component of the program essay, namely, the absence of any discussion of "agency," or the lack of what I prefer to call, following old Plekhanov, any "social equivalent" for this seemingly disembodied cultural logic.

Agency, however, raises the issue of the other unit of my title, "late capitalism," about which something further needs to be said. In particular, people have begun to notice that it functions as a sign of some kind and seems to carry a burden of intent and consequences not clear to the noninitiate.[6] It is not my favorite slogan, and I try to vary it with the appropriate synonyms ("multinational capitalism," "spectacle or image society," "media capitalism," "the world system," even "postmodernism" itself); but as the Right has also spotted what evidently seems to them a dangerous new concept and way of speaking (even though some of the economic diagnoses overlap their own, and a term like *postindustrial society* certainly has a family likeness), this particular terrain of ideological struggle, which unfortunately one rarely chooses oneself, seems a solid one and worth defending.

As far as I can see, the general use of the term *late capitalism* originated with the Frankfurt School;[7] it is everywhere in Adorno and Horkheimer, sometimes varied with their own synonyms (for example, "administered society"), which make it clear that a very different conception was involved, of a more Weberian type, which, derived essentially from Grossman and Pollock, stressed two essential features: (1) a tendential web of bureaucratic control (in its more nightmarish forms, a Foucault-like grid *avant la lettre*), and (2) the interpenetration of government and big business ("state capitalism") such that Nazism and the New Deal are related systems (and some form of socialism, benign or Stalinist, also seems on the agenda).

As widely used today, the term *late capitalism* has very different overtones from these. No one particularly notices the expansion of the state sector and bureaucratization any longer: it seems a simple, "natural" fact of life. What marks the development of the new concept over the older one (which was still roughly consistent with Lenin's notion of a "monopoly stage" of capitalism) is not merely an emphasis on the emergence of new forms of business organization (multinationals, transnationals) beyond the monopoly stage but, above all, the vision of a world capitalist system fundamentally distinct from the older imperialism, which was little more than a rivalry between the various colonial powers. The scholastic, I am tempted to say theological, debates on whether the various notions of "late capitalism" are really consistent with Marxism itself (despite Marx's own repeated evocation, in the *Grundrisse*, of the "world market" as the ultimate horizon of capitalism)[8] turn on this matter of internationalization and how it is to be described (and in particular whether the component of "dependency theory" or of Wallerstein's "world system" theory is a production model, based on social classes). In spite of these theoretical uncertainties, it seems fair to say that today we have some rough idea of this new system (called "late capitalism" in order to mark its continuity with what preceded it rather than the break, rupture, and mutation that concepts like "postindustrial society" wished to underscore). Besides the forms of transnational business mentioned above, its features include the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges (including the enormous Second and Third World debt), new forms of media interrelationship (very much including transportation systems such as containerization), computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale.

In periodizing a phenomenon of this kind, we have to complicate the model with all kinds of supplementary epicycles. It is necessary to distinguish between the gradual setting in place of the various (often unrelated) preconditions for the new structure and the "moment" (not exactly chronological) when they all jell and combine into a functional system. This moment is itself less a matter of chronology than it is of a wellnigh Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*, or retroactivity: people become aware of the dynamics of some new system, in which they are themselves seized, only later on and gradually. Nor is that dawning collective consciousness of a new system (deduced itself intermittently in a fragmentary way from various unrelated crisis symptoms such as factory closings or higher interest rates) exactly the same as the coming into being of fresh cultural forms of expression (Raymond Williams's "structures of feeling" do finally strike one as a very odd way to have to characterize postmodernism culturally). That the various preconditions for a new "structure of feeling" also preexist their moment of combination and crystallization into a relatively hegemonic style everyone acknowledges;

but that prehistory is not in synch with the economic one. Thus Mandel suggests that the basic new technological prerequisites of the new "long wave" of capitalism's third stage (here called "late capitalism") were available by the end of World War II, which also had the effect of reorganizing international relations, decolonizing the colonies, and laying the groundwork for the emergence of a new economic world system. Culturally, however, the precondition is to be found (apart from a wide variety of aberrant modernist "experiments" which are then restructured in the form of predecessors) in the enormous social and psychological transformations of the 1960s, which swept so much of tradition away on the level of *mentalités*. Thus the economic preparation of postmodernism or late capitalism began in the 1950s, after the wartime shortages of consumer goods and spare parts had been made up, and new products and new technologies (not least those of the media) could be pioneered. On the other hand, the psychic *habitus* of the new age demands the absolute break, strengthened by a generational rupture, achieved more properly in the 1960s (it being understood that economic development does not then pause for *that*, but very much continues along its own level and according to its own logic). If you prefer a now somewhat antiquated language, the distinction is very much the one Althusser used to harp on between a Hegelian "essential cross section" of the present (or *coupe d'essence*), where a culture critique wants to find a single principle of the "postmodern" inherent in the most varied and ramified features of social life, and that Althusserian "structure in dominance" in which the various levels entertain a semiautonomy over against each other, run at different rates of speed, develop unevenly, and yet conspire to produce a totality. Add to this the unavoidable representational problem that there is no "late capitalism in general" but only this or that specific national form of the thing, and non-North American readers will inevitably deplore the Americanocentrism of my own particular account, which is justified only to the degree that it was the brief "American century" (1945–73) that constituted the hothouse, or forcing ground, of the new system, while the development of the cultural forms of postmodernism may be said to be the first specifically North American global style.

Meanwhile, it is my sense that both levels in question, infrastructure and superstructures—the economic system and the cultural "structure of feeling"—somehow crystallized in the great shock of the crises of 1973 (the oil crisis, the end of the international gold standard, for all intents and purposes the end of the great wave of "wars of national

liberation" and the beginning of the end of traditional communism), which, now that the dust clouds have rolled away, disclose the existence, already in place, of a strange new landscape: the landscape the essays in this book try to describe (along with an increasing number of other probes and hypothetical accounts).[9]

This matter of periodization is not, however, altogether alien to the signals given off by the expression "late capitalism," which is by now clearly identified as a kind of leftist logo which is ideologically and politically booby-trapped, so that the very act of using it constitutes tacit agreement about a whole range of essentially Marxian social and economic propositions the other side may be far from wanting to endorse. *Capitalism* was itself always a funny word in this sense: just using the word—otherwise a neutral enough designation for an economic and social system on whose properties all sides agree—seemed to position you in a vaguely critical, suspicious, if not outright socialist stance: only committed right-wing ideologues and full-throated market apologists also use it with the same relish.

"Late capitalism" still does some of that, but with a difference: its qualifier in particular rarely means anything so silly as the ultimate senescence, breakdown, and death of the system as such (a temporal vision that would rather seem to belong to modernism than postmodernism). What "late" generally conveys is rather the sense that something has changed, that things are different, that we have gone through a transformation of the life world which is somehow decisive but incomparable with the older convulsions of modernization and industrialization, less perceptible and dramatic, somehow, but more permanent precisely because more thoroughgoing and all-pervasive.[10]

That means that the expression *late capitalism* carries the other, cultural half of my title within it as well; not only is it something like a literal translation of the other expression, *postmodernism*, its temporal index seems already to direct attention to changes in the quotidian and on the cultural level as such. To say that my two terms, the *cultural* and the *economic*, thereby collapse back into one another and say the same thing, in an eclipse of the distinction between base and superstructure that has itself often struck people as significantly characteristic of postmodernism in the first place, is also to suggest that the base, in the third stage of capitalism, generates its superstructures with a new kind of dynamic. And this may also be what (rightly) worries the unconverted about the term; it seems to obligate you in advance to talk about cultural phenomena at least in business terms if not in those of political economy.

As for *postmodernism* itself, I have not tried to systematize a usage or to impose any conveniently coherent thumbnail meaning, for the concept is not merely contested, it is also internally conflicted and contradictory. I will argue that, for good or ill, we cannot *not* use it. But my argument should also be taken to imply that every time it is used, we are under the obligation to rehearse those inner contradictions and to stage those representational inconsistencies and dilemmas; we have to work all that through every time around. *Postmodernism* is not something we can settle once and for all and then use with a clear conscience. The concept, if there is one, has to come at the end, and not at the beginning, of our discussions of it. Those are the conditions—the *only* ones, I think, that prevent the mischief of premature clarification—under which this term can productively continue to be used.

The materials assembled in the present volume constitute the third and last section of the penultimate subdivision of a larger project entitled *The Poetics of Social Forms*.

Durham, April 1990

1

The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

The last few years have been marked by an inverted millenarianism in which premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that (the end of ideology, art, or social class; the "crisis" of Leninism, social democracy, or the welfare state, etc., etc.); taken together, all of these perhaps constitute what is increasingly called postmodernism. The case for its existence depends on the hypothesis of some radical break or *coupure*, generally traced back to the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s.

As the word itself suggests, this break is most often related to notions of the waning or extinction of the hundred-year-old modern movement (or to its ideological or aesthetic repudiation). Thus abstract expressionism in painting, existentialism in philosophy, the final forms of representation in the novel, the films of the great *auteurs*, or the modernist school of poetry (as institutionalized and canonized in the works of Wallace Stevens) all are now seen as the final, extraordinary flowering of a high-modernist impulse which is spent and exhausted with them. The enumeration of what follows, then, at once becomes empirical, chaotic, and heterogeneous: Andy Warhol and pop art, but also photorealism, and beyond it, the "new expressionism"; the moment, in music, of John Cage, but also the synthesis of classical and "popular" styles found in composers like Phil Glass and Terry Riley, and also punk and new wave rock (the Beatles and the Stones now standing as the high-modernist moment of that more recent and rapidly evolving tradition); in film, Godard, post-Godard, and experimental cinema and video, but also a whole new type of commercial film (about which more below); Burroughs, Pynchon, or Ishmael Reed, on the one hand, and the French *nouveau roman* and its succession, on the other, along with alarming

new kinds of literary criticism based on some new aesthetic of textuality or *écriture* . . . The list might be extended indefinitely; but does it imply any more fundamental change or break than the periodic style and fashion changes determined by an older high-modernist imperative of stylistic innovation?

It is in the realm of architecture, however, that modifications in aesthetic production are most dramatically visible, and that their theoretical problems have been most centrally raised and articulated; it was indeed from architectural debates that my own conception of postmodernism—as it will be outlined in the following pages—initially began to emerge. More decisively than in the other arts or media, postmodernist positions in architecture have been inseparable from an implacable critique of architectural high modernism and of Frank Lloyd Wright or the so-called international style (Le Corbusier, Mies, etc), where formal criticism and analysis (of the high-modernist transformation of the building into a virtual sculpture, or monumental "duck," as Robert Venturi puts it)[1] are at one with reconsiderations on the level of urbanism and of the aesthetic institution. High modernism is thus credited with the destruction of the fabric of the traditional city and its older neighborhood culture (by way of the radical disjunction of the new Utopian high-modernist building from its surrounding context), while the prophetic elitism and authoritarianism of the modern movement are remorselessly identified in the imperious gesture of the charismatic Master.

Postmodernism in architecture will then logically enough stage itself as a kind of aesthetic populism, as the very title of Venturi's influential manifesto, *Learning from Las Vegas*, suggests. However we may ultimately wish to evaluate this populist rhetoric,[2] it has at least the merit of drawing our attention to one fundamental feature of all the postmodernisms enumerated above: namely, the effacement in them of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories, and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern, from Leavis and the American New Criticism all the way to Adorno and the Frankfurt School. The postmodernisms have, in fact, been fascinated precisely by this whole "degraded" landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and *Reader's Digest* culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature, with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance,

the popular biography, the murder mystery, and the science fiction or fantasy novel: materials they no longer simply "quote," as a Joyce or a Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance.

Nor should the break in question be thought of as a purely cultural affair: indeed, theories of the postmodern—whether celebratory or couched in the language of moral revulsion and denunciation—bear a strong family resemblance to all those more ambitious sociological generalizations which, at much the same time, bring us the news of the arrival and inauguration of a whole new type of society, most famously baptized "postindustrial society" (Daniel Bell) but often also designated consumer society, media society, information society, electronic society or high tech, and the like. Such theories have the obvious ideological mission of demonstrating, to their own relief, that the new social formation in question no longer obeys the laws of classical capitalism, namely, the primacy of industrial production and the omnipresence of class struggle. The Marxist tradition has therefore resisted them with vehemence, with the signal exception of the economist Ernest Mandel, whose book *Late Capitalism* sets out not merely to anatomize the historic originality of this new society (which he sees as a third stage or moment in the evolution of capital) but also to demonstrate that it is, if anything, a *purer* stage of capitalism than any of the moments that preceded it. I will return to this argument later; suffice it for the moment to anticipate a point that will be argued in chapter 2, namely, that every position on postmodernism in culture—whether apologia or stigmatization—is also at one and the same time, and *necessarily*, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today.

A last preliminary word on method: what follows is not to be read as stylistic description, as the account of one cultural style or movement among others. I have rather meant to offer a periodizing hypothesis, and that at a moment in which the very conception of historical periodization has come to seem most problematical indeed. I have argued elsewhere that all isolated or discrete cultural analysis always involves a buried or repressed theory of historical periodization; in any case, the conception of the "genealogy" largely lays to rest traditional theoretical worries about so-called linear history, theories of "stages," and teleological historiography. In the present context, however, lengthier theoretical discussion of such (very real) issues can perhaps be replaced by a few substantive remarks.

One of the concerns frequently aroused by periodizing hypotheses is that these tend to obliterate difference and to project an idea of the his-

torical period as massive homogeneity (bounded on either side by inexplicable chronological metamorphoses and punctuation marks). This is, however, precisely why it seems to me essential to grasp postmodernism not as a style but rather as a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features.

Consider, for example, the powerful alternative position that postmodernism is itself little more than one more stage of modernism proper (if not, indeed, of the even older romanticism); it may indeed be conceded that all the features of postmodernism I am about to enumerate can be detected, full-blown, in this or that preceding modernism (including such astonishing genealogical precursors as Gertrude Stein, Raymond Roussel, or Marcel Duchamp, who may be considered outright postmodernists, avant la lettre). What has not been taken into account by this view, however, is the social position of the older modernism, or better still, its passionate repudiation by an older Victorian and post-Victorian bourgeoisie for whom its forms and ethos are received as being variously ugly, dissonant, obscure, scandalous, immoral, subversive, and generally "antisocial." It will be argued here, however, that a mutation in the sphere of culture has rendered such attitudes archaic. Not only are Picasso and Joyce no longer ugly; they now strike us, on the whole, as rather "realistic," and this is the result of a canonization and academic institutionalization of the modern movement generally that can be traced to the late 1950s. This is surely one of the most plausible explanations for the emergence of postmodernism itself, since the younger generation of the 1960s will now confront the formerly oppositional modern movement as a set of dead classics, which "weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living," as Marx once said in a different context.

As for the postmodern revolt against all that, however, it must equally be stressed that its own offensive features—from obscurity and sexually explicit material to psychological squalor and overt expressions of social and political defiance, which transcend anything that might have been imagined at the most extreme moments of high modernism—no longer scandalize anyone and are not only received with the greatest complacency but have themselves become institutionalized and are at one with the official or public culture of Western society.

What has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to airplanes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns

an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation. Such economic necessities then find recognition in the varied kinds of institutional support available for the newer art, from foundations and grants to museums and other forms of patronage. Of all the arts, architecture is the closest constitutively to the economic, with which, in the form of commissions and land values, it has a virtually unmediated relationship. It will therefore not be surprising to find the extraordinary flowering of the new postmodern architecture grounded in the patronage of multinational business, whose expansion and development is strictly contemporaneous with it. Later I will suggest that these two new phenomena have an even deeper dialectical interrelationship than the simple one-to-one financing of this or that individual project. Yet this is the point at which I must remind the reader of the obvious; namely, that this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror.

The first point to be made about the conception of periodization in dominance, therefore, is that even if all the constitutive features of postmodernism were identical with and coterminous to those of an older modernism—a position I feel to be demonstrably erroneous but which only an even lengthier analysis of modernism proper could dispel—the two phenomena would still remain utterly distinct in their meaning and social function, owing to the very different positioning of postmodernism in the economic system of late capital and, beyond that, to the transformation of the very sphere of culture in contemporary society.

This point will be further discussed at the conclusion of this book. I must now briefly address a different kind of objection to periodization, a concern about its possible obliteration of heterogeneity, one most often expressed by the Left. And it is certain that there is a strange quasi-Sartrean irony—a "winner loses" logic—which tends to surround any effort to describe a "system," a totalizing dynamic, as these are detected in the movement of contemporary society. What happens is that the more powerful the vision of some increasingly total system or logic —the Foucault of the prisons book is the obvious example—the more powerless the reader comes to feel. Insofar as the theorist wins, therefore, by constructing an increasingly closed and terrifying machine, to that very degree he loses, since the critical capacity of his work is thereby paralyzed, and the impulses of negation and revolt, not to speak of those

of social transformation, are increasingly perceived as vain and trivial in the face of the model itself.

I have felt, however, that it was only in the light of some conception of a dominant cultural logic or hegemonic norm that genuine difference could be measured and assessed. I am very far from feeling that all cultural production today is "postmodern" in the broad sense I will be conferring on this term. The postmodern is, however, the force field in which very different kinds of cultural impulses—what Raymond Williams has usefully termed "residual" and "emergent" forms of cultural production—must make their way. If we do not achieve some general sense of a cultural dominant, then we fall back into a view of present history as sheer heterogeneity, random difference, a coexistence of a host of distinct forces whose effectivity is undecidable. At any rate, this has been the political spirit in which the following analysis was devised: to project some conception of a new systematic cultural norm and its reproduction in order to reflect more adequately on the most effective forms of any radical cultural politics today.

The exposition will take up in turn the following constitutive features of the postmodern: a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary "theory" and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality, whose "schizophrenic" structure (following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts; a whole new type of emotional ground tone—what I will call "intensities"—which can best be grasped by a return to older theories of the sublime; the deep constitutive relationships of all this to a whole new technology, which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system; and, after a brief account of postmodernist mutations in the lived experience of built space itself, some reflections on the mission of political art in the bewildering new world space of late or multinational capital.

I

We will begin with one of the canonical works of high modernism in visual art, Van Gogh's well-known painting of the peasant shoes, an example which, as you can imagine, has not been innocently or randomly chosen. I want to propose two ways of reading this painting, both of which in some fashion reconstruct the reception of the work in a two-stage or double-level process.

I first want to suggest that if this copiously reproduced image is not to sink to the level of sheer decoration, it requires us to reconstruct some initial situation out of which the finished work emerges. Unless that situation—which has vanished into the past—is somehow mentally restored, the painting will remain an inert object, a reified end product impossible to grasp as a symbolic act in its own right, as praxis and as production.

This last term suggests that one way of reconstructing the initial situation to which the work is somehow a response is by stressing the raw materials, the initial content, which it confronts and reworks, transforms, and appropriates. In Van Gogh that content, those initial raw materials, are, I will suggest, to be grasped simply as the whole object world of agricultural misery, of stark rural poverty, and the whole rudimentary human world of backbreaking peasant toil, a world reduced to its most brutal and menaced, primitive and marginalized state.

Fruit trees in this world are ancient and exhausted sticks coming out of poor soil; the people of the village are worn down to their skulls, caricatures of some ultimate grotesque typology of basic human feature types. How is it, then, that in Van Gogh such things as apple trees explode into a hallucinatory surface of color, while his village stereotypes are suddenly and garishly overlaid with hues of red and green? I will briefly suggest, in this first interpretative option, that the willed and violent transformation of a drab peasant object world into the most glorious materialization of pure color in oil paint is to be seen as a Utopian gesture, an act of compensation which ends up producing a whole new Utopian realm of the senses, or at least of that supreme sense—sight, the visual, the eye—which it now reconstitutes for us as a semiautonomous space in its own right, a part of some new division of labor in the body of capital, some new fragmentation of the emergent sensorium which replicates the specializations and divisions of capitalist life at the same time that it seeks in precisely such fragmentation a desperate Utopian compensation for them.

There is, to be sure, a second reading of Van Gogh which can hardly be ignored when we gaze at this particular painting, and that is Heidegger's central analysis in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, which is organized around the idea that the work of art emerges within the gap between Earth and World, or what I would prefer to translate as the meaningless materiality of the body and nature and the meaning endowment of history and of the social. We will return to that particular gap or rift later on; suffice it here to recall some of the famous phrases that model the

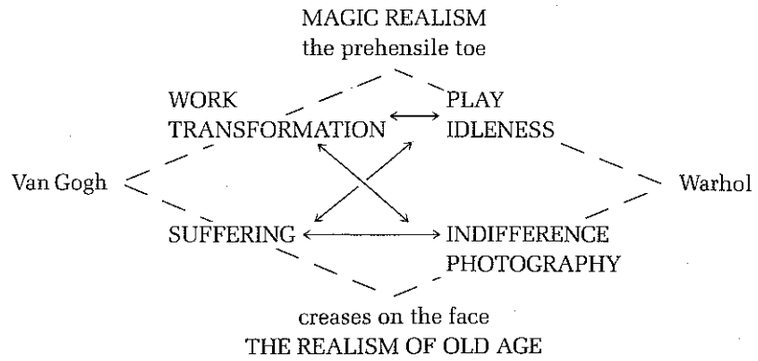
process whereby these henceforth illustrious peasant shoes slowly re-create about themselves the whole missing object world which was once their lived context. "In them," says Heidegger, "there vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of ripening corn and its enigmatic self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field." "This equipment," he goes on, "belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman. . . . Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth. . . . This entity emerges into the unconcealment of its being,"[3] by way of the mediation of the work of art, which draws the whole absent world and earth into revelation around itself, along with the heavy tread of the peasant woman, the loneliness of the field path, the hut in the clearing, the worn and broken instruments of labor in the furrows and at the hearth. Heidegger's account needs to be completed by insistence on the renewed materiality of the work, on the transformation of one form of materiality —the earth itself and its paths and physical objects—into that other materiality of oil paint affirmed and foregrounded in its own right and for its own visual pleasures, but nonetheless it has a satisfying plausibility.

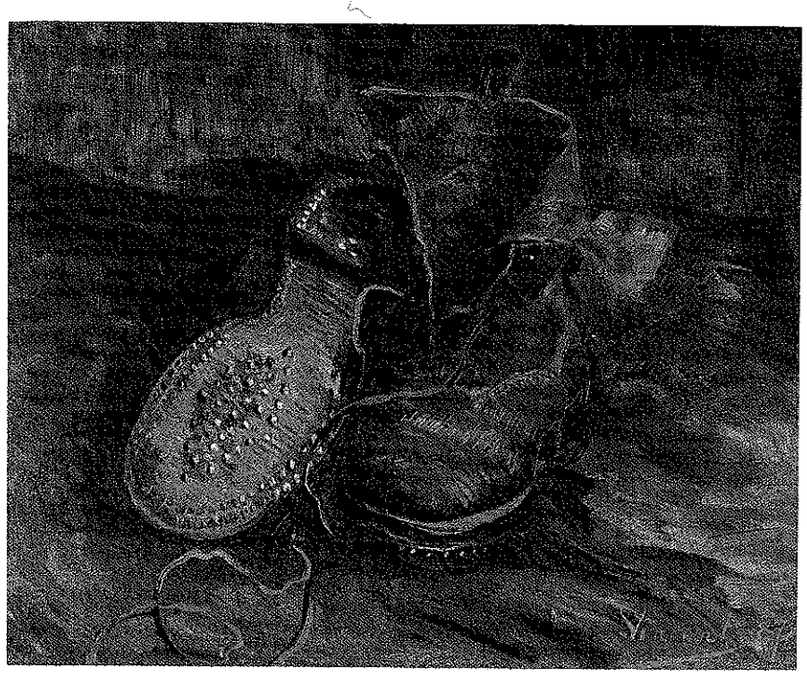
At any rate, both readings may be described as *hermeneutical*, in the sense in which the work in its inert, objectal form is taken as a clue or a symptom for some vaster reality which replaces it as its ultimate truth. Now we need to look at some shoes of a different kind, and it is pleasant to be able to draw for such an image on the recent work of the central figure in contemporary visual art. Andy Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* evidently no longer speaks to us with any of the immediacy of Van Gogh's footgear; indeed, I am tempted to say that it does not really speak to us at all. Nothing in this painting organizes even a minimal place for the viewer, who confronts it at the turning of a museum corridor or gallery with all the contingency of some inexplicable natural object. On the level of the content, we have to do with what are now far more clearly fetishes, in both the Freudian and the Marxian senses (Derrida remarks, somewhere, about the Heideggerian *Paar Bauernschuhe*, that the Van Gogh footgear are a heterosexual pair, which allows neither for perversion nor for fetishization). Here, however, we have a random collection of dead objects hanging together on the canvas like so many turnips, as shorn of their earlier life world as the pile of shoes left over from Auschwitz or the remainders and tokens of some incomprehensible and tragic fire in a packed dance hall. There is therefore in Warhol no way to complete the hermeneutic gesture and restore to these oddments that whole larger lived context of the dance hall or the ball, the world of jetset fashion or glamour magazines. Yet this is even more paradoxical in the light of biographical information: Warhol began his artistic career as a commercial illustrator for shoe fashions and a designer of display windows in which various pumps and slippers figured prominently. Indeed, one is tempted to raise here—far too prematurely—one of the central issues about postmodernism itself and its possible political dimensions: Andy Warhol's work in fact turns centrally around commodification, and the great billboard images of the Coca-Cola bottle or the Campbell's soup can, which explicitly foreground the commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital, *ought* to be powerful and critical political statements. If they are not that, then one would surely want to know why, and one would want to begin to wonder a little more seriously about the possibilities of political or critical art in the postmodern period of late capital.

But there are some other significant differences between the high-modernist and the postmodernist moment, between the shoes of Van Gogh and the shoes of Andy Warhol, on which we must now very briefly dwell. The first and most evident is the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense, perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the postmodernisms to which we will have occasion to return in a number of other contexts.

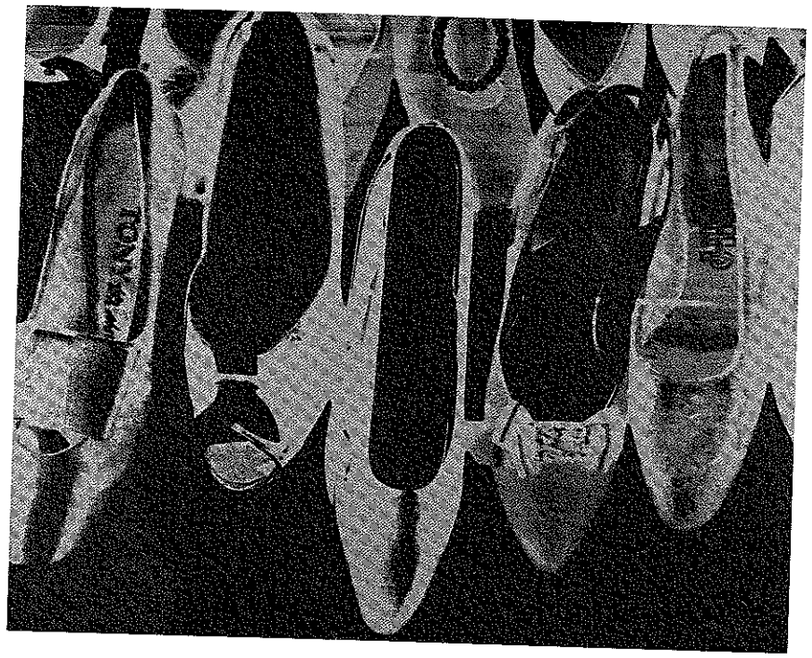
Then we must surely come to terms with the role of photography and the photographic negative in contemporary art of this kind; and it is this, indeed, which confers its deathly quality to the Warhol image, whose glacéd X-ray elegance mortifies the reified eye of the viewer in a way that would seem to have nothing to do with death or the death obsession or the death anxiety on the level of content. It is indeed as though we had here to do with the inversion of Van Gogh's Utopian gesture: in the earlier work a stricken world is by some Nietzschean fiat and act of the will transformed into the stridency of Utopian color. Here, on the contrary, it is as though the external and colored surface of things —debased and contaminated in advance by their assimilation to glossy advertising images—has been stripped away to reveal the deathly black-and-white substratum of the photographic negative which subtends them. Although this kind of death of the world of appearance becomes thematized in certain of Warhol's pieces, most notably the traffic accidents or the electric chair series, this is not, I think, a matter of content any longer but of some more fundamental mutation both in the object world itself—now become a set of texts or simulacra—and in the disposition of the subject.

All of which brings me to a third feature to be developed here, what I will call the waning of affect in postmodern culture. Of course, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all affect, all feeling or emotion, all subjectivity, has vanished from the newer image. Indeed, there is a kind of return of the repressed in *Diamond Dust Shoes*, a strange, compensatory, decorative exhilaration, explicitly designated by the title itself, which is, of course, the glitter of gold dust, the spangling of gilt sand that seals the surface of the painting and yet continues to glint at us. Think, however, of Rimbaud's magical flowers "that look back at you," or of the august premonitory eye flashes of Rilke's archaic Greek torso which warn the bourgeois subject to change his life; nothing of that sort here in the gratuitous frivolity of this final decorative overlay. In an interesting review of the Italian version of this essay,[4] Remo Ceserani expands this foot fetishism into a fourfold image which adds to the gaping "modernist" expressivity of the Van Gogh-Heidegger shoes the "realist" pathos of Walker Evans and James Agee (strange that pathos should thus require a team!); while what looked like a random assortment of yesteryear's fashions in Warhol takes on, in Magritte, the carnal reality of the human member itself, now more phantasmic than the leather it is printed on. Magritte, unique among the surrealists, survived the sea change from the modern to its sequel, becoming in the process something of a postmodern emblem: the uncanny, Lacanian foreclusion, without expression. The ideal schizophrenic, indeed, is easy enough to please provided only an eternal present is thrust before the eyes, which gaze with equal fascination on an old shoe or the tenaciously growing organic mystery of the human toenail. Ceserani thereby deserves a semiotic cube of his own:

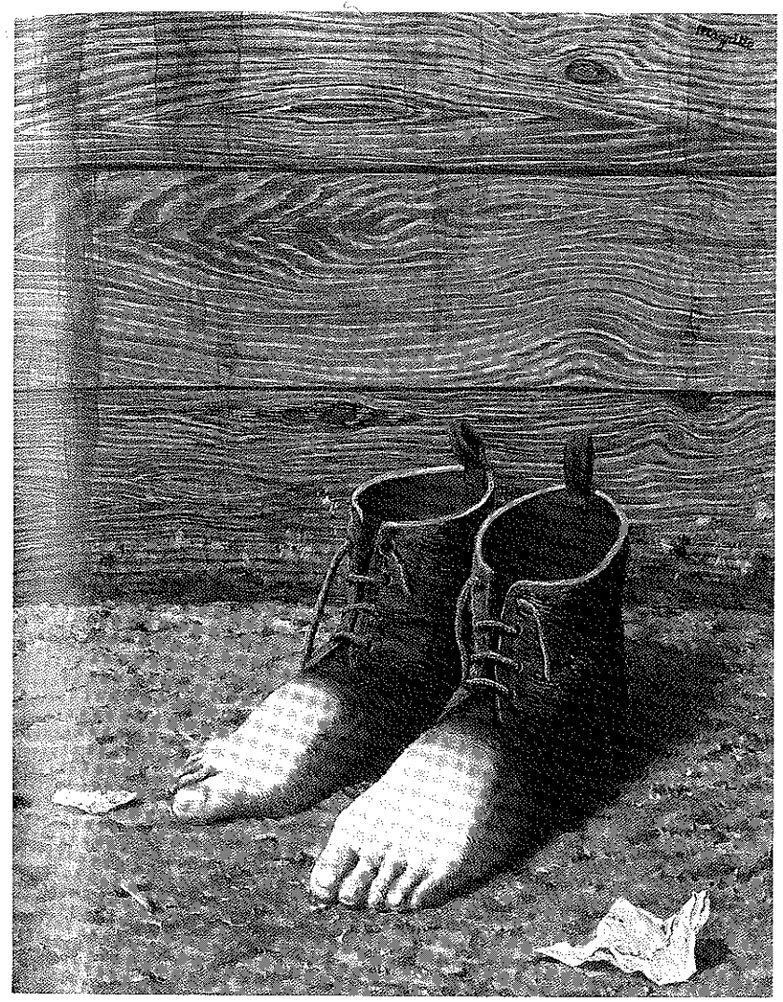




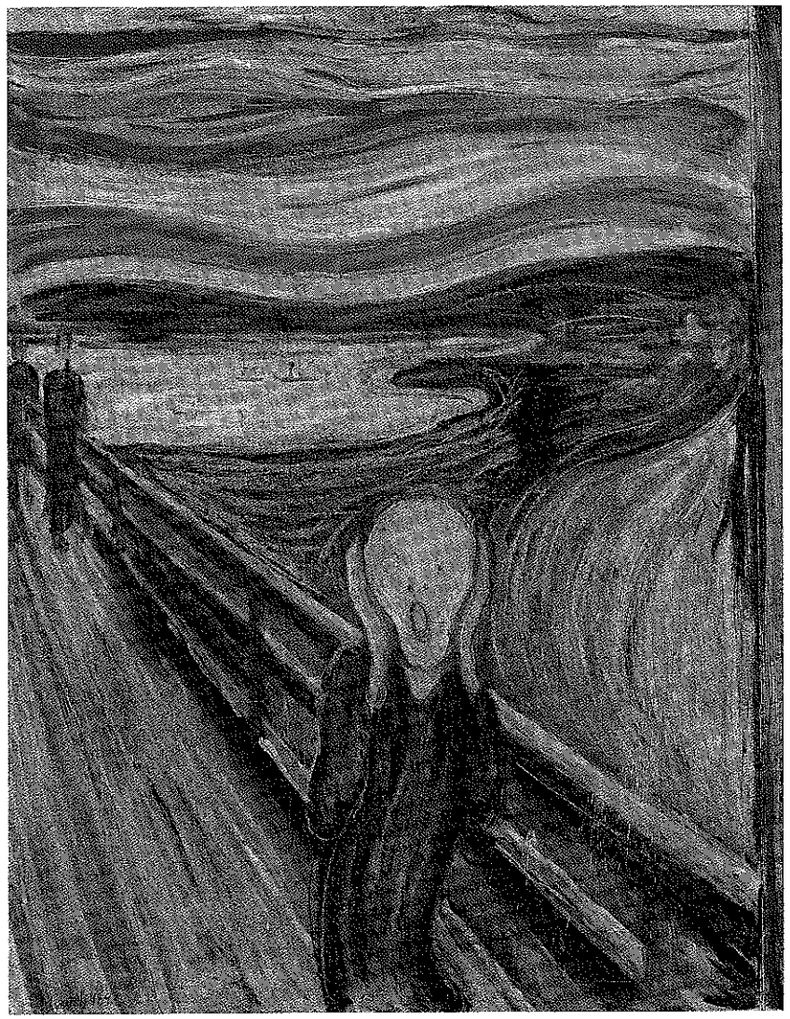
Vincent Van Gogh, "A Pair of Boots"



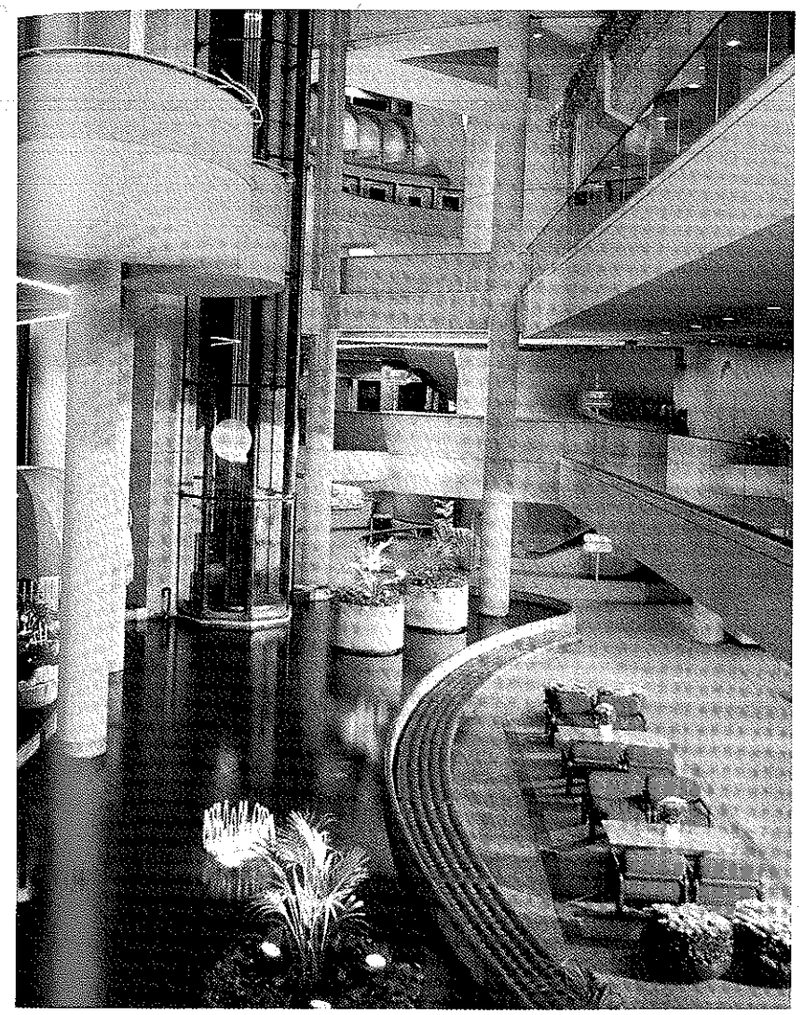
Andy Warhol, "Diamond Dust Shoes"



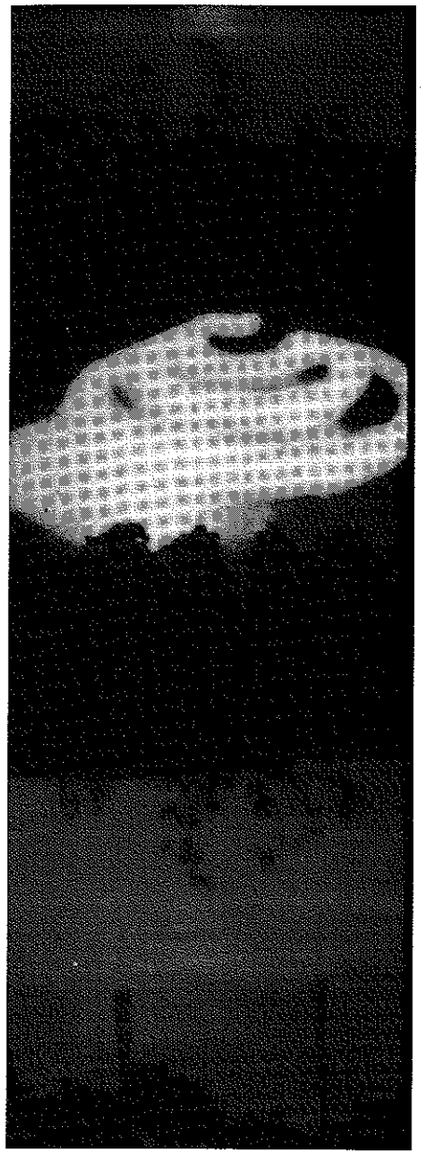
René Magritte, "Le modèle rouge"



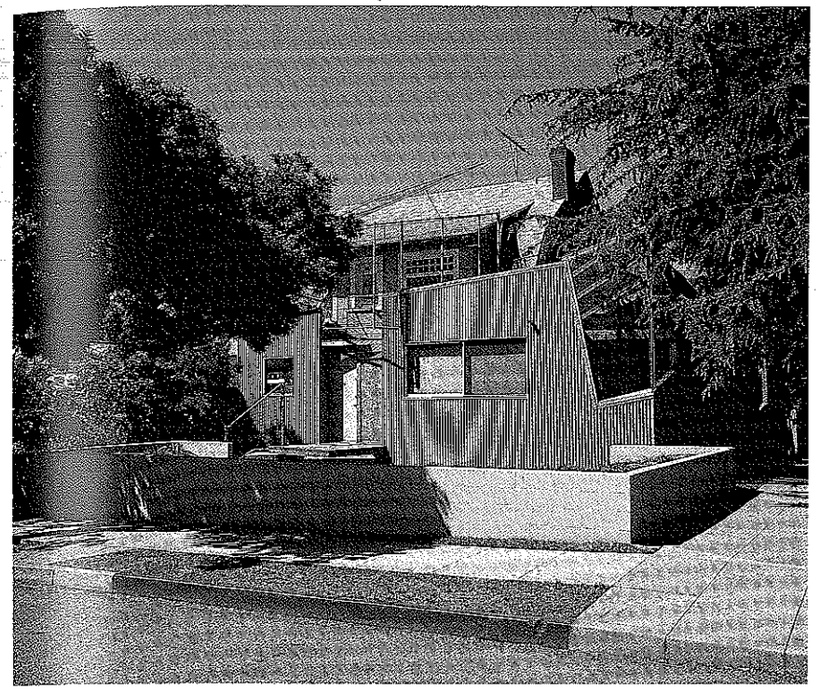
Edvard Munch, "The Scream"



The Westin Bonaventure, interior (Portman)

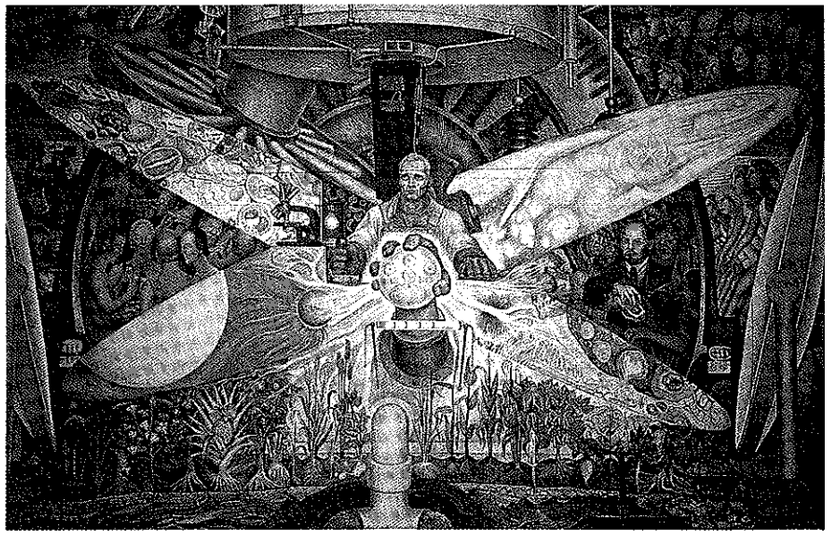


Oliver Wasow, "#146"



Frank Gehry House, Santa Monica, California

Frank Gehry House, Santa Monica, California



Diego Rivera, "Man at the Crossroads"

Walker Evans, "Floyd Burroughs' Work Shoes"

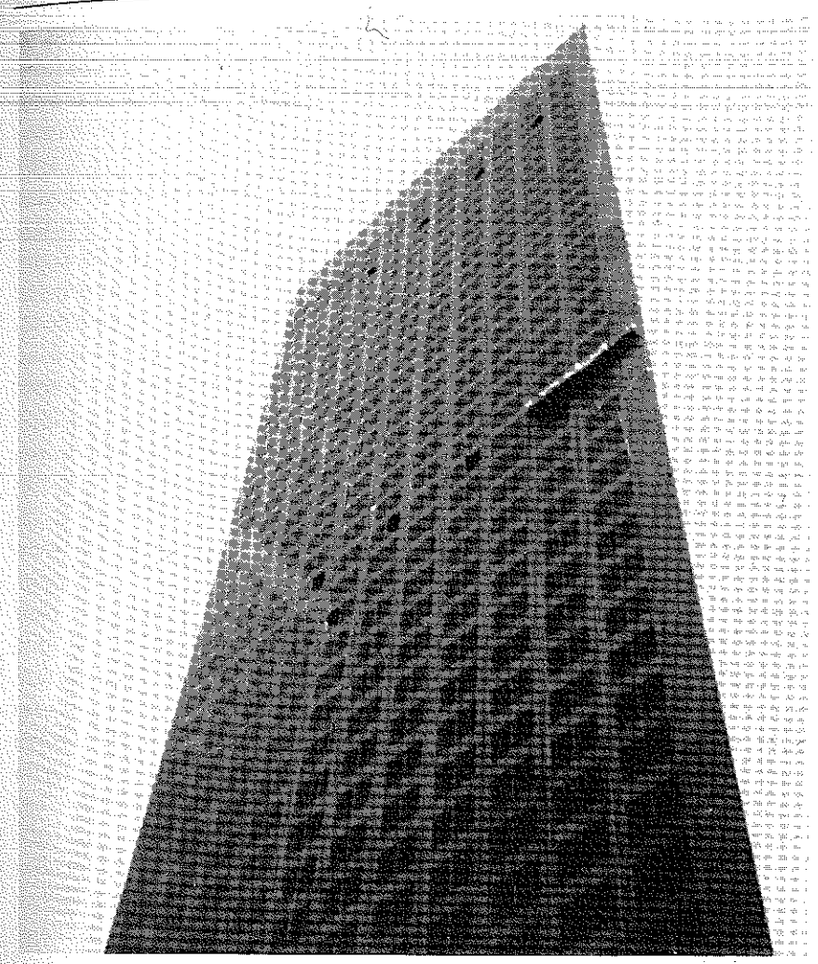
The waning of affect is, however, perhaps best initially approached by way of the human figure, and it is obvious that what we have said about the commodification of objects holds as strongly for Warhol's human subjects: stars—like Marilyn Monroe—who are themselves commodified and transformed into their own images. And here too a certain brutal return to the older period of high modernism offers a dramatic shorthand parable of the transformation in question. Edward Munch's painting *The Scream* is, of course, a canonical expression of the great modernist thematics of alienation, anomie, solitude, social fragmentation, and isolation, a virtually programmatic emblem of what used to be called the age of anxiety. It will here be read as an embodiment not merely of the expression of that kind of affect but, even more, as a virtual deconstruction of the very aesthetic of expression itself, which seems to have dominated much of what we call high modernism but to have vanished away—for both practical and theoretical reasons—in the world of the postmodern. The very concept of expression presupposes indeed some separation within the subject, and along with that a whole metaphysics of the inside and outside, of the wordless pain within the monad and the moment in which, often cathartically, that "emotion" is then projected out and externalized, as gesture

or cry, as desperate communication and the outward dramatization of inward feeling.

This is perhaps the moment to say something about contemporary theory, which has, among other things, been committed to the mission of criticizing and discrediting this very hermeneutic model of the inside and the outside and of stigmatizing such models as ideological and metaphysical. But what is today called contemporary theory—or better still, theoretical discourse—is also, I want to argue, itself very precisely a postmodernist phenomenon. It would therefore be inconsistent to defend the truth of its theoretical insights in a situation in which the very concept of "truth" itself is part of the metaphysical baggage which poststructuralism seeks to abandon. What we can at least suggest is that the poststructuralist critique of the hermeneutic, of what I will shortly call the depth model, is useful for us as a very significant symptom of the very postmodernist culture which is our subject here.

Overhastily, we can say that besides the hermeneutic model of inside and outside which Munch's painting develops, at least four other fundamental depth models have generally been repudiated in contemporary theory: (1) the dialectical one of essence and appearance (along with a whole range of concepts of ideology or false consciousness which tend to accompany it); (2) the Freudian model of latent and manifest, or of repression (which is, of course, the target of Michel Foucault's programmatic and symptomatic pamphlet *La Volonté de savoir* [*The history of Sexuality*]); (3) the existential model of authenticity and inauthenticity whose heroic or tragic thematics are closely related to that other great opposition between alienation and disalienation, itself equally a casualty of the poststructural or postmodern period; and (4) most recently, the great semiotic opposition between signifier and signified, which was itself rapidly unraveled and deconstructed during its brief heyday in the 1960s and 1970s. What replaces these various depth models is for the most part a conception of practices, discourses, and textual play, whose new syntagmatic structures we will examine later on; let it suffice now to observe that here too depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces (what if often called intertextuality is in that sense no longer a matter of depth).

Nor is this depthlessness merely metaphorical: it can be experienced physically and "literally" by anyone who, mounting what used to be Raymond Chandler's Bunker Hill from the great Chicano markets on Broadway and Fourth Street in downtown Los Angeles, suddenly confronts the great free-standing wall of Wells Fargo Court (Skidmore,



Wells Fargo Court (Skidmore, Owings and Merrill)

Owings and Merrill)—a surface which seems to be unsupported by any volume, or whose putative volume (rectangular? trapezoidal?) is ocularly quite undecidable. This great sheet of windows, with its gravity-defying two-dimensionality, momentarily transforms the solid ground on which we stand into the contents of a stereopticon, pasteboard shapes profiling themselves here and there around us. The visual effect is the same from all sides: as fateful as the great monolith in Stanley Kubrick's *2001* which confronts its viewers like an enigmatic destiny, a call to evolutionary

mutation. If this new multinational downtown effectively abolished the older ruined city fabric which is violently replaced, cannot something similar be said about the way in which this strange new surface in its own peremptory way renders our older systems of perception of the city somehow archaic and aimless, without offering another in their place?

Returning now for one last moment to Munch's painting, it seems evident that *The Scream* subtly but elaborately disconnects its own aesthetic of expression, all the while remaining imprisoned within it. Its gestural content already underscores its own failure, since the realm of the sonorous, the cry, the raw vibrations of the human throat, are incompatible with its medium (something underscored within the work by the homunculus's lack of ears). Yet the absent scream returns, as it were, in a dialectic of loops and spirals, circling ever more closely toward that even more absent experience of atrocious solitude and anxiety which the scream was itself to "express." Such loops inscribe themselves on the painted surface in the form of those great concentric circles in which sonorous vibration becomes ultimately visible, as on the surface of a sheet of water, in an infinite regress which fans out from the sufferer to become the very geography of a universe in which pain itself now speaks and vibrates through the material sunset and landscape. The visible world now becomes the wall of the monad on which this "scream running through nature" (Munch's words)[5] is recorded and transcribed: one thinks of that character of Lautréamont who, growing up inside a sealed and silent membrane, ruptures it with his own scream on catching sight of the monstrousness of the deity and thereby rejoins the world of sound and suffering.

All of which suggests some more general historical hypothesis: namely, that concepts such as anxiety and alienation (and the experiences to which they correspond, as in *The Scream*) are no longer appropriate in the world of the postmodern. The great Warhol figures—Marilyn herself or Edie Sedgewick—the notorious cases of burnout and self-destruction of the ending 1960s, and the great dominant experiences of drugs and schizophrenia, would seem to have little enough in common any more either with the hysterics and neurotics of Freud's own day or with those canonical experiences of radical isolation and solitude, anomie, private revolt, Van Gogh-type madness, which dominated the period of high modernism. This shift in the dynamics of cultural pathology can be characterized as one in which the alienation of the subject is displaced by the latter's fragmentation.

Such terms inevitably recall one of the more fashionable themes in

contemporary theory, that of the "death" of the subject itself—the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego or individual—and the accompanying stress, whether as some new moral ideal or as empirical description, on the *decentering* of that formerly centered subject or psyche. (Of the two possible formulations of this notion—the historicist one, that a once-existing centered subject, in the period of classical capitalism and the nuclear family, has today in the world of organizational bureaucracy dissolved; and the more radical poststructuralist position, for which such a subject never existed in the first place but constituted something like an ideological mirage—I obviously incline toward the former; the latter must in any case take into account something like a "reality of the appearance.")

We must however add that the problem of expression is itself closely linked to some conception of the subject as a monadlike container, within which things felt are then expressed by projection outward. What we must now stress, however, is the degree to which the high-modernist conception of a unique *style*, along with the accompanying collective ideals of an artistic or political vanguard or avant-garde, themselves stand or fall along with that older notion (or experience) of the so-called centered subject.

Here too Munch's painting stands as a complex reflection on this complicated situation: it shows us that expression requires the category of the individual monad, but it also shows us the heavy price to be paid for that precondition, dramatizing the unhappy paradox that when you constitute your individual subjectivity as a self-sufficient field and a closed realm, you thereby shut yourself off from everything else and condemn yourself to the mindless solitude of the monad, buried alive and condemned to a prison cell without egress.

Postmodernism presumably signals the end of this dilemma, which it replaces with a new one. The end of the bourgeois ego, or monad, no doubt brings with it the end of the psychopathologies of that ego—what I have been calling the waning of affect. But it means the end of much more—the end, for example, of style, in the sense of the unique and the personal, the end of the distinctive individual brush stroke (as symbolized by the emergent primacy of mechanical reproduction). As for expression and feelings or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older *anomie* of the centered subject may also mean not merely a liberation from anxiety but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling. This is not to say that the cultural products of the postmodern

era are utterly devoid of feeling, but rather that such feelings—which it may be better and more accurate, following J.-F. Lyotard, to call "intensities"—are now free-floating and impersonal and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria, a matter to which we will want to return later on.

The waning of affect, however, might also have been characterized, in the narrower context of literary criticism, as the waning of the great high modernist thematics of time and temporality, the elegiac mysteries of *durée* and memory (something to be understood fully as much as a category of the literary criticism associated with high modernism as with the works themselves). We have often been told, however, that we now inhabit the synchronic rather than the diachronic, and I think it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism.[6]

II

The disappearance of the individual subject, along with its formal consequence, the increasing unavailability of the personal style, engender the well-nigh universal practice today of what may be called pastiche. This concept, which we owe to Thomas Mann (in *Doktor Faustus*), who owed it in turn to Adorno's great work on the two paths of advanced musical experimentation (Schoenberg's innovative planification and Stravinsky's irrational eclecticism), is to be sharply distinguished from the more readily received idea of parody.

To be sure, parody found a fertile area in the idiosyncracies of the moderns and their "inimitable" styles: the Faulknerian long sentence, for example, with its breathless gerundives; Lawrentian nature imagery punctuated by testy colloquialism; Wallace Stevens's inveterate hypostasis of nonsubstantive parts of speech ("the intricate evasions of as"); the fateful (but finally predictable) swoops in Mahler from high orchestral pathos into village accordion sentiment; Heidegger's meditative-solemn practice of the false etymology as a mode of "proof" . . . All these strike one as somehow characteristic, insofar as they ostentatiously deviate from a norm which then reasserts itself, in a not necessarily unfriendly way, by a systematic mimicry of their willful eccentricities.

Yet in the dialectical leap from quantity to quality, the explosion of

modern literature into a host of distinct private styles and mannerisms has been followed by a linguistic fragmentation of social life itself to the point where the norm itself is eclipsed: reduced to a neutral and reified media speech (far enough from the Utopian aspirations of the inventors of Esperanto or Basic English), which itself then becomes but one more idiolect among many. Modernist styles thereby become postmodernist codes. And that the stupendous proliferation of social codes today into professional and disciplinary jargons (but also into the badges of affirmation of ethnic, gender, race, religious, and class-factional adhesion) is also a political phenomenon, the problem of micropolitics sufficiently demonstrates. If the ideas of a ruling class were once the dominant (or hegemonic) ideology of bourgeois society, the advanced capitalist countries today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm. Faceless masters continue to inflect the economic strategies which constrain our existences, but they no longer need to impose their speech (or are henceforth unable to); and the postliteracy of the late capitalist world reflects not only the absence of any great collective project but also the unavailability of the older national language itself.

In this situation parody finds itself without a vocation; it has lived, and that strange new thing pastiche slowly comes to take its place. Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs: it is to parody what that other interesting and historically original modern thing, the practice of a kind of blank irony, is to what Wayne Booth calls the "stable ironies" of the eighteenth century.

It would therefore begin to seem that Adorno's prophetic diagnosis has been realized, albeit in a negative way: not Schönberg (the sterility of whose achieved system he already glimpsed) but Stravinsky is the true precursor of postmodern cultural production. For with the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style—what is as unique and unmistakable as your own fingerprints, as incomparable as your own body (the very source, for an early Roland Barthes, of stylistic invention and innovation)—the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the

past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture.

This situation evidently determines what the architecture historians call "historicism," namely, the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion, and in general what Henri Lefebvre has called the increasing primacy of the "neo." This omnipresence of pastiche is not incompatible with a certain humor, however, nor is it innocent of all passion: it is at the least compatible with addiction—with a whole historically original consumers' appetite for a world transformed into sheer images of itself and for pseudo-events and "spectacles" (the term of the situationists). It is for such objects that we may reserve Plato's conception of the "simulacrum," the identical copy for which no original has ever existed. Appropriately enough, the culture of the simulacrum comes to life in a society where exchange value has been generalized to the point at which the very memory of use value is effaced, a society of which Guy Debord has observed, in an extraordinary phrase, that in it "the image has become the final form of commodity reification" (*The Society of the Spectacle*).

The new spatial logic of the simulacrum can now be expected to have a momentous effect on what used to be historical time. The past is thereby itself modified: what was once, in the historical novel as Lukács defines it, the organic genealogy of the bourgeois collective project —what is still, for the redemptive historiography of an E. P. Thompson or of American "oral history," for the resurrection of the dead of anonymous and silenced generations, the retrospective dimension indispensable to any vital reorientation of our collective future—has meanwhile itself become a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum. Guy Debord's powerful slogan is now even more apt for the "prehistory" of a society bereft of all historicity, one whose own putative past is little more than a set of dusty spectacles. In faithful conformity to poststructuralist linguistic theory, the past as "referent" finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts.

Yet it should not be thought that this process is accompanied by indifference: on the contrary, the remarkable current intensification of an addiction to the photographic image is itself a tangible symptom of an omnipresent, omnivorous, and well-nigh libidinal historicism. As I have already observed, the architects use this (exceedingly polysemous) word for the complacent eclecticism of postmodern architecture, which

randomly and without principle but with gusto cannibalizes all the architectural styles of the past and combines them in overstimulating ensembles. Nostalgia does not strike one as an altogether satisfactory word for such fascination (particularly when one thinks of the pain of a properly modernist nostalgia with a past beyond all but aesthetic retrieval), yet it directs our attention to what is a culturally far more generalized manifestation of the process in commercial art and taste, namely the so-called nostalgia film (or what the French call *la mode rétro*).

Nostalgia films restructure the whole issue of pastiche and project it onto a collective and social level, where the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past is now refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the generation. The inaugural film of this new aesthetic discourse, George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (1973), set out to recapture, as so many films have attempted since, the henceforth mesmerizing lost reality of the Eisenhower era; and one tends to feel, that for Americans at least, the 1950s remain the privileged lost object of desire[7]—not merely the stability and prosperity of a pax Americana but also the first naïve innocence of the countercultural impulses of early rock and roll and youth gangs (Coppola's *Rumble Fish* will then be the contemporary dirge that laments their passing, itself, however, still contradictorily filmed in genuine nostalgia film style). With this initial breakthrough, other generational periods open up for aesthetic colonization: as witness the stylistic recuperation of the American and the Italian 1930s, in Polanski's *Chinatown* and Bertolucci's *Il Conformista*, respectively. More interesting, and more problematical, are the ultimate attempts, through this new discourse, to lay siege either to our own present and immediate past or to a more distant history that escapes individual existential memory.

Faced with these ultimate objects—our social, historical, and existential present, and the past as "referent"—the incompatibility of a postmodernist "nostalgia" art language with genuine historicity becomes dramatically apparent. The contradiction propels this mode, however, into complex and interesting new formal inventiveness; it being understood that the nostalgia film was never a matter of some old-fashioned "representation" of historical content, but instead approached the "past" through stylistic connotation, conveying "pastness" by the glossy qualities of the image, and "1930s-ness" or "1950s-ness" by the attributes of fashion (in that following the prescription of the Barthes of *Mythologies*, who saw connotation as the purveying of imaginary and stereotypical idealities: "Sinité," for example, as some Disney-EPCOT "concept" of China).

The insensible colonization of the present by the nostalgia mode can be observed in Lawrence Kasdan's elegant film *Body Heat*, a distant "affluent society" remake of James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity*, set in a contemporary Florida small town a few hours' drive from Miami. The word *remake* is, however, anachronistic to the degree to which our awareness of the preexistence of other versions (previous films of the novel as well as the novel itself) is now a constitutive and essential part of the film's structure: we are now, in other words, in "intertextuality" as a deliberate, built-in feature of the aesthetic effect and as the operator of a new connotation of "pastness" and pseudohistorical depth, in which the history of aesthetic styles displaces "real" history.

Yet from the outset a whole battery of aesthetic signs begin to distance the officially contemporary image from us in time: the art deco scripting of the credits, for example, serves at once to program the spectator to the appropriate "nostalgia" mode of reception (art deco quotation has much the same function in contemporary architecture, as in Toronto's remarkable Eaton Centre).[8] Meanwhile, a somewhat different play of connotations is activated by complex (but purely formal) allusions to the institution of the star system itself. The protagonist, William Hurt, is one of a new generation of film "stars" whose status is markedly distinct from that of the preceding generation of male superstars, such as Steve McQueen or Jack Nicholson (or even, more distantly, Brando), let alone of earlier moments in the evolution of the institution of the star. The immediately preceding generation projected their various roles through and by way of their well-known off-screen personalities, which often connoted rebellion and nonconformism. The latest generation of starring actors continues to assure the conventional functions of stardom (most notably sexuality) but in the utter absence of "personality" in the older sense, and with something of the anonymity of character acting (which in actors like Hurt reaches virtuoso proportions, yet of a very different kind than the virtuosity of the older Brando or Olivier). This "death of the subject" in the institution of the star now, however, opens up the possibility of a play of historical allusions to much older roles—in this case to those associated with Clark Gable—so that the very style of the acting can now also serve as a "connotator" of the past.

Finally, the setting has been strategically framed, with great ingenuity, to eschew most of the signals that normally convey the contemporaneity of the United States in its multinational era: the small-town setting allows the camera to elude the high-rise landscape of the 1970s and 1980s (even though a key episode in the narrative involves the fatal

destruction of older buildings by land speculators), while the object world of the present day—artifacts and appliances, whose styling would at once serve to date the image—is elaborately edited out. Everything in the film, therefore, conspires to blur its official contemporaneity and make it possible for the viewer to receive the narrative as though it were set in some eternal thirties, beyond real historical time. This approach to the present by way of the art language of the simulacrum, or of the pastiche of the stereotypical past, endows present reality and the openness of present history with the spell and distance of a glossy mirage. Yet this mesmerizing new aesthetic mode itself emerged as an elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way. It cannot therefore be said to produce this strange occultation of the present by its own formal power, but rather merely to demonstrate, through these inner contradictions, the enormity of a situation in which we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience.

As for "real history" itself—the traditional object, however it may be defined, of what used to be the historical novel—it will be more revealing now to turn back to that older form and medium and to read its postmodern fate in the work of one of the few serious and innovative leftist novelists at work in the United States today, whose books are nourished with history in the more traditional sense and seem, so far, to stake out successive generational moments in the "epic" of American history, between which they alternate. E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* gives itself officially as a panorama of the first two decades of the century (like *World's Fair*); his most recent novel, *Billy Bathgate*, like *Loon Lake* addresses the thirties and the Great Depression, while *The Book of Daniel* holds up before us, in painful juxtaposition, the two great moments of the Old Left and the New Left, of thirties and forties communism and the radicalism of the 1960s (even his early western may be said to fit into this scheme and to designate in a less articulated and formally self-conscious way the end of the frontier of the late nineteenth century).

The Book of Daniel is not the only one of these five major historical novels to establish an explicit narrative link between the reader's and the writer's present and the older historical reality that is the subject of the work; the astonishing last page of *Loon Lake*, which I will not disclose, also does this in a very different way; it is a matter of some interest to note that the first version of *Ragtime*[9] positions us explicitly in our own present, in the novelist's house in New Rochelle, New York, which at once becomes the scene of its own (imaginary) past in the

1900s. This detail has been suppressed from the published text, symbolically cutting its moorings and freeing the novel to float in some new world of past historical time whose relationship to us is problematical indeed. The authenticity of the gesture, however, may be measured by the evident existential fact of life that there no longer does seem to be any organic relationship between the American history we learn from schoolbooks and the lived experience of the current multinational, high-rise, stagflated city of the newspapers and of our own everyday life.

A crisis in historicity, however, inscribes itself symptomatically in several other curious formal features within this text. Its official subject is the transition from a pre-World War I radical and working-class politics (the great strikes) to the technological invention and new commodity production of the 1920s (the rise of Hollywood and of the image as commodity): the interpolated version of Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*, the strange, tragic episode of the black protagonist's revolt, may be thought of as a moment related to this process. That *Ragtime* has political content and even something like a political "meaning" seems in any case obvious and has been expertly articulated by Linda Hutcheon in terms of

> its three paralleled families: the Anglo-American establishment one and the marginal immigrant European and American black ones. The novel's action disperses the center of the first and moves the margins into the multiple "centers" of the narrative, in a formal allegory of the social demographics of urban America. In addition, there is an extended critique of American democratic ideals through the presentation of class conflict rooted in capitalist property and moneyed power. The black Coalhouse, the white Houdini, the immigrant Tateh are all working class, and because of this—not in spite of it—all can therefore work to create new aesthetic forms (ragtime, vaudeville, movies).[10]

But this does everything but the essential, lending the novel an admirable thematic coherence few readers can have experienced in parsing the lines of a verbal object held too close to the eyes to fall into these perspectives. Hutcheon is, of course, absolutely right, and this is what the novel would have meant had it not been a postmodern artifact. For one thing, the objects of representation, ostensibly narrative characters, are incommensurable and, as it were, of incomparable substances, like oil and water—Houdini being a *historical* figure, Tateh a *fictional* one, and Coalhouse an *intertextual* one—something very difficult for an interpretive comparison of this kind to register. Meanwhile, the theme attributed to the novel also demands a somewhat different kind of scrutiny, since it can be rephrased into a classic version of the Left's "experience of defeat" in the twentieth century, namely, the proposition that the depolitization of the workers' movement is attributable to the media or culture generally (what she here calls "new aesthetic forms"). This is, indeed, in my opinion, something like the elegiac backdrop, if not the meaning, of *Ragtime*, and perhaps of Doctorow's work in general; but then we need another way of describing the novel as something like an unconscious expression and associative exploration of this left doxa, this historical opinion or quasi-vision in the mind's eye of "objective spirit." What such a description would want to register is the paradox that a seemingly realistic novel like *Ragtime* is in reality a nonrepresentational work that combines fantasy signifiers from a variety of ideologemes in a kind of hologram.

My point, however, is not some hypothesis as to the thematic coherence of this decentered narrative but rather just the opposite, namely, the way in which the kind of reading this novel imposes makes it virtually impossible for us to reach and thematize those official "subjects" which float above the text but cannot be integrated into our reading of the sentences. In that sense, the novel not only resists interpretation, it is organized systematically and formally to short-circuit an older type of social and historical interpretation which it perpetually holds out and withdraws. When we remember that the theoretical critique and repudiation of interpretation as such is a fundamental component of poststructuralist theory, it is difficult not to conclude that Doctorow has somehow deliberately built this very tension, this very contradiction, into the flow of his sentences.

The book is crowded with real historical figures—from Teddy Roosevelt to Emma Goldman, from Harry K. Thaw and Stanford White to J. Pierpont Morgan and Henry Ford, not to mention the more central role of Houdini—who interact with a fictive family, simply designated as Father, Mother, Older Brother, and so forth. All historical novels, beginning with those of Sir Walter Scott himself, no doubt in one way or another involve a mobilization of previous historical knowledge generally acquired through the schoolbook history manuals devised for whatever legitimizing purpose by this or that national tradition—thereafter instituting a narrative dialectic between what we already "know" about The Pretender, say, and what he is then seen to be concretely in the pages of the novel. But Doctorow's procedure seems much more extreme

than this; and I would argue that the designation of both types of characters—historical names and capitalized family roles—operates powerfully and systematically to reify all these characters and to make it impossible for us to receive their representation without the prior interception of already acquired knowledge or doxa—something which lends the text an extraordinary sense of déjà vu and a peculiar familiarity one is tempted to associate with Freud's "return of the repressed" in "The Uncanny" rather than with any solid historiographic formation on the reader's part.

Meanwhile, the sentences in which all this is happening have their own specificity, allowing us more concretely to distinguish the moderns' elaboration of a personal style from this new kind of linguistic innovation, which is no longer personal at all but has its family kinship rather with what Barthes long ago called "white writing." In this particular novel, Doctorow has imposed upon himself a rigorous principle of selection in which only simple declarative sentences (predominantly mobilized by the verb "to be") are received. The effect is, however, not really one of the condescending simplification and symbolic carefulness of children's literature, but rather something more disturbing, the sense of some profound subterranean violence done to American English, which cannot, however, be detected empirically in any of the perfectly grammatical sentences with which this work is formed. Yet other more visible technical "innovations" may supply a clue to what is happening in the language of *Ragtime*: it is, for example, well known that the source of many of the characteristic effects of Camus's novel *The Stranger* can be traced back to that author's willful decision to substitute, throughout, the French tense of the *passé composé* for the other past tenses more normally employed in narration in that language.[11] I suggest that it is as if something of that sort were at work here: *as though* Doctorow had set out systematically to produce the effect or the equivalent, in his language, of a verbal past tense we do not possess in English, namely, the French preterite (or *passé simple*), whose "perfective" movement, as Émile Benveniste taught us, serves to separate events from the present of enunciation and to transform the stream of time and action into so many finished, complete, and isolated punctual event objects which find themselves sundered from any present situation (even that of the act of story telling or enunciation).

E. L. Doctorow is the epic poet of the disappearance of the American radical past, of the suppression of older traditions and moments of the American radical tradition: no one with left sympathies can read these

splendid novels without a poignant distress that is an authentic way of confronting our own current political dilemmas in the present. What is culturally interesting, however, is that he has had to convey this great theme formally (since the waning of the content is very precisely his subject) and, more than that, has had to elaborate his work by way of that very cultural logic of the postmodern which is itself the mark and symptom of his dilemma. *Loon Lake* much more obviously deploys the strategies of the pastiche (most notably in its reinvention of Dos Passos); but *Ragtime* remains the most peculiar and stunning monument to the aesthetic situation engendered by the disappearance of the historical referent. This historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only "represent" our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby at once becomes "pop history"). Cultural production is thereby driven back inside a mental space which is no longer that of the old monadic subject but rather that of some degraded collective "objective spirit": it can no longer gaze directly on some putative real world, at some reconstruction of a past history which was once itself a present; rather, as in Plato's cave, it must trace our mental images of that past upon its confining walls. If there is any realism left here, it is a "realism" that is meant to derive from the shock of grasping that confinement and of slowly becoming aware of a new and original historical situation in which we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach.

III

The crisis in historicity now dictates a return, in a new way, to the question of temporal organization in general in the postmodern force field, and indeed, to the problem of the form that time, temporality, and the syntagmatic will be able to take in a culture increasingly dominated by space and spatial logic. If, indeed, the subject has lost its capacity actively to extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions across the temporal manifold and to organize its past and future into coherent experience, it becomes difficult enough to see how the cultural productions of such a subject could result in anything but "heaps of fragments" and in a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory. These are, however, very precisely some of the privileged terms in which postmodernist cultural production has been analyzed (and even defended, by its own apologists). They are, however, still privative features; the

more substantive formulations bear such names as textuality, *écriture*, or schizophrenic writing, and it is to these that we must now briefly turn.

I have found Lacan's account of schizophrenia useful here not because I have any way of knowing whether it has clinical accuracy but chiefly because—as description rather than diagnosis—it seems to me to offer a suggestive aesthetic model.[12] I am obviously very far from thinking that any of the most significant postmodernist artists—Cage, Ashbery, Sollers, Robert Wilson, Ishmael Reed, Michael Snow, Warhol, or even Beckett himself—are schizophrenics in any clinical sense. Nor is the point some culture-and-personality diagnosis of our society and its art, as in psychologizing and moralizing culture critiques of the type of Christopher Lasch's influential *The Culture of Narcissism*, from which I am concerned to distance the spirit and the methodology of the present remarks: there are, one would think, far more damaging things to be said about our social system than are available through the use of psychological categories.

Very briefly, Lacan describes schizophrenia as a breakdown in the signifying chain, that is, the interlocking syntagmatic series of signifiers which constitutes an utterance or a meaning. I must omit the familial or more orthodox psychoanalytic background to this situation, which Lacan transcodes into language by describing the Oedipal rivalry in terms not so much of the biological individual who is your rival for the mother's attention but rather of what he calls the Name-of-the-Father, paternal authority now considered as a linguistic function.[13] His conception of the signifying chain essentially presupposes one of the basic principles (and one of the great discoveries) of Saussurean structuralism, namely, the proposition that meaning is not a one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified, between the materiality of language, between a word or a name, and its referent or concept. Meaning on the new view is generated by the movement from signifier to signifier. What we generally call the signified—the meaning or conceptual content of an utterance—is now rather to be seen as a meaning-effect, as that objective mirage of signification generated and projected by the relationship of signifiers among themselves. When that relationship breaks down, when the links of the signifying chain snap, then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers. The connection between this kind of linguistic malfunction and the psyche of the schizophrenic may then be grasped by way of a twofold proposition: first, that personal identity is itself the effect of a certain temporal unification of past and future with one's present; and, second, that such

active temporal unification is itself a function of language, or better still of the sentence, as it moves along its hermeneutic circle through time. If we are unable to unify the past, present, and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify the past, present, and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life. With the breakdown of the signifying chain, therefore, the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time. We will want to ask questions about the aesthetic or cultural results of such a situation in a moment; let us first see what it feels like:

> I remember very well the day it happened. We were staying in the country and I had gone for a walk alone as I did now and then. Suddenly, as I was passing the school, I heard a German song; the children were having a singing lesson. I stopped to listen, and at that instant a strange feeling came over me, a feeling hard to analyze but akin to something I was to know too well later—a disturbing sense of unreality. It seemed to me that I no longer recognized the school, it had become as large as a barracks; the singing children were prisoners, compelled to sing. It was as though the school and the children's song were set apart from the rest of the world. At the same time my eye encountered a field of wheat whose limits I could not see. The yellow vastness, dazzling in the sun, bound up with the song of the children imprisoned in the smooth stone school-barracks, filled me with such anxiety that I broke into sobs. I ran home to our garden and began to play "to make things seem as they usually were," that is, to return to reality. It was the first appearance of those elements which were always present in later sensations of unreality: illimitable vastness, brilliant light, and the gloss and smoothness of material things.[14]

In our present context, this experience suggests the following: first, the breakdown of temporality suddenly releases this present of time from all the activities and intentionalities that might focus it and make it a space of praxis; thereby isolated, that present suddenly engulfs the subject with undescribable vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming, which effectively dramatizes the power of the material—or better still, the literal—signifier in isolation. This present of the world or material signifier comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as

well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity.

What happens in textuality or schizophrenic art is strikingly illuminated by such clinical accounts, although in the cultural text, the isolated signifier is no longer an enigmatic state of the world or an incomprehensible yet mesmerizing fragment of language but rather something closer to a sentence in free-standing isolation. Think, for example, of the experience of John Cage's music, in which a cluster of material sounds (on the prepared piano, for example) is followed by a silence so intolerable that you cannot imagine another sonorous chord coming into existence and cannot imagine remembering the previous one well enough to make any connection with it if it does. Some of Beckett's narratives are also of this order, most notably *Watt*, where a primacy of the present sentence in time ruthlessly disintegrates the narrative fabric that attempts to reform around it. My example, however, will be a less somber one, a text by a younger San Francisco poet whose group or school—so-called Language Poetry or the New Sentence—seem to have adopted schizophrenic fragmentation as their fundamental aesthetic.

China

We live on the third world from the sun. Number three. Nobody tells us what to do.

The people who taught us to count were being very kind.

It's always time to leave.

If it rains, you either have your umbrella or you don't.

The wind blows your hat off.

The sun rises also.

I'd rather the stars didn't describe us to each other; I'd rather we do it for ourselves.

Run in front of your shadow.

A sister who points to the sky at least once a decade is a good sister.

The landscape is motorized.

The train takes you where it goes.

Bridges among water.

Folks straggling along vast stretches of concrete, heading into the plane.

Don't forget what your hat and shoes will look like when you are nowhere to be found.

Even the words floating in air make blue shadows.

If it tastes good we eat it.

The leaves are falling. Point things out.

Pick up the right things.

Hey guess what? What? *I've learned how to talk.* Great.

The person whose head was incomplete burst into tears.

As it fell, what could the doll do? Nothing.

Go to sleep.

You look great in shorts. And the flag looks great too.

Everyone enjoyed the explosions.

Time to wake up.

But better get used to dreams.

—*Bob Perelman*[15]

Many things could be said about this interesting exercise in discontinuities; not the least paradoxical is the reemergence here across these disjoined sentences of some more unified global meaning. Indeed, insofar as this is in some curious and secret way a political poem, it does seem to capture something of the excitement of the immense, unfinished social experiment of the New China—unparalleled in world history—the unexpected emergence, between the two superpowers, of "number three," the freshness of a whole new object world produced by human beings in some new control over their collective destiny; the signal event, above all, of a collectivity which has become a new "subject of history" and which, after the long subjection of feudalism and imperialism, again speaks in its own voice, for itself, as though for the first time.

But I mainly wanted to show the way in which what I have been calling schizophrenic disjunction or *écriture*, when it becomes generalized as a cultural style, ceases to entertain a necessary relationship to the morbid content we associate with terms like schizophrenia and becomes available for more joyous intensities, for precisely that euphoria which we saw displacing the older affects of anxiety and alienation.

Consider, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre's account of a similar tendency in Flaubert:

> His sentence [Sartre tells us about Flaubert] closes in on the object, seizes it, immobilizes it, and breaks its back, wraps itself around it, changes into stone and petrifies its object along with itself. It is blind and deaf, bloodless, not a breath of life; a deep silence separates it from the sentence which follows; it falls into the void, eternally, and drags its prey down into that infinite fall. Any reality, once described, is struck off the inventory.[16]

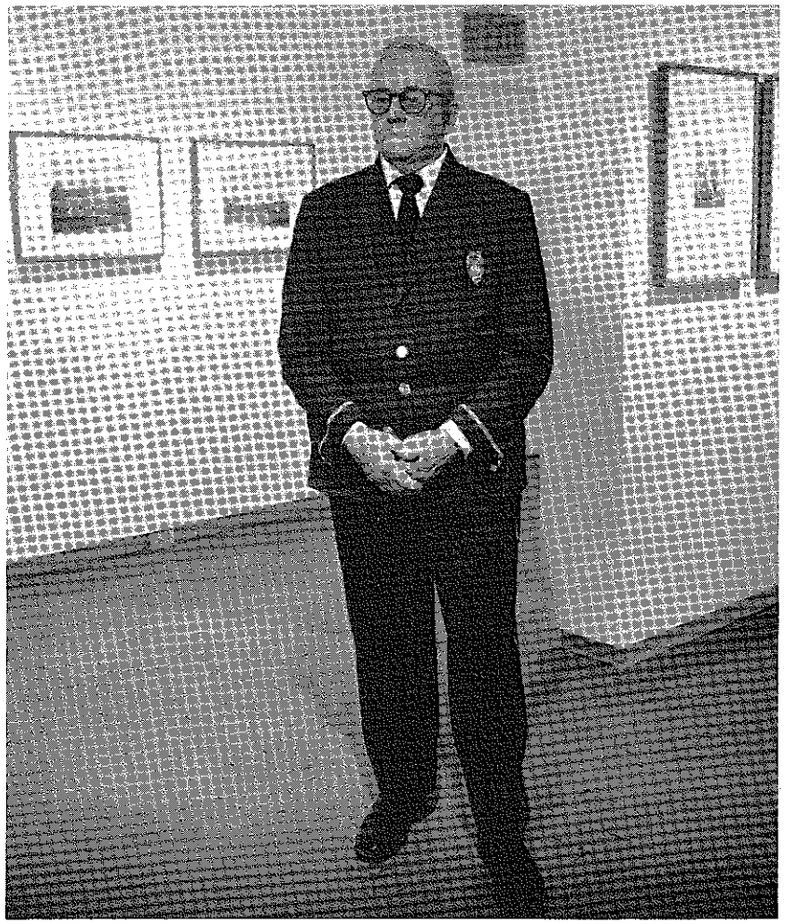
I am tempted to see this reading as a kind of optical illusion (or photographic enlargement) of an unwittingly genealogical type, in which certain latent or subordinate, properly postmodernist, features of Flaubert's style are anachronistically foregrounded. However, it affords an interesting lesson in periodization and in the dialectical restructuring of cultural dominants and subordinates. For these features, in Flaubert, were symptoms and strategies in that whole posthumous life and resentment of praxis which is denounced (with increasing sympathy) throughout the three thousand pages of Sartre's *Family Idiot*. When such features become themselves the cultural norm, they shed all such forms of negative affect and become available for other, more decorative uses.

But we have not yet fully exhausted the structural secrets of Perelman's poem, which turns out to have little enough to do with that referent called China. The author has, in fact, related how, strolling through Chinatown, he came across a book of photographs whose idiogrammatic captions remained a dead letter to him (or perhaps, one should say, a material signifier). The sentences of the poem in question are then Perelman's own captions to those pictures, their referents another image, another absent text; and the unity of the poem is no longer to be found within its language but outside itself, in the bound unity of another, absent book. There is here a striking parallel to the dynamics of so-called photorealism, which looked like a return to representation and figuration after the long hegemony of the aesthetics of abstraction until it became clear that their objects were not to be found in the "real world" either but were themselves photographs of that real world, this last now transformed into images, of which the "realism" of the photorealist painting is now the simulacrum.

This account of schizophrenia and temporal organization might, however, have been formulated in a different way, which brings us back to Heidegger's notion of a gap or rift between Earth and World, albeit in a fashion that is sharply incompatible with the tone and high seriousness

of his own philosophy. I would like to characterize the postmodernist experience of form with what will seem, I hope, a paradoxical slogan: namely, the proposition that "difference relates." Our own recent criticism, from Macherey on, has been concerned to stress the heterogeneity and profound discontinuities of the work of art, no longer unified or organic, but now a virtual grab bag or lumber room of disjoined subsystems and random raw materials and impulses of all kinds. The former work of art, in other words, has now turned out to be a text, whose reading proceeds by differentiation rather than by unification. Theories of difference, however, have tended to stress disjunction to the point at which the materials of the text, including its words and sentences, tend to fall apart into random and inert passivity, into a set of elements which entertain separations from one another.

In the most interesting postmodernist works, however, one can detect a more positive conception of relationship, which restores its proper tension to the notion of difference itself. This new mode of relationship through difference may sometimes be an achieved new and original way of thinking and perceiving; more often it takes the form of an impossible imperative to achieve that new mutation in what can perhaps no longer be called consciousness. I believe that the most striking emblem of this new mode of thinking relationships can be found in the work of Nam June Paik, whose stacked or scattered television screens, positioned at intervals within lush vegetation, or winking down at us from a ceiling of strange new video stars, recapitulate over and over again prearranged sequences or loops of images which return at dyssynchronous moments on the various screens. The older aesthetic is then practiced by viewers, who, bewildered by this discontinuous variety, decided to concentrate on a single screen, as though the relatively worthless image sequence to be followed there had some organic value in its own right. The postmodernist viewer, however, is called upon to do the impossible, namely, to see all the screens at once, in their radical and random difference; such a viewer is asked to follow the evolutionary mutation of David Bowie in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (who watches fifty-seven television screens simultaneously) and to rise somehow to a level at which the vivid perception of radical difference is in and of itself a new mode of grasping what used to be called relationship: something for which the word *collage* is still only a very feeble name.



Duane Hanson, "Museum Guard"

IV

Now we need to complete this exploratory account of postmodernist space and time with a final analysis of that euphoria or those intensities which seem so often to characterize the newer cultural experience. Let us reemphasize the enormity of a transition which leaves behind it the desolation of Hopper's buildings or the stark Midwest syntax of Sheeler's forms, replacing them with the extraordinary surfaces of the photorealist cityscape, where even the automobile wrecks gleam with some new hal-

Duane Hanson, "Tourist II"

lucinatory splendor. The exhilaration of these new surfaces is all the more paradoxical in that their essential content—the city itself—has deteriorated or disintegrated to a degree surely still inconceivable in the early years of the twentieth century, let alone in the previous era. How urban squalor can be a delight to the eyes when expressed in commodification, and how an unparalleled quantum leap in the alienation of daily life in the city can now be experienced in the form of a strange new hallucinatory exhilaration—these are some of the questions that confront us in this moment of our inquiry. Nor should the

human figure be exempted from investigation, although it seems clear that for the newer aesthetic the representation of space itself has come to be felt as incompatible with the representation of the body: a kind of aesthetic division of labor far more pronounced than in any of the earlier generic conceptions of landscape, and a most ominous symptom indeed. The privileged space of the newer art is radically antianthropomorphic, as in the empty bathrooms of Doug Bond's work. The ultimate contemporary fetishization of the human body, however, takes a very different direction in the statues of Duane Hanson: what I have already called the simulacrum, whose peculiar function lies in what Sartre would have called the *derealization* of the whole surrounding world of everyday reality. Your moment of doubt and hesitation as to the breath and warmth of these polyester figures, in other words, tends to return upon the real human beings moving about you in the museum and to transform them also for the briefest instant into so many dead and flesh-colored simulacra in their own right. The world thereby momentarily loses its depth and threatens to become a glossy skin, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density. But is this now a terrifying or an exhilarating experience?

It has proved fruitful to think of such experiences in terms of what Susan Sontag, in an influential statement, isolated as "camp." I propose a somewhat different cross-light on it, drawing on the equally fashionable current theme of the "sublime," as it has been rediscovered in the works of Edmund Burke and Kant; or perhaps one might want to yoke the two notions together in the form of something like a camp or "hysterical" sublime. The sublime was for Burke an experience bordering on terror, the fitful glimpse, in astonishment, stupor, and awe, of what was so enormous as to crush human life altogether: a description then refined by Kant to include the question of representation itself, so that the object of the sublime becomes not only a matter of sheer power and of the physical incommensurability of the human organism with Nature but also of the limits of figuration and the incapacity of the human mind to give representation to such enormous forces. Such forces Burke, in his historical moment at the dawn of the modern bourgeois state, was only able to conceptualize in terms of the divine, while even Heidegger continues to entertain a phantasmatic relationship with some organic precapitalist peasant landscape and village society, which is the final form of the image of Nature in our own time.

Today, however, it may be possible to think all this in a different way, at the moment of a radical eclipse of Nature itself: Heidegger's "field

path" is, after all, irredeemably and irrevocably destroyed by late capital, by the green revolution, by neocolonialism and the megalopolis, which runs its superhighways over the older fields and vacant lots and turns Heidegger's "house of being" into condominiums, if not the most miserable unheated, rat-infested tenement buildings. The *other* of our society is in that sense no longer Nature at all, as it was in precapitalist societies, but something else which we must now identify.

I am anxious that this other thing not overhastily be grasped as technology per se, since I will want to show that technology is here itself a figure for something else. Yet technology may well serve as adequate shorthand to designate that enormous properly human and anti-natural power of dead human labor stored up in our machinery—an alienated power, what Sartre calls the counterfinality of the practico-inert, which turns back on and against us in unrecognizable forms and seems to constitute the massive dystopian horizon of our collective as well as our individual praxis.

Technological development is however on the Marxist view the result of the development of capital rather than some ultimately determining instance in its own right. It will therefore be appropriate to distinguish several generations of machine power, several stages of technological revolution within capital itself. I here follow Ernest Mandel, who outlines three such fundamental breaks or quantum leaps in the evolution of machinery under capital:

> The fundamental revolutions in power technology—the technology of the production of motive machines by machines—thus appears as the determinant moment in revolutions of technology as a whole. Machine production of steam-driven motors since 1848; machine production of electric and combustion motors since the 90s of the 19th century; machine production of electronic and nuclear-powered apparatuses since the 40s of the 20th century —these are the three general revolutions in technology engendered by the capitalist mode of production since the "original" industrial revolution of the later 18th century.[17]

This periodization underscores the general thesis of Mandel's book *Late Capitalism*; namely, that there have been three fundamental moments in capitalism, each one marking a dialectical expansion over the previous stage. These are market capitalism, the monopoly stage or the stage of imperialism, and our own, wrongly called postindustrial, but what might better be termed multinational, capital. I have already pointed out that

Mandel's intervention in the postindustrial debate involves the proposition that late or multinational or consumer capitalism, far from being inconsistent with Marx's great nineteenth-century analysis, constitutes, on the contrary, the purest form of capital yet to have emerged, a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas. This purer capitalism of our own time thus eliminates the enclaves of precapitalist organization it had hitherto tolerated and exploited in a tributary way. One is tempted to speak in this connection of a new and historically original penetration and colonization of Nature and the Unconscious: that is, the destruction of precapitalist Third World agriculture by the Green Revolution, and the rise of the media and the advertising industry. At any rate, it will also have been clear that my own cultural periodization of the stages of realism, modernism, and postmodernism is both inspired and confirmed by Mandel's tripartite scheme.

We may therefore speak of our own period as the Third Machine Age; and it is at this point that we must reintroduce the problem of aesthetic representation already explicitly developed in Kant's earlier analysis of the sublime, since it would seem only logical that the relationship to and the representation of the machine could be expected to shift dialectically with each of these qualitatively different stages of technological development.

It is appropriate to recall the excitement of machinery in the moment of capital preceding our own, the exhilaration of futurism, most notably, and of Marinetti's celebration of the machine gun and the motorcar. These are still visible emblems, sculptural nodes of energy which give tangibility and figuration to the motive energies of that earlier moment of modernization. The prestige of these great streamlined shapes can be measured by their metaphorical presence in Le Corbusier's buildings, vast Utopian structures which ride like so many gigantic steamship liners upon the urban scenery of an older fallen earth.[18] Machinery exerts another kind of fascination in the works of artists like Picabia and Duchamp, whom we have no time to consider here; but let me mention, for completeness' sake, the ways in which revolutionary or communist artists of the 1930s also sought to reappropriate this excitement of machine energy for a Promethean reconstruction of human society as a whole, as in Fernand Léger and Diego Rivera.

It is immediately obvious that the technology of our own moment no longer possesses this same capacity for representation: not the turbine, nor even Sheeler's grain elevators or smokestacks, not the baroque elaboration of pipes and conveyor belts, nor even the streamlined profile of

the railroad train—all vehicles of speed still concentrated at rest—but rather the computer, whose outer shell has no emblematic or visual power, or even the casings of the various media themselves, as with that home appliance called television which articulates nothing but rather implodes, carrying its flattened image surface within itself.

Such machines are indeed machines of reproduction rather than of production, and they make very different demands on our capacity for aesthetic representation than did the relatively mimetic idolatry of the older machinery of the futurist moment, of some older speed-and-energy sculpture. Here we have less to do with kinetic energy than with all kinds of new reproductive processes; and in the weaker productions of postmodernism the aesthetic embodiment of such processes often tends to slip back more comfortably into a mere thematic representation of content—into narratives which are *about* the processes of reproduction and include movie cameras, video, tape recorders, the whole technology of the production and reproduction of the simulacrum. (The shift from Antonioni's modernist *Blow-Up* to DePalma's postmodernist *Blow-out* is here paradigmatic.) When Japanese architects, for example, model a building on the decorative imitation of stacks of cassettes, then the solution is at best thematic and allusive, although often humorous.

Yet something else does tend to emerge in the most energetic postmodernist texts, and this is the sense that beyond all thematics or content the work seems somehow to tap the networks of the reproductive process and thereby to afford us some glimpse into a postmodern or technological sublime, whose power or authenticity is documented by the success of such works in evoking a whole new postmodern space in emergence around us. Architecture therefore remains in this sense the privileged aesthetic language; and the distorting and fragmenting reflections of one enormous glass surface to the other can be taken as paradigmatic of the central role of process and reproduction in postmodernist culture.

As I have said, however, I want to avoid the implication that technology is in any way the "ultimately determining instance" either of our present-day social life or of our cultural production: such a thesis is, of course, ultimately at one with the post-Marxist notion of a postindustrial society. Rather, I want to suggest that our faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of a present-day multinational capitalism. The technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating not so much in its own right but because it seems to offer some privileged

representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself. This is a figural process presently best observed in a whole mode of contemporary entertainment literature—one is tempted to characterize it as "high-tech paranoia"—in which the circuits and networks of some putative global computer hookup are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind. Yet conspiracy theory (and its garish narrative manifestations) must be seen as a degraded attempt—through the figuration of advanced technology—to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system. It is in terms of that enormous and threatening, yet only dimly perceivable, other reality of economic and social institutions that, in my opinion, the postmodern sublime can alone be adequately theorized.

Such narratives, which first tried to find expression through the generic structure of the spy novel, have only recently crystallized in a new type of science fiction, called *cyberpunk*, which is fully as much an expression of transnational corporate realities as it is of global paranoia itself: William Gibson's representational innovations, indeed, mark his work as an exceptional literary realization within a predominantly visual or aural postmodern production.

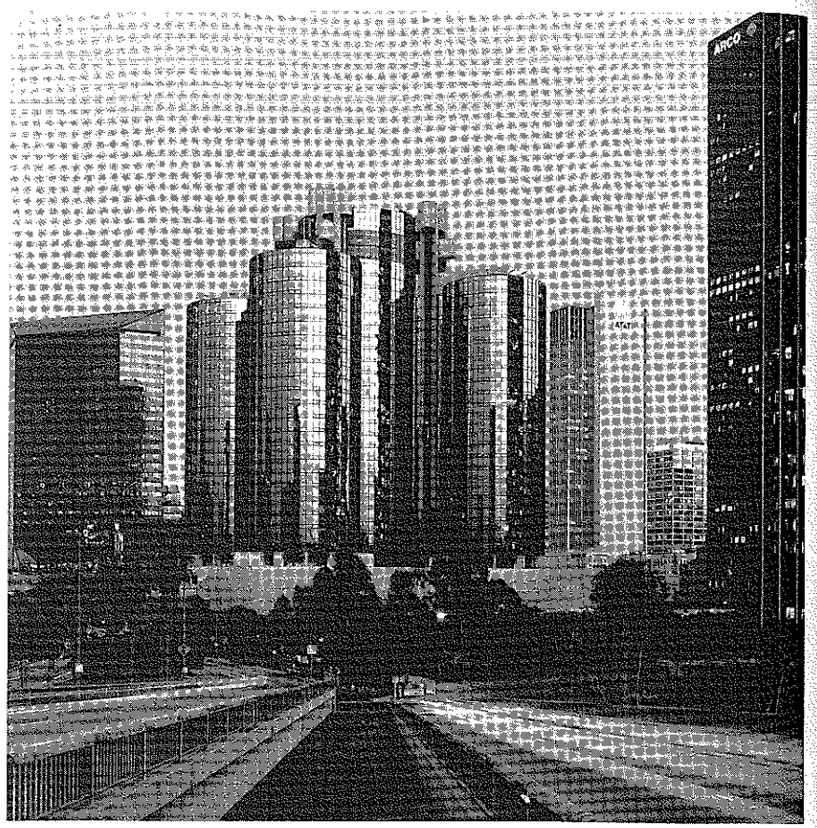
V

Now, before concluding, I want to sketch an analysis of a full-blown postmodern building—a work which is in many ways uncharacteristic of that postmodern architecture whose principal proponents are Robert Venturi, Charles Moore, Michael Graves, and, more recently, Frank Gehry, but which to my mind offers some very striking lessons about the originality of postmodernist space. Let me amplify the figure which has run through the preceding remarks and make it even more explicit: I am proposing the notion that we are here in the presence of something like a mutation in built space itself. My implication is that we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with that evolution; there has been a mutation in the object unaccompanied as yet by any equivalent mutation in the subject. We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace, as I will call it, in part because our perceptual habits were formed in that older

kind of space I have called the space of high modernism. The newer architecture therefore—like many of the other cultural products I have evoked in the preceding remarks—stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions.

The building whose features I will very rapidly enumerate is the Westin Bonaventure Hotel, built in the new Los Angeles downtown by the architect and developer John Portman, whose other works include the various Hyatt Regencies, the Peachtree Center in Atlanta, and the Renaissance Center in Detroit. I have mentioned the populist aspect of the rhetorical defense of postmodernism against the elite (and Utopian) austerities of the great architectural modernisms: it is generally affirmed, in other words, that these newer buildings are popular works, on the one hand, and that they respect the vernacular of the American city fabric, on the other; that is to say, they no longer attempt, as did the masterworks and monuments of high modernism, to insert a different, a distinct, an elevated, a new Utopian language into the tawdry and commercial sign system of the surrounding city, but rather they seek to speak that very language, using its lexicon and syntax as that has been emblematically "learned from Las Vegas."

On the first of these counts Portman's Bonaventure fully confirms the claim: it is a popular building, visited with enthusiasm by locals and tourists alike (although Portman's other buildings are even more successful in this respect). The populist insertion into the city fabric is, however, another matter, and it is with this that we will begin. There are three entrances to the Bonaventure, one from Figueroa and the other two by way of elevated gardens on the other side of the hotel, which is built into the remaining slope of the former Bunker Hill. None of these is anything like the old hotel marquee, or the monumental porte cochere with which the sumptuous buildings of yesteryear were wont to stage your passage from city street to the interior. The entryways of the Bonaventure are, as it were, lateral and rather backdoor affairs: the gardens in the back admit you to the sixth floor of the towers, and even there you must walk down one flight to find the elevator by which you gain access to the lobby. Meanwhile, what one is still tempted to think of as the front entry, on Figueroa, admits you, baggage and all, onto the second-story shopping balcony, from which you must take an escalator down to the main registration desk. What I first want to suggest about these curiously unmarked ways in is that they seem to have been imposed by some new category of closure governing the inner space of the hotel



The Westin Bonaventure (Portman)

itself (and this over and above the material constraints under which Portman had to work). I believe that, with a certain number of other characteristic postmodern buildings, such as the Beaubourg in Paris or the Eaton Centre in Toronto, the Bonaventure aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city; to this new total space, meanwhile, corresponds a new collective practice, a new mode in which individuals move and congregate, something like the practice of a new and historically original kind of hypercrowd. In this sense, then, ideally the minicity of Portman's Bonaventure ought not to have entrances at all, since the entryway is always the seam that links the building to the rest of the city that surrounds it: for it does not wish to be a part of the city but rather its equivalent and replacement or substitute. That

Le Corbusier, "Unite d'Habitation"

is obviously not possible, whence the downplaying of the entrance to its bare minimum.[19] But this disjunction from the surrounding city is different from that of the monuments of the International Style, in which the act of disjunction was violent, visible, and had a very real symbolic significance—as in Le Corbusier's great *pilotis*, whose gesture radically separates the new Utopian space of the modern from the degraded and fallen city fabric which it thereby explicitly repudiates (although the gamble of the modern was that this new Utopian space, in the virulence of its novum, would fan out and eventually transform its surroundings by the very power of its new spatial language). The Bonaventure, however, is content to "let the fallen city fabric continue to be in its being" (to parody Heidegger); no further effects, no larger

protopolitical Utopian transformation, is either expected or desired.

This diagnosis is confirmed by the great reflective glass skin of the Bonaventure, whose function I will now interpret rather differently than I did a moment ago when I saw the phenomenon of reflection generally as developing a thematics of reproductive technology (the two readings are, however, not incompatible). Now one would want rather to stress the way in which the glass skin repels the city outside, a repulsion for which we have analogies in those reflector sunglasses which make it impossible for your interlocutor to see your own eyes and thereby achieve a certain aggressivity toward and power over the Other. In a similar way, the glass skin achieves a peculiar and placeless dissociation of the Bonaventure from its neighborhood: it is not even an exterior, inasmuch as when you seek to look at the hotel's outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it.

Now consider the escalators and elevators. Given their very real pleasures in Portman, particularly the latter, which the artist has termed "gigantic kinetic sculptures" and which certainly account for much of the spectacle and excitement of the hotel interior—particularly in the Hyatts, where like great Japanese lanterns or gondolas they ceaselessly rise and fall—given such a deliberate marking and foregrounding in their own right, I believe one has to see such "people movers" (Portman's own term, adapted from Disney) as somewhat more significant than mere functions and engineering components. We know in any case that recent architectural theory has begun to borrow from narrative analysis in other fields and to attempt to see our physical trajectories through such buildings as virtual narratives or stories, as dynamic paths and narrative paradigms which we as visitors are asked to fulfill and to complete with our own bodies and movements. In the Bonaventure, however, we find a dialectical heightening of this process: it seems to me that the escalators and elevators here henceforth replace movement but also, and above all, designate themselves as new reflexive signs and emblems of movement proper (something which will become evident when we come to the question of what remains of older forms of movement in this building, most notably walking itself). Here the narrative stroll has been underscored, symbolized, reified, and replaced by a transportation machine which becomes the allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own: and this is a dialectical intensification of the autoreferentiality of all modern culture, which tends to turn upon itself and designate its own cultural production as its content.

I am more at a loss when it comes to conveying the thing itself, the

experience of space you undergo when you step off such allegorical devices into the lobby or atrium, with its great central column surrounded by a miniature lake, the whole positioned between the four symmetrical residential towers with their elevators, and surrounded by rising balconies capped by a kind of greenhouse roof at the sixth level. I am tempted to say that such space makes it impossible for us to use the language of volume or volumes any longer, since these are impossible to seize. Hanging streamers indeed suffuse this empty space in such a way as to distract systematically and deliberately from whatever form it might be supposed to have, while a constant busyness gives the feeling that emptiness is here absolutely packed, that it is an element within which you yourself are immersed, without any of that distance that formerly enabled the perception of perspective or volume. You are in this hyperspace up to your eyes and your body; and if it seemed before that that suppression of depth I spoke of in postmodern painting or literature would necessarily be difficult to achieve in architecture itself, perhaps this bewildering immersion may now serve as the formal equivalent in the new medium.

Yet escalator and elevator are also in this context dialectical opposites; and we may suggest that the glorious movement of the elevator gondola is also a dialectical compensation for this filled space of the atrium—it gives us the chance at a radically different, but complementary, spatial experience: that of rapidly shooting up through the ceiling and outside, along one of the four symmetrical towers, with the referent, Los Angeles itself, spread out breathtakingly and even alarmingly before us. But even this vertical movement is contained: the elevator lifts you to one of those revolving cocktail lounges, in which, seated, you are again passively rotated about and offered a contemplative spectacle of the city itself, now transformed into its own images by the glass windows through which you view it.

We may conclude all this by returning to the central space of the lobby itself (with the passing observation that the hotel rooms are visibly marginalized: the corridors in the residential sections are low-ceilinged and dark, most depressingly functional, while one understands that the rooms are in the worst of taste). The descent is dramatic enough, plummeting back down through the roof to splash down in the lake. What happens when you get there is something else, which can only be characterized as milling confusion, something like the vengeance this space takes on those who still seek to walk through it. Given the absolute symmetry of the four towers, it is quite impossible to get your bearings in this lobby; recently, color coding and directional signals have

been added in a pitiful and revealing, rather desperate, attempt to restore the coordinates of an older space. I will take as the most dramatic practical result of this spatial mutation the notorious dilemma of the shopkeepers on the various balconies: it has been obvious since the opening of the hotel in 1977 that nobody could ever find any of these stores, and even if you once located the appropriate boutique, you would be most unlikely to be as fortunate a second time; as a consequence, the commercial tenants are in despair and all the merchandise is marked down to bargain prices. When you recall that Portman is a businessman as well as an architect and a millionaire developer, an artist who is at one and the same time a capitalist in his own right, one cannot but feel that here too something of a "return of the repressed" is involved.

So I come finally to my principal point here, that this latest mutation in space—postmodern hyperspace—has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. It may now be suggested that this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment—which is to the initial bewilderment of the older modernism as the velocities of spacecraft to those of the automobile—can itself stand as the symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects.

But as I am anxious that Portman's space not be perceived as something either exceptional or seemingly marginalized and leisure-specialized on the order of Disneyland, I will conclude by juxtaposing this complacent and entertaining (although bewildering) leisure-time space with its analogue in a very different area, namely, the space of postmodern warfare, in particular as Michael Herr evokes it in *Dispatches*, his great book on the experience of Vietnam. The extraordinary linguistic innovations of this work may still be considered postmodern, in the eclectic way in which its language impersonally fuses a whole range of contemporary collective idiolects, most notably rock language and black language: but the fusion is dictated by problems of content. This first terrible postmodernist war cannot be told in any of the traditional paradigms of the war novel or movie—indeed, that breakdown of all previous narrative paradigms is, along with the breakdown of any shared language through which a veteran might convey such experience, among the principle subjects of the book and may be said to open up the place

of a whole new reflexivity. Benjamin's account of Baudelaire, and of the emergence of modernism from a new experience of city technology which transcends all the older habits of bodily perception, is both singularly relevant and singularly antiquated in the light of this new and virtually unimaginable quantum leap in technological alienation:

> He was a moving-target-survivor subscriber, a true child of the war, because except for the rare times when you were pinned or stranded the system was geared to keep you mobile, if that was what you thought you wanted. As a technique for staying alive it seemed to make as much sense as anything, given naturally that you were there to begin with and wanted to see it close; it started out sound and straight but it formed a cone as it progressed, because the more you moved the more you saw, the more you saw the more besides death and mutilation you risked, and the more you risked of that the more you would have to let go of one day as a "survivor." Some of us moved around the war like crazy people until we couldn't see which way the run was taking us anymore, only the war all over its surface with occasional, unexpected penetration. As long as we could have choppers like taxis it took real exhaustion or depression near shock or a dozen pipes of opium to keep us even apparently quiet, we'd still be running around inside our skins like something was after us, ha ha, La Vida Loca. In the months after I got back the hundreds of helicopters I'd flown in began to draw together until they'd formed a collective meta-chopper, and in my mind it was the sexiest thing going; saver-destroyer, provider-waster, right hand–left hand, nimble, fluent, canny and human; hot steel, grease, jungle-saturated canvas webbing, sweat cooling and warming up again, cassette rock and roll in one ear and door-gun fire in the other, fuel, heat, vitality and death, death itself, hardly an intruder.[20]

In this new machine, which does not, like the older modernist machinery of the locomotive or the airplane, represent motion, but which can only be represented *in motion*, something of the mystery of the new postmodernist space is concentrated.

VI

The conception of postmodernism outlined here is a historical rather than a merely stylistic one. I cannot stress too greatly the radical distinction between a view for which the postmodern is one (optional)

style among many others available and one which seeks to grasp it as the cultural dominant of the logic of late capitalism: the two approaches in fact generate two very different ways of conceptualizing the phenomenon as a whole: on the one hand, moral judgments (about which it is indifferent whether they are positive or negative), and, on the other, a genuinely dialectical attempt to think our present of time in History.

Of some positive moral evaluation of postmodernism little needs to be said: the complacent (yet delirious) camp-following celebration of this aesthetic new world (including its social and economic dimension, greeted with equal enthusiasm under the slogan of "postindustrial society") is surely unacceptable, although it may be somewhat less obvious that current fantasies about the salvational nature of high technology, from chips to robots—fantasies entertained not only by both left and right governments in distress but also by many intellectuals—are also essentially of a piece with more vulgar apologias for postmodernism.

But in that case it is only consequent to reject moralizing condemnations of the postmodern and of its essential triviality when juxtaposed against the Utopian "high seriousness" of the great modernisms: judgments one finds both on the Left and on the radical Right. And no doubt the logic of the simulacrum, with its transformation of older realities into television images, does more than merely replicate the logic of late capitalism; it reinforces and intensifies it. Meanwhile, for political groups which seek actively to intervene in history and to modify its otherwise passive momentum (whether with a view toward channeling it into a socialist transformation of society or diverting it into the regressive reestablishment of some simpler fantasy past), there cannot but be much that is deplorable and reprehensible in a cultural form of image addiction which, by transforming the past into visual mirages, stereotypes, or texts, effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project, thereby abandoning the thinking of future change to fantasies of sheer catastrophe and inexplicable cataclysm, from visions of "terrorism" on the social level to those of cancer on the personal. Yet if postmodernism is a historical phenomenon, then the attempt to conceptualize it in terms of moral or moralizing judgments must finally be identified as a category mistake. All of which becomes more obvious when we interrogate the position of the cultural critic and moralist; the latter, along with all the rest of us, is now so deeply immersed in postmodernist space, so deeply suffused and infected by its new cultural categories, that the luxury of the old-fashioned ideological critique, the indignant moral denunciation of the other, becomes unavailable.

The distinction I am proposing here knows one canonical form in Hegel's differentiation of the thinking of individual morality or moralizing (*Moralität*) from that whole very different realm of collective social values and practices (*Sittlichkeit*).[21] But it finds its definitive form in Marx's demonstration of the materialist dialectic, most notably in those classic pages of the *Manifesto* which teach the hard lesson of some more genuinely dialectical way to think historical development and change. The topic of the lesson is, of course, the historical development of capitalism itself and the deployment of a specific bourgeois culture. In a well-known passage Marx powerfully urges us to do the impossible, namely, to think this development positively *and* negatively all at once; to achieve, in other words, a type of thinking that would be capable of grasping the demonstrably baleful features of capitalism along with its extraordinary and liberating dynamism simultaneously within a single thought, and without attenuating any of the force of either judgment. We are somehow to lift our minds to a point at which it is possible to understand that capitalism is at one and the same time the best thing that has ever happened to the human race, and the worst. The lapse from this austere dialectical imperative into the more comfortable stance of the taking of moral positions is inveterate and all too human: still, the urgency of the subject demands that we make at least some effort to think the cultural evolution of late capitalism dialectically, as catastrophe and progress all together.

Such an effort suggests two immediate questions, with which we will conclude these reflections. Can we in fact identify some "moment of truth" within the more evident "moments of falsehood" of postmodern culture? And, even if we can do so, is there not something ultimately paralyzing in the dialectical view of historical development proposed above; does it not tend to demobilize us and to surrender us to passivity and helplessness by systematically obliterating possibilities of action under the impenetrable fog of historical inevitability? It is appropriate to discuss these two (related) issues in terms of current possibilities for some effective contemporary cultural politics and for the construction of a genuine political culture.

To focus the problem in this way is, of course, immediately to raise the more genuine issue of the fate of culture generally, and of the function of culture specifically, as one social level or instance, in the postmodern era. Everything in the previous discussion suggests that what we have been calling postmodernism is inseparable from, and unthinkable without the hypothesis of, some fundamental mutation of the sphere

of culture in the world of late capitalism, which includes a momentous modification of its social function. Older discussions of the space, function, or sphere of culture (mostly notably Herbert Marcuse's classic essay "The Affirmative Character of Culture") have insisted on what a different language would call the "semiautonomy" of the cultural realm: its ghostly, yet Utopian, existence, for good or ill, above the practical world of the existent, whose mirror image it throws back in forms which vary from the legitimations of flattering resemblance to the contestatory indictments of critical satire or Utopian pain.

What we must now ask ourselves is whether it is not precisely this semiautonomy of the cultural sphere which has been destroyed by the logic of late capitalism. Yet to argue that culture is today no longer endowed with the relative autonomy it once enjoyed as one level among others in earlier moments of capitalism (let alone in precapitalist societies) is not necessarily to imply its disappearance or extinction. Quite the contrary; we must go on to affirm that the dissolution of an autonomous sphere of culture is rather to be imagined in terms of an explosion: a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life—from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself—can be said to have become "cultural" in some original and yet untheorized sense. This proposition is, however, substantively quite consistent with the previous diagnosis of a society of the image or the simulacrum and a transformation of the "real" into so many pseudoevents.

It also suggests that some of our most cherished and time-honored radical conceptions about the nature of cultural politics may thereby find themselves outmoded. However distinct those conceptions—which range from slogans of negativity, opposition, and subversion to critique and reflexivity—may have been, they all shared a single, fundamentally spatial, presupposition, which may be resumed in the equally time-honored formula of "critical distance." No theory of cultural politics current on the Left today has been able to do without one notion or another of a certain minimal aesthetic distance, of the possibility of the positioning of the cultural act outside the massive Being of capital, from which to assault this last. What the burden of our preceding demonstration suggests, however, is that distance in general (including "critical distance" in particular) has very precisely been abolished in the new space of postmodernism. We are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiation; meanwhile, it has already been observed how the prodigious new expansion of multinational capital ends up penetrating and colonizing those very precapitalist enclaves (Nature and the Unconscious) which offered extraterritorial and Archimedean footholds for critical effectivity. The shorthand language of co-optation is for this reason omnipresent on the left, but would now seem to offer a most inadequate theoretical basis for understanding a situation in which we all, in one way or another, dimly feel that not only punctual and local countercultural forms of cultural resistance and guerrilla warfare but also even overtly political interventions like those of *The Clash* are all somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it.

What we must now affirm is that it is precisely this whole extraordinarily demoralizing and depressing original new global space which is the "moment of truth" of postmodernism. What has been called the postmodernist "sublime" is only the moment in which this content has become most explicit, has moved the closest to the surface of consciousness as a coherent new type of space in its own right—even though a certain figural concealment or disguise is still at work here, most notably in the high-tech thematics in which the new spatial content is still dramatized and articulated. Yet the earlier features of the postmodern which were enumerated above can all now be seen as themselves partial (yet constitutive) aspects of the same general spatial object.

The argument for a certain authenticity in these otherwise patently ideological productions depends on the prior proposition that what we have been calling postmodern (or multinational) space is not merely a cultural ideology or fantasy but has genuine historical (and socioeconomic) reality as a third great original expansion of capitalism around the globe (after the earlier expansions of the national market and the older imperialist system, which each had their own cultural specificity and generated new types of space appropriate to their dynamics). The distorted and unreflexive attempts of newer cultural production to explore and to express this new space must then also, in their own fashion, be considered as so many approaches to the representation of (a new) reality (to use a more antiquated language). As paradoxical as the terms may seem, they may thus, following a classic interpretive option, be read as peculiar new forms of realism (or at least of the mimesis of reality), while at the same time they can equally well be analyzed as so many attempts to distract and divert us from that reality or to disguise its contradictions and resolve them in the guise of various formal mystifications.

As for that reality itself, however—the as yet untheorized original space of some new "world system" of multinational or late capitalism, a space whose negative or baleful aspects are only too obvious—the dialectic requires us to hold equally to a positive or "progressive" evaluation of its emergence, as Marx did for the world market as the horizon of national economies, or as Lenin did for the older imperialist global network. For neither Marx nor Lenin was socialism a matter of returning to smaller (and thereby less repressive and comprehensive) systems of social organization; rather, the dimensions attained by capital in their own times were grasped as the promise, the framework, and the precondition for the achievement of some new and more comprehensive socialism. Is this not the case with the yet more global and totalizing space of the new world system, which demands the intervention and elaboration of an internationalism of a radically new type? The disastrous realignment of socialist revolution with the older nationalisms (not only in Southeast Asia), whose results have necessarily aroused much serious recent left reflection, can be adduced in support of this position.

But if all this is so, then at least one possible form of a new radical cultural politics becomes evident, with a final aesthetic proviso that must quickly be noted. Left cultural producers and theorists—particularly those formed by bourgeois cultural traditions issuing from romanticism and valorizing spontaneous, instinctive, or unconscious forms of "genius," but also for very obvious historical reasons such as Zhdanovism and the sorry consequences of political and party interventions in the arts—have often by reaction allowed themselves to be unduly intimidated by the repudiation, in bourgeois aesthetics and most notably in high modernism, of one of the age-old functions of art—the pedagogical and the didactic. The teaching function of art was, however, always stressed in classical times (even though it there mainly took the form of moral lessons), while the prodigious and still imperfectly understood work of Brecht reaffirms, in a new and formally innovative and original way, for the moment of modernism proper, a complex new conception of the relationship between culture and pedagogy. The cultural model I will propose similarly foregrounds the cognitive and pedagogical dimensions of political art and culture, dimensions stressed in very different ways by both Lukács and Brecht (for the distinct moments of realism and modernism, respectively).

We cannot, however, return to aesthetic practices elaborated on the basis of historical situations and dilemmas which are no longer ours. Meanwhile, the conception of space that has been developed here suggests that a model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern. I will therefore provisionally define the aesthetic of this new (and hypothetical) cultural form as an aesthetic of *cognitive mapping*.

In a classic work, *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch taught us that the alienated city is above all a space in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves: grids such as those of Jersey City, in which none of the traditional markers (monuments, nodes, natural boundaries, built perspectives) obtain, are the most obvious examples. Disalienation in the traditional city, then, involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories. Lynch's own work is limited by the deliberate restriction of his topic to the problems of city form as such; yet it becomes extraordinarily suggestive when projected outward onto some of the larger national and global spaces we have touched on here. Nor should it be too hastily assumed that his model—while it clearly raises very central issues of representation as such—is in any way easily vitiated by the conventional poststructural critiques of the "ideology of representation" or mimesis. The cognitive map is not exactly mimetic in that older sense; indeed, the theoretical issues it poses allow us to renew the analysis of representation on a higher and much more complex level.

There is, for one thing, a most interesting convergence between the empirical problems studied by Lynch in terms of city space and the great Althusserian (and Lacanian) redefinition of ideology as "the representation of the subject's *Imaginary* relationship to his or her *Real* conditions of existence."[22] Surely this is exactly what the cognitive map is called upon to do in the narrower framework of daily life in the physical city: to enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole.

Yet Lynch's work also suggests a further line of development insofar as cartography itself constitutes its key mediatory instance. A return to the history of this science (which is also an art) shows us that Lynch's model does not yet, in fact, really correspond to what will become mapmaking. Lynch's subjects are rather clearly involved in precartographic operations whose results traditionally are described as itineraries rather

than as maps: diagrams organized around the still subject-centered or existential journey of the traveler, along which various significant key features are marked—oases, mountain ranges, rivers, monuments, and the like. The most highly developed form of such diagrams is the nautical itinerary, the sea chart, or *portulans*, where coastal features are noted for the use of Mediterranean navigators who rarely venture out into the open sea.

Yet the compass at once introduces a new dimension into sea charts, a dimension that will utterly transform the problematic of the itinerary and allow us to pose the problem of a genuine cognitive mapping in a far more complex way. For the new instruments—compass, sextant, and theodolite—correspond not merely to new geographic and navigational problems (the difficult matter of determining longitude, particularly on the curving surface of the planet, as opposed to the simpler matter of latitude, which European navigators can still empirically determine by ocular inspection of the African coast); they also introduce a whole new coordinate: the relationship to the totality, particularly as it is mediated by the stars and by new operations like that of triangulation. At this point, cognitive mapping in the broader sense comes to require the coordination of existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality.

Finally, with the first globe (1490) and the invention of the Mercator projection at about the same time, yet a third dimension of cartography emerges, which at once involves what we would today call the nature of representational codes, the intrinsic structures of the various media, the intervention, into more naïve mimetic conceptions of mapping, of the whole new fundamental question of the languages of representation itself, in particular the unresolvable (well-nigh Heisenbergian) dilemma of the transfer of curved space to flat charts. At this point it becomes clear that there can be no true maps (at the same time it also becomes clear that there can be scientific progress, or better still, a dialectical advance, in the various historical moments of mapmaking).

Transcoding all this now into the very different problematic of the Althusserian definition of ideology, one would want to make two points. The first is that the Althusserian concept now allows us to rethink these specialized geographical and cartographic issues in terms of social space—in terms, for example, of social class and national or international context, in terms of the ways in which we all necessarily *also* cognitively map our individual social relationship to local, national, and international class realities. Yet to reformulate the problem in this way is also to come starkly up against those very difficulties in mapping which are posed in heightened and original ways by that very global space of the postmodernist or multinational moment which has been under discussion here. These are not merely theoretical issues; they have urgent practical political consequences, as is evident from the conventional feelings of First World subjects that existentially (or "empirically") they really do inhabit a "postindustrial society" from which traditional production has disappeared and in which social classes of the classical type no longer exist—a conviction which has immediate effects on political praxis.

The second point is that a return to the Lacanian underpinnings of Althusser's theory can afford some useful and suggestive methodological enrichments. Althusser's formulation remobilizes an older and henceforth classical Marxian distinction between science and ideology that is not without value for us even today. The existential—the positioning of the individual subject, the experience of daily life, the monadic "point of view" on the world to which we are necessarily, as biological subjects, restricted—is in Althusser's formula implicitly opposed to the realm of abstract knowledge, a realm which, as Lacan reminds us, is never positioned in or actualized by any concrete subject but rather by that structural void called *le sujet supposé savoir* (the subject supposed to know), a subject-place of knowledge. What is affirmed is not that we cannot know the world and its totality in some abstract or "scientific" way. Marxian "science" provides just such a way of knowing and conceptualizing the world abstractly, in the sense in which, for example, Mandel's great book offers a rich and elaborated *knowledge* of that global world system, of which it has never been said here that it was unknowable but merely that it was unrepresentable, which is a very different matter. The Althusserian formula, in other words, designates a gap, a rift, between existential experience and scientific knowledge. Ideology has then the function of somehow inventing a way of articulating those two distinct dimensions with each other. What a historicist view of this definition would want to add is that such coordination, the production of functioning and living ideologies, is distinct in different historical situations, and, above all, that there may be historical situations in which it is not possible at all—and this would seem to be our situation in the current crisis.

But the Lacanian system is threefold, and not dualistic. To the Marxian-Althusserian opposition of ideology and science correspond only two of Lacan's tripartite functions: the Imaginary and the Real, respectively.

Our digression on cartography, however, with its final revelation of a properly representational dialectic of the codes and capacities of individual languages or media, reminds us that what has until now been omitted was the dimension of the Lacanian Symbolic itself.

An aesthetic of cognitive mapping—a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system—will necessarily have to respect this now enormously complex representational dialectic and invent radically new forms in order to do it justice. This is not then, clearly, a call for a return to some older kind of machinery, some older and more transparent national space, or some more traditional and reassuring perspectival or mimetic enclave: the new political art (if it is possible at all) will have to hold to the truth of postmodernism, that is to say, to its fundamental object—the world space of multinational capital—at the same time at which it achieves a breakthrough to some as yet unimaginable new mode of representing this last, in which we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion. The political form of postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale.

2

Theories of the Postmodern

The problem of postmodernism—how its fundamental characteristics are to be described, whether it even exists in the first place, whether the very *concept* is of any use, or is, on the contrary, a mystification—this problem is at one and the same time an aesthetic and a political one. The various positions that can logically be taken on it, whatever terms they are couched in, can always be shown to articulate visions of history in which the evaluation of the social moment in which we live today is the object of an essentially political affirmation or repudiation. Indeed, the very enabling premise of the debate turns on an initial, strategic presupposition about our social system: to grant some historic originality to a postmodernist culture is also implicitly to affirm some radical structural difference between what is sometimes called consumer society and earlier moments of the capitalism from which it emerged.

The various logical possibilities, however, are necessarily linked with the taking of a position on that other issue inscribed in the very designation postmodernism itself, namely, the evaluation of what must now be called high or classical modernism. Indeed, when we make some initial inventory of the varied cultural artifacts that might plausibly be characterized as postmodern, the temptation is strong to seek the "family resemblance" of such heterogeneous styles and products not in themselves but in some common high modernist impulse and aesthetic against which they all, in one way or another, stand in reaction.

The architectural debates, however, the inaugural discussions of postmodernism as a style, have the merit of making the political resonance of these seemingly aesthetic issues inescapable and allowing it to be detectable in the sometimes more coded or veiled discussions in the other arts. On the whole, four general positions on postmodernism may be

undo themselves and to abolish the very logic on which their attraction/repulsion was based in the first place.

Thus these films can be read as dual symptoms: they show a collective unconscious in the process of trying to identify its own present at the same time that they illuminate the failure of this attempt, which seems to reduce itself to the recombination of various stereotypes of the past. Perhaps, indeed, what follows upon a strongly generational self-consciousness, such as what the "people of the sixties" felt, is often a peculiar aimlessness. What if the crucial identifying feature of the next "decade" is, for example, a lack of just such strong self-consciousness, which is to say a constitutive lack of identity in the first place? This is what many of us felt about the seventies, whose specificity seemed most of the time to consist in having no specificity, particularly after the uniqueness of the preceding period. Things began to pick up again in the eighties, and in a variety of ways. But the identity process is not a cyclical one, and this is essentially the dilemma. Of the eighties, as against the seventies, one could say that there were new political straws in the wind, that things were moving again, that some impossible "return of the sixties" seemed to be in the air and in the ground. But the eighties, politically and otherwise, have not really resembled the sixties, especially, particularly if one tried to define them as a return or a reversion. Even that enabling costume-party self-deception of which Marx spoke—the wearing of the costumes of the great moments of the past—is no longer on the cards in an ahistorical period of history. The generational *combinatoire* thus seems to have broken down at the moment it confronted serious historicity, and the rather different self-concept of "postmodernism" has taken its place.

Dick used science fiction to see his present as (past) history; the classical nostalgia film, while evading its present altogether, registered its historicist deficiency by losing itself in mesmerized fascination in lavish images of specific generational pasts. The two 1986 movies, while scarcely pioneering a wholly new form (or mode of historicity), nonetheless seem, in their allegorical complexity, to mark the end of that and the now open space for something else.

10

Secondary Elaborations

I. Prolegomena to Future Confrontations Between the Modern and the Postmodern

Marxism and postmodernism: people often seem to find this combination peculiar or paradoxical, and somehow intensely unstable, so that some are led to conclude that, in my own case, having "become" a postmodernist I must have ceased to be a Marxist in any meaningful (or in other words, stereotypical) sense. For the two terms (in full postmodernism) carry with them a whole freight of pop nostalgia images, "Marxism" perhaps distilling itself into yellowing period photographs of Lenin and the Soviet revolution, and "postmodernism" quickly yielding a vista of the gaudiest new hotels. The overhasty unconscious then rapidly assembles the image of a small, painstakingly reproduced nostalgia restaurant—decorated with old photographs, with Soviet waiters sluggishly serving bad Russian food—hidden away within some gleaming new pink-and-blue architectural extravaganza.

If I may indulge in a personal note, it has happened to me before to have been oddly and comically identified with an object of study: a book I published years ago on structuralism elicited letters, some of which addressed me as a "foremost" spokesperson for structuralism, while the others appealed to me as an "eminent" critic and opponent of that movement. I was really neither of those things, but I have to conclude that I must have been "neither" in some relatively complicated and unusual way that it seemed hard for people to grasp. As far as postmodernism is concerned, and despite the trouble I took in my principal essay on the subject to explain how it was not possible intellectually or politically simply to celebrate postmodernism or to "disavow" it (whatever that might mean), avant-garde art critics quickly identified

me as a vulgar Marxist hatchet man, while some of the more simple-hearted comrades concluded that, following the example of so many illustrious predecessors, I had finally gone off the deep end and become a "post-Marxist" (which is to say, in one language, a renegade and a turncoat, and in another, someone who would rather switch than fight).

Many of these reactions seemed to confuse taste (or opinion), analysis, and evaluation, three things I would have thought we had some interest in keeping separate. "Taste," in the loosest media sense of personal preferences, would seem to correspond to what used to be nobly and philosophically designated as "aesthetic judgment" (the change in codes and the barometrical fall in lexical dignity is at least one index of the displacement of traditional aesthetics and the transformation of the cultural sphere in modern times). "Analysis" I take to be that peculiar and rigorous conjuncture of formal and historical analysis that constitutes the specific task of literary and cultural study; to describe this further as the investigation of the historical conditions of possibility of specific forms may perhaps convey the way in which these twin perspectives (often thought to be irreconcilable or incommensurable in the past) can be said to constitute their object and thereby to be inseparable. Analysis in this sense can be seen to be a very different set of operations from a cultural journalism oriented around taste and opinion; what it would now be important to secure is the difference between such journalism—with its indispensable reviewing functions—and what I will call "evaluation," which no longer turns on whether a work is "good" (after the fashion of an older aesthetic judgment), but rather tries to keep alive (or to reinvent) assessments of a sociopolitical kind that interrogate the quality of social life itself by way of the text or individual work of art, or hazard an assessment of the political effects of cultural currents or movements with less utilitarianism and a greater sympathy for the dynamics of everyday life than the imprimaturs and indexes of earlier traditions.

As far as taste is concerned (and as readers of the preceding chapters will have become aware), culturally I write as a relatively enthusiastic consumer of postmodernism, at least of some parts of it: I like the architecture and a lot of the newer visual work, in particular the newer photography. The music is not bad to listen to, or the poetry to read; the novel is the weakest of the newer cultural areas and is considerably excelled by its narrative counterparts in film and video (at least the high literary novel is; subgeneric narratives, however, are very good, indeed, and in the Third World of course all this falls out very differently). Food

and fashion have also greatly improved, as has the life world generally. My sense is that this is essentially a visual culture, wired for sound—but one where the linguistic element (for which some stronger term than "standardization" needs to be invented, and which is in addition marbled by the worst kind of junk-language, such as "life-style" or "sexual preference") is slack and flabby, and not to be made interesting without ingenuity, daring, and keen motivation.

These are tastes, giving rise to opinions; they have little to do with the analysis of the function of such a culture and how it got to be that way. In any case, even the opinions are probably not satisfactory in this form either, since the second thing people want to know, for the obvious contextual reason, is how this compares to an older modernist canon. The architecture is generally a great improvement; the novels are much worse. Photography and video are incomparable (the latter for a very obvious reason indeed); also we're fortunate today in having interesting new painting to look at and poetry to read.

Music, however (after Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Thomas Mann), ought to lead us into something more interesting and complicated than mere opinion. For one thing, it remains a fundamental class marker, the index of that cultural capital Pierre Bourdieu calls social "distinction": whence the passions that highbrow and lowbrow, or elite and mass, musical tastes (and the theories that correspond to them, Adorno, on the one hand, Simon Frith, on the other) still arouse. Meanwhile, music also includes history in a more thoroughgoing and irrevocable fashion, since, as background and mood stimulus, it mediates our historical past along with our private or existential one and can scarcely be woven out of the memory any longer.

The most crucial relationship of music to the postmodern, however, surely passes through space itself (on my analysis, one of the distinguishing or even constitutive traits of the new "culture" or cultural dominant). MTV above all can be taken as a spatialization of music, or, if you prefer, as the telltale revelation that it had already, in our time, become profoundly spatialized in the first place. Technologies of the musical, to be sure, whether of production, reproduction, reception, or consumption, already worked to fashion a new sonorous space around the individual or the collective listener: in music, too, "representationality"—in the sense of drawing up your *fauteuil* and gazing across at the spectacle unfolded before you—has known its crisis and its specific historical disintegration. You no longer offer a musical object for contemplation and gustation; you wire up the context and make space musical around

the consumer. In that situation, *narrative* offers multiple and protei-form mediations between the sounds in time and the body in place, coordinating a narrativized visual fragment—an image shard marked as narrative, which does not have to come from any story you ever heard of—with an event on the sound track. Particularly in the postmodern it is crucial to distinguish between narrativization and any specific narrative segment as such: failure to do so results in confusions between "old-fashioned realistic" stories and novels, and putatively modern or postmodern antinarrative ones. The story is, however, only one of the forms narrative or narrativization can take; and it is worth entertaining the possibility that today the mere intent to produce a story may be enough, as in Lem's imaginary book reviews (Ken Russell, when asked why he had shifted over into MTV, prophesied that in the twenty-first century no fiction film would last longer than fifteen minutes). What MTV does to music, therefore, is not some inversion of that defunct nineteenth-century form called program music but rather the nailing of sounds (using Lacan's carpet tacks, no doubt) onto visible space and spatial segments: here, as in the video form more generally, the older paradigm—that lights up in genealogical hindsight as this one's predecessor (but not the basic influence on it)—is *animation* itself. The cartoon—particularly in its more delirious and surreal varieties—was the first laboratory in which "text" tried out its vocation to mediate between sight and sound (think of Walt's own lowbrow obsession with highbrow music) and ended up spatializing time.

We therefore begin to make some progress on turning our tastes into "postmodernism theory" when we step back and attend to the "system of the fine arts" itself: the ratio between the forms and media (indeed, the very shape that "media" itself has taken on, supplanting form and genre alike), the way in which the generic system itself, as a restructuration and a new configuration (however minimally modified), expresses the postmodern, and through it, all the other things that are happening to us.

But descriptions like these seem not only to involve the obligatory comparison with the modern as such, they also let questions back in by way of the "canon": surely only a very old-fashioned critic or cultural journalist would be interested in proving the obvious, that Yeats is "greater" than Paul Muldoon, or Auden than Bob Perelman—unless the word *great* is simply an expression of enthusiasm, in which case you might well sometimes want to do it the other way round. The rejoinder here is the rather different one that you cannot even realistically

"compare" the "greatness" of "great writers" *within* a single paradigm or period. Adorno's notion of an internecine war among the individual works, aesthetic monads that repel each other, is surely the one that better corresponds to most people's aesthetic experience, explaining why it is intolerable to be asked to decide whether Keats is greater than Wordsworth, or to measure the worth of the Pompidou Center on the scale of the Guggenheim, or the preeminence of Dos Passos over Doctorow, let alone the question of Mallarmé and Ashbery.

We do, however, make comparisons of this kind and seem to enjoy the process, however meaningless it may be; one can therefore only conclude that such compulsive matchings and rankings *must mean something else*. Indeed, I've argued in another place[1] that in the political unconscious of an age, such comparisons—whether of individual works or cultural styles more generally—are in reality the figuration and the expressive raw material of a deeper comparison between the modes of production themselves, which confront and judge each other by way of the individual contact between reader and text. The example of the modern/postmodern, however, shows that this also holds good for stages within a single mode of production, in this case for the confrontation between the modernist (or imperialist, or monopoly) stage of capitalism and its postmodern (or multinational) stage.

All the enumeration of sheerly cultural traits comes down to this catachresis, or four-term metaphor: we concoct some proposition about the qualitative superiority of the musical production of the eighteenth-century German principalities only in order to censure or to celebrate the commercial-technological engenderment of music in our own. That manifest comparison is the cover and the vehicle for a latent one in which we try to construct a feeling for daily life in the ancien régime so as, in a next step, to reconstruct a feeling for what is peculiar and specific, original and historic, in the present. Under the guise of specialized history, therefore, we are still doing general or universal history, which is destined to end up in postmodernism theory, as the sequence of Brechtian estrangement operations outlined above makes plain. These are then the terms and conditions under which we can argue about the respective "greatness" of Mahler and Phil Glass, or Eisenstein and MTV, but they extend far beyond the aesthetic or the cultural as such, becoming meaningful or intelligible only when they reach the terrain of the production of material life and the limits and potentialities it (dialectically) imposes on human praxis, including cultural praxis. What is now at stake is relative systemic alienation itself and the dialectical relation-

ship between the limits of the base and the possibilities of the superstructure within any given system or systemic moment: its internal quotient of misery and the determinate potentiality of bodily and spiritual transfiguration it also affords, or conquers.

That is, for modernism, a whole investigation in its own right, about which only a few first notes are here appended. As for the feeling entertained about the "end of the modern" within the postmodern, that is another matter entirely, and a constitutive one (which does not necessarily have much to do with historical modernism, or historical modernity either). A second set of notes therefore configures this topic, which is sometimes confused with the ethical and aesthetic "comparison" between modernism and postmodernism; nor does it afford the socio-economic comparison proposed in what follows.

II. Notes Toward a Theory of the Modern

The "classics" of the modern can certainly be postmodernized, or transformed into "texts," if not into precursors of "textuality": the two operations are relatively different, insofar as the precursors—Raymond Roussel, Gertrude Stein, Marcel Duchamp—always fit uneasily into some modernist canon anyway. They are the exemplars and the eyewitness exhibits in some cases for the identity between modernism and postmodernism, since, in them, the slightest modification, the merest breath of perversity in shifting the chairs around, makes what ought to be the most classical high modernist aesthetic values into something uncomfortable and remote (but closer to us!). It is as though they constituted some opposition within the opposition, an aesthetic negation of the negation; against the already anti-hegemonic minority art of the modern, they staged their own even more minoritarian and private rebellion, which will of course itself become canonical when the modern freezes over and becomes a drafty set of museums.

As for the mainstream moderns, however, those waiting patiently in line for a room in just such a museum, any number of them seem capable of a thoroughgoing rewriting into the postmodern text (one hesitates to think of the process in the same way as the adaptation of a novel to the screen, particularly since one of the features of postmodern cinema is the increasing scarcity of just such screen adaptations). But that we are rewriting high modernism in new ways today seems to me beyond doubt, at least for certain crucial writers: that besides being a realist, Flaubert also turned into a modernist when Joyce learned him by heart,

then unexpectedly turned into something like a postmodernist in the hands of Nathalie Sarraute—that is a familiar story. As for Joyce himself, Colin MacCabe has projected a new Joyce for us today, a feminist and a creole or multiethnic Joyce, which would seem to be very consonant with the times and to offer at least one Joyce we might be willing to celebrate as postmodern. Meanwhile, on my side, I've tried to invoke a Third World and anti-imperialist Joyce more consistent with a contemporary than with a modernist aesthetic.[2] But are all the classics of yesteryear rewritable in this fashion? Is the Proust of Gilles Deleuze a postmodern Proust? Deleuze's Kafka is certainly a postmodern Kafka, a Kafka of ethnicity and microgroups, very much a Third World and dialect minority Kafka in tune with postmodern politics and the "new social movements." But is T. S. Eliot recuperable? What ever happened to Thomas Mann and André Gide? Frank Lentricchia has kept Wallace Stevens alive throughout this momentous climatological transformation, but Paul Valéry has vanished without a trace, and he was central to the modernist movement internationally. What is suspicious about the matter, and about the questions that it raises, is their overwhelming family likeness with familiar discussions of the nature of the classic itself, the "inexhaustible" text, capable of being reinvented and used in new ways by successive generations—something like a great manor house, handed down and redecorated over and over by successive heirs, who can install the latest Parisian fashions or Japanese technology. Meanwhile, the nonsurvivors are proof that "posterity" really does exist, even in our own postmodern media age; the losers are a crucial component of the argument, who document the necessary pastness of the past by showing that not all its "great books" are still of any interest to us. This approach conveniently masks out those parts of the problem that reidentify it with the older historicist dilemma and prevents us from learning something about our own postmodernity by way of the boredom inspired by the high modern "classics" we can no longer read. But boredom is a very useful instrument with which to explore the past, and to stage a meeting between it and the present.

As for the others who did survive—at the price of a certain renovation or "immaculation,"[3] a certain *Umfunktionierung* (Flaubert has to be read much more slowly, for example, in order to undo the storyline and turn the sentences into the moments of a postmodern "text")—they will evidently have something to tell us about a situation of "modernity" we still share. We need, in fact, to inflect the root adjective into three distinct substantives—beyond "modernism" proper, the less famil-

iar one of "modernity," and then of "modernization"—in order not only to grasp the dimensions of the problem, but to appreciate how differently the various academic disciplines, as well as the various national traditions, have framed it. "Modernism" has come only recently to France, "modernity" only recently to us, "modernization" belongs to the sociologists, Spanish has two separate words for the artistic movements ("modernismo" and "vanguardismo"), etc. A comparative lexicon would be a four- or five-dimensional affair, registering the chronological appearance of these terms in the various language groups, while recording the uneven development observable between them.[4] A comparative sociology of modernism and its cultures—a sociology which like Weber's remained committed to measuring the extraordinary impact of capitalism on hitherto traditional cultures, the social and psychic damage done to now irrevocable older forms of human life and perception—would alone offer an adequate framework for rethinking "modernism" today, provided it worked both sides of the street and dug its tunnel from both directions; one must, in other words, not only deduce modernism from modernization, but also scan the sedimented traces of modernization within the aesthetic work itself.

It should also be obvious that it is the fact of the relationship itself that counts and not its content. The various modernisms have just as often constituted violent reactions against modernization as they have replicated its values and tendencies by their own formal insistence on novelty, innovation, the transformation of older forms, therapeutic iconoclasm and the processing of new (aesthetic) wonder-working technologies. If, for example, modernization has something to do with industrial progress, rationalization, reorganization of production and administration along more efficient lines, electricity, the assembly line, parliamentary democracy, and cheap newspapers—then we will have to conclude that at least one strand of artistic modernism is anti-modern and comes into being in violent or muffled protest against modernization, now grasped as technological progress in the largest sense. These anti-modern modernisms sometimes involve pastoral visions or Luddite gestures but are mostly symbolic, and, especially at the turn of the century, involve what is sometimes referred to as a new wave of anti-positivist, spiritualistic, irrational reactions against triumphant enlightenment progress or reason.

Perry Anderson reminds me, however, that in this respect the deepest and most fundamental feature shared by all the modernisms is not so much their hostility to a technology some (like the Futurists) actually

celebrated, but rather their hostility to the market itself. The centrality of this feature is then confirmed by its inversion in the various postmodernisms, which, even more wildly different from each other than the various modernisms, all at least share a resonant affirmation, when not an outright celebration, of the market as such.

That the experience of the machine is in any case a crucial marker here can be deduced, in my view, from the rhythm of the successive waves of aesthetic modernism: a long first wave in the late nineteenth century, organized around organic forms and exemplified in some privileged way in *symbolisme*; a second one acquiring its momentum from the turn of the century on and characterized by the dual markers of an enthusiasm for machine technology and an organization into more paramilitary-type avant-gardes (Futurism can serve as the strong form of this moment). To these should be added the modernism of the isolated "genius," organized, unlike the two periodic movements (with their emphasis on the organic transformation of the life-world, and on the avant-garde and its social mission, respectively), around the great Work, the Book of the World—secular scripture, sacred text, ultimate ritual mass (Mallarmé's Livre) for an unimaginable new social order. And we should probably also make some place (but not as late as he does) for what Charles Jencks has come to call "late modernism"—the last survivals of a properly modernist view of art and the world after the great political and economic break of the Depression, where, under Stalinism or the Popular Front, Hitler or the New Deal, some new conception of social realism achieves the status of momentary cultural dominance by way of collective anxiety and world war. Jencks's late moderns are those who persist into postmodernism, and the idea makes sense architecturally; a literary frame of reference, however, throws up names like Borges and Nabokov, Beckett, poets like Olson or Zukovsky, and composers like Milton Babbitt, who had the misfortune to span two eras and the luck to find a time capsule of isolation or exile in which to spin out unseasonable forms.

Of the most canonical of these four moments or tendencies, that of the great demiurges and prophets—Frank Lloyd Wright and his cape and porkpie hat, Proust in his cork-lined room, the "force of nature" Picasso, and the "tragic," uniquely doomed Kafka (all as idiosyncratic and eccentric as the best Great Detectives in the classical detective stories)—something more needs to be said to discourage the view that, from the hindsight of postmodern fashion and commerciality, modernism was still a time of giants and legendary powers no longer available to us. But

if the poststructuralist motif of the "death of the subject" means anything socially, it signals the end of the entrepreneurial and inner-directed individualism, with its "charisma" and its accompanying categorial panoply of quaint romantic values such as that of the "genius" in the first place. Seen thus, the extinction of the "great moderns" is not necessarily an occasion for pathos. Our social order is richer in information and more literate, and socially, at least, more "democratic" in the sense of the universalization of wage labor (I have always felt that Brecht's term "plebeianization" is politically more suitable and sociologically more exact in designating this leveling process, which people on the left can surely only welcome); this new order no longer needs prophets and seers of the high modernist and charismatic type, whether among its cultural producers or its politicians. Such figures no longer hold any charm or magic for the subjects of a corporate, collectivized, post-individualistic age; in that case, goodbye to them without regrets, as Brecht might have put it: woe to the country that needs geniuses, prophets, Great Writers, or demiurges!

What one must retain historically is the fact that the phenomenon did once exist; a postmodern view of the "great" modernist creators ought not to argue away the social and historical specificity of those now doubtful "centered subjects," but rather provide new ways of understanding their conditions of possibility.

A beginning is made on that process by grasping the once-famous names no longer as characters larger than life or great souls of one kind or another, but rather—non- and anti-anthropomorphically—as *careers*, that is to say as objective situations in which an ambitious young artist around the turn of the century could see the objective possibility of turning himself into the "greatest painter" (or poet or novelist or composer) "of the age." That objective possibility is now given, not in subjective talent as such or some inner richness or inspiration, but rather in strategies of a well-nigh military character, based on superiority of technique and terrain, assessment of the counterforces, a shrewd maximization of one's own specific and idiosyncratic resources. This approach to "genius," however, which we now associate with the name of Pierre Bourdieu,[5] should be sharply distinguished from a debunking or demystifying *ressentiment* like what Tolstoy seems to have felt about Shakespeare, and, *mutatis mutandis*, about the role of "great men" generally in history. Despite Tolstoy, I think we still do admire the great generals (along with their counterparts, the great artists),[6] but the admiration has been displaced from their innate subjectivity to their historical flair, their capacity to assess the "current situation" and to evaluate its potential permutation system on the spot. This is, it seems to me, a properly postmodern revision in biographical historiography, which characteristically substitutes the horizontal for the vertical, space for time, system for depth.

But there is a deeper reason for the disappearance of the Great Writer under postmodernism, and it is simply this, sometimes called "uneven development": in an age of monopolies (and trade unions), of increasing institutionalized collectivization, there is always a lag. Some parts of the economy are still archaic, handicraft enclaves; some are more modern and futuristic than the future itself. Modern art, in this respect, drew its power and its possibilities from being a backwater and an archaic holdover within a modernizing economy: it glorified, celebrated, and dramatized older forms of individual production which the new mode of production was elsewhere on the point of displacing and blotting out. Aesthetic production then offered the Utopian vision of a more human production generally; and in the world of the monopoly stage of capitalism it exercised a fascination by way of the image it offered of a Utopian transformation of human life. Joyce in his rooms in Paris single-handedly produces a whole world, all by himself and beholden to no one; but the human beings in the streets outside those rooms have no comparable sense of power and control, of human productivity; none of the feeling of freedom and autonomy that comes when, like Joyce, you can make or at least share in making your own decisions. As a form of production, then, modernism (including the Great Artists and producers) gives off a message that has little to do with the content of the individual works: it is the aesthetic as sheer autonomy, as the satisfactions of handicraft transfigured.

Modernism must thus be seen as uniquely corresponding to an uneven moment of social development, or to what Ernst Bloch called the "simultaniety of the nonsimultaneous," the "synchronicity of the non-synchronous" (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*):[7] the coexistence of realities from radically different moments of history—handicrafts alongside the great cartels, peasant fields with the Krupp factories or the Ford plant in the distance. But a less programmatic demonstration of unevenness is afforded by the work of Kafka, about which Adorno once said that it stood as a definitive rebuke to anyone who wanted to think about art in terms of pleasure. I think he was wrong about this, at least from a postmodern perspective; the refutation can be staged in a much more wide-ranging way from those perverse-seeming descriptions

of Kafka as a "mystical humorist" (Thomas Mann) and as a joyous and Chaplinesque writer, although it is certain that when you remember Chaplin during your reading of Kafka, Chaplin doesn't look the same any more either.

More must therefore be said on the subject of the pleasurability and even the joyous nature of Kafka's nightmares. Benjamin once observed that there were at least two current interpretations of Kafka that we needed to get rid of for good: one was the psychoanalytic (Kafka's Oedipus complex—he certainly had one, but his are hardly a psychological works as such); the other was the theological (the idea of salvation is certainly there in Kafka, but there is nothing otherworldly about it, or about salvation in general). Perhaps we might today also add the existential interpretation: the human condition, anxiety, and the like also offer only too familiar themes and considerations which, as you might have imagined, can certainly not be judged to be very postmodern). And we must also briefly reconsider what used to be thought of as the "Marxist" interpretation: *The Trial* as the representation of the ramshackle bureaucracy of an Austro-Hungarian Empire on the eve of collapse. There is much truth to this interpretation also, except for the suggestion that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was in any way a nightmare. On the contrary, besides being the last of the old archaic empires, it was also the first multinational and multiethnic state: comfortably inefficient when compared with Prussia, humane and tolerant when juxtaposed with the czars; finally not a bad arrangement at all, and an intriguing model in our own postnational period, still riven by nationalisms. The K.-and-K. structure plays a part in Kafka, but not exactly in the way in which the "bureaucracy-as-nightmare" interpretation (the Empire as a foretaste of Auschwitz) wants to suggest.

Returning to the idea of the simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous, of the coexistence of distinct moments of history, what you first notice in reading *The Trial* is the presence of a modern, well-nigh corporate, workweek and business routine: Joseph K. is a young banker (a "junior executive" or "confidential clerk") who lives for his work, a bachelor who spends his empty evenings in a tavern and whose Sundays are miserable, when they are not made even more miserable by invitations from business colleagues to intolerable professional social outings. Into this boredom of organized modernity something rather different suddenly comes—and it is precisely that archaic, older legal bureaucracy associated with the Empire's political structure. So we have here a very striking coexistence: a modern, or at least modernizing, economy, and an

old-fashioned political structure, something that Orson Welles's great film of *The Trial* captured vividly by way of space itself: Joseph K. lives in the worse kind of faceless anonymous modern housing but visits a court housed in shabby baroque splendor (when not in ancient tenement-like rooms), the interspace being occupied by the empty rubble and vacant lots of urban development to come (he will eventually die in one of those bombed-out spaces). The pleasures of Kafka, the pleasures of the nightmare in Kafka, then come from the way in which the archaic livens up routine and boredom, and an old-fashioned juridical and bureaucratic paranoia enters the empty workweek of the corporate age and makes something at least happen! The moral would now seem to be that the worst is better than nothing at all, and that nightmares are a welcome relief from the work week. There is in Kafka a hunger for the sheer event as such in a situation in which it seems as rare as a miracle; in his language, an avidness to register, in a virtually musical economic notation, the slightest tremors in the life world that might betray the faintest presence of something "taking place." This appropriation of the negative by a positive, indeed Utopian, force that wraps itself in its wolf's clothing, is scarcely psychologically unfamiliar; it is for example well-known, to cite a more postcontemporary malady, how the deeper satisfaction afforded by paranoia and its various delusions of persecution and espionage lies in the reassuring certainty that everyone is always looking at you all the time!

It is then, in Kafka as elsewhere, the peculiar overlap of future and past, in this case, the resistance of archaic feudal structures to irresistible modernizing tendencies—of tendential organization and the residual survival of the not yet "modern" in some other sense—that is the condition of possibility for high modernism as such, and for its production of aesthetic forms and messages that may no longer have anything to do with the unevenness from which it alone springs.

What follows paradoxically as a consequence is that in that case the postmodern must be characterized as a situation in which the survival, the residue, the holdover, the archaic, has finally been swept away without a trace. In the postmodern, then, the past itself has disappeared (along with the well-known "sense of the past" or historicity and collective memory). Where its buildings still remain, renovation and restoration allow them to be transferred to the present in their entirety as those other, very different and postmodern things called *simulacra*. Everything is now organized and planned; nature has been triumphantly blotted out, along with peasants, petit-bourgeois commerce, handicraft,

feudal aristocracies and imperial bureaucracies. Ours is a more homogeneously modernized condition; we no longer are encumbered with the embarrassment of non-simultaneities and non-synchronicities. Everything has reached the same hour on the great clock of development or rationalization (at least from the perspective of the "West"). This is the sense in which we can affirm, either that modernism is characterized by a situation of incomplete *modernization*, or that postmodernism is more modern than modernism itself.

Perhaps it can also be added that what is also thereby lost from the postmodern is *modernity* as such, in the sense in which that word can be taken to mean something specific and distinct from either modernism and modernization. Indeed, our old friends base and superstructure seem fatally to reimpose themselves: if modernization is something that happens to the base, and modernism the form the superstructure takes in reaction to that ambivalent development, then perhaps modernity characterizes the attempt to make something coherent out of their relationship. Modernity would then in that case describe the way "modern" people feel about themselves; the word would seem to have something to do not with the products (either cultural or industrial) but with the producers and the consumers, and how they feel either producing the products or living among them. This modern feeling now seems to consist in the conviction that we ourselves are somehow new, that a new age is beginning, that everything is possible and nothing can ever be the same again; nor do we want anything to be the same again, we *want* to "make it new," get rid of all those old objects, values, mentalities, and ways of doing things, and to be somehow transfigured. "Il faut être absolument moderne," cried Rimbaud; we have to be somehow absolutely, radically modern; which is to say (presumably) that we have to make ourselves modern, too; it's something we do, not merely something that happens to us. Is this the way we feel today, in full postmodernism? We certainly don't feel ourselves living among dusty, traditional, boring, ancient things and ideas. Apollinaire's great poetic outburst against the ancient buildings of 1910 Europe, and against the very space of Europe itself: "A la fin tu es las de ce monde ancien!" (you're suddenly sick and tired of this antiquated world!) probably does not express the contemporary (the postcontemporary) feeling about the supermarket or the credit card. The word *new* doesn't seem to have the same resonance for us any longer; the word itself is no longer new or pristine. What does that suggest about the postmodern experience of time or change or history?

It implies first of all that we are using "time" or historical "lived experience" and historicity as a mediation between the socioeconomic structure and our cultural and ideological evaluation of it, as well as a provisionally privileged theme by which to stage our systemic comparison between the modern and the postmodern moments of capital. Later on, we will want to develop the matter further in two directions: first, around that sense of unique historical difference from other societies that a certain experience of the New (in the modern) seems to encourage and perpetuate; and second, in analyzing the role of new technologies (and their consumption) in a postmodernity evidently disinterested in thematizing and valorizing the New as such any longer.

For the moment, we conclude that the keen sense of the New in the modern period was only possible because of the mixed, uneven, transitional nature of that period, in which the old coexisted with what was then coming into being. Apollinaire's Paris included both grimy medieval monuments and cramped Renaissance tenements, *and* motorcars and airplanes, telephones, electricity, and the latest fashions in clothing and culture. You know and experience these last as new and modern only because the old and traditional are also present. One way of telling the story of the transition from the modern to the postmodern lies then in showing how at length modernization triumphs and wipes the old completely out: nature is abolished along with the traditional countryside and traditional agriculture; even the surviving historical monuments, now all cleaned up, become glittering simulacra of the past, and not its survival. Now everything is new; but by the same token, the very category of the new then loses its meaning and becomes itself something of a modernist survival.

Whoever says "new," however, or deplores the loss of its concept in a postmodern age, also fatally raises the spectre of Revolution itself, in the sense in which its concept once embodied the ultimate vision of the Novum become absolute and extending itself into the smallest crannies and details of a lifeworld transformed. The inveterate recourse to a vocabulary of political revolution, and the aesthetic avant-garde's often narcissistic affectation of the trappings of their political opposite numbers, suggest a politicality in the very form of the modernisms that casts some doubt on the reassurances of their academic ideologies, who taught us again and again that the moderns were not political, or even socially very conscious. Indeed, their work was said to represent a new "inward turn" and the opening up of some new reflexive deep subjectivity: the "carnival of interiorized fetishism," Lukács once called it. And certainly

modernist texts in their range and variety do seem to offer the appearance of so many Geiger counters picking up all kinds of new subjective impulses and signals and registering those in new ways and according to new "inscription devices."

One can also argue against this impression with empirical and biographical evidence about the writers' sympathies. For one thing, Joyce and Kafka were socialists; even Proust was a Dreyfusard (although also a snob); Mayakovsky and the surrealists were communists; Thomas Mann was at some points at least a progressive and an antifascist; only the Anglo-Americans (along with Yeats) were true reactionaries of the blackest stamp.

But something more fundamental can be argued from the spirit of the works themselves, and in particular from a renewed scrutiny of the same high-modernist celebration of the self that the anti-political critics adduced to support a notion of the modernists' subjectivism (in this, they joined hands with the Stalinist tradition). I want, however, to propose the alternative proposition that modernism's introspective probing of the deeper impulses of consciousness, and even of the unconscious itself, was always accompanied by a Utopian sense of the impending transformation or transfiguration of the "self" in question. "You have to change your life!" Rilke's archaic Greek torso tells him paradigmatically; and D. H. Lawrence is filled with intimations of this momentous new sea change from which new people are sure to emerge. What we now have to grasp is that those feelings, expressed in connection with the self, could only come into being in correlation with a similar feeling about society and the object world itself. It is because that object world, in the throes of industrialization and modernization, seems to tremble at the brink of an equally momentous and even Utopian transformation that the "self" can also be felt to be on the point of change. For this is not merely the moment of Taylorization and the new factories; it also marks the emergence of most of Europe into a parliamentary system in which new and vast working-class parties play their part for the first time, and feel themselves, particularly in Germany, on the point of achieving hegemony. Perry Anderson has argued persuasively that modernism in the arts (although he rejects the category of modernism as such for other reasons) is intimately related to the winds of change blowing from the great new radical social movements.[8] High modernism does not express those values as such; rather it emerges in a space opened by them, and its formal values of the New and of innovation, along with its Utopian sense of the transfiguration of the self and the

world, are, in ways that remain to be explored, very much to be seen as echoes and resonances of the hopes and optimism of that great period dominated by the Second International. As for the works themselves, John Berger's exemplary essays on cubism[9] offer a more detailed analysis of the way in which this seemingly very formalist new painting is infused by a Utopian spirit that will be crushed by the grisly uses of industrialization on the battlefields of World War I. This new Utopianism is only in part a glorification of new machinery, as in futurism; it expresses itself across a gamut of impulses and excitement that ultimately touch on the impending transformation of society itself.

III. Cultural Reification and the "Relief" of the Postmodern

All of this looks very different examined synchronically: in other words, the feeling that postmodern people have about the modern will now begin to tell us more about postmodernism itself than about the system it supplanted and overthrew. If modernism thought of itself as a prodigious revolution in cultural production, however, postmodernism thinks of itself as a renewal of production as such after a long period of ossification and dwelling among dead monuments. The very word *production* itself—a much-buffeted straw in the wind during the 1960s, but which tended then always to signal the most empty and abstract, ascetic-formalistic endeavors (such as Sollers's early "texts")—turns out now in hindsight to have meant something after all and to have signaled a genuine renewal in the thing it was supposed to signify.

I think we now have to talk about the *relief* of the postmodern generally, a thunderous unblocking of logjams and a release of new productivity that was somehow tensed up and frozen, locked like cramped muscles, at the latter end of the modern period. This release was something a good deal more momentous than a mere generational change (any number of generations having succeeded themselves during the gradually canonical reign of the modern proper), although it also did something to the collective sense of what "generations" were in the first place. One cannot too often symbolically underscore the moment (in most U.S. universities, the late 1950s or early 1960s) in which the modern "classics" entered the school system and the college reading lists (before that, we read Pound on our own, English departments only laboriously reaching Tennyson). This was a kind of revolution in its own way, with unexpected consequences, forcing the recognition of the mod-

ern texts at the same time that it defused them, like former radicals finally appointed to the cabinet.

For the other arts, however, canonization and the "corrupting" influence of success will clearly take very different forms. In architecture, for instance, it seems clear that the built equivalent of reception in the academy is the appropriation by the state of high modernist forms and methods, the readaptation by an expanded state bureaucracy (sometimes identified as that of the "welfare state" or social democracy) of Utopian forms now degraded into anonymous forms of large-scale housing and office construction. The modernist styles then become stamped with just such bureaucratic connotation, so that to break with it radically produces some feeling of "relief," even though what replaces it is neither Utopia nor democracy, but simply the private-corporate constructions of the post-welfare state postmodern. Overdetermination is present here to the degree that the literary canonization of the modern also expressed a prodigious bureaucratic expansion of the university system in the 1960s. Nor should one in either case underestimate the active pressures in such developments of popular demands (and demography) of a more truly democratic or "plebeian" kind. What we need to invent is a notion of "overdetermination in ambivalence" in which works become endowed with associations at one and the same time "plebeian" and "bureaucratic," with the not unexpected political confusion inherent in such ambivalence.

This is only a figure, however, for what needs to be talked about in a more general way and on a more abstract level—namely, reification itself. The word probably directs attention in the wrong direction for us today, since "the transformation of social relations into things" that it seems most insistently to designate has become a second nature. Meanwhile, the "things" in question have themselves changed beyond recognition, to the point where one might well find people arguing for the desirability of the thinglike in our amorphous day and age.[10] Postmodern "things" are in any case not the kind Marx had in mind, even the "cash nexus" in current banking practices is a good deal more glamorous than anything Carlyle can have "libidinally cathected."

The other definition of reification that has been important in recent years is the "effacement of the traces of production" from the object itself, from the commodity thereby produced. This sees the matter from the standpoint of the consumer: it suggests the kind of guilt people are freed from if they are able not to remember the work that went into their toys and furnishings. Indeed, the point of having your own object world,

and walls and muffled distance or relative silence all around you, is to forget about all those innumerable others for a while; you don't want to have to think about Third World women every time you pull yourself up to your word processor, or all the other lower-class people with their lower-class lives when you decide to use or consume your other luxury products: it would be like having voices inside your head; indeed, it "violates" the intimate space of your privacy and your extended body. For a society that wants to forget about class, therefore, reification in this consumer-packaging sense is very functional indeed; consumerism as a culture involves much more than this, but this kind of "effacement" is surely the indispensable precondition on which all the rest can be constructed.

The reification of culture itself is evidently a somewhat different matter, since those products are "signed"; nor, in consuming culture, do we particularly want, let alone need, to forget the human producer T. S. Eliot, or Margaret Mitchell or Toscanini or Jack Benny, or even Sam Goldwyn or Cecil B. deMille. The feature of reification I want to insist on in this realm of cultural products is what generates a radical separation between consumers and producers. Specialization is too weak and non-dialectical a term for that, but it plays its part in developing and perpetuating a deep conviction within the consumer that the production of the product in question—attributable no doubt to other human beings in the generic sense—is nonetheless beyond anything you can imagine; it is not something the consumer or user has any social sympathy for whatsoever. In that respect, it is a little like the feeling nonintellectuals and lower-class people have always had about intellectuals and what they do: you see them doing it, and it doesn't look very complicated, but even with the best will in the world you don't quite get it, you don't see why people would want to do things like that, let alone trust yourself to form an idea of what it is they actually do. True Gramscian subalternity that: the deep sense of inferiority in the face of the cultural other, the implicit acknowledgment of their innate superiority, to which punctual rage or anti-intellectualism or working-class contempt and machismo is itself only a secondary reaction, a reaction to *my* inferiority first and foremost, before being transferred onto the intellectual. I want to suggest that something like this subalternity—Gunther Anders years ago in a somewhat different connection called it Promethean shame, a Promethean inferiority complex in front of the machine[11]—is what we now feel for culture more generally.

But this cultural posture is less dramatic than anti-intellectualism,

because it relates to things rather than to people; and so we must try to lower the figural level. A Marxian social psychology must above all insist on the psychological concomitants of production itself. The reason production (and what can loosely be called the "economic") is philosophically prior to power (and what can loosely be called the "political") lies here, in the relationship between production and feelings of power in the first place; but it is something that it is preferable and more persuasive to say the other way round (not least because it helps us thereby evade humanist rhetoric): namely, by insisting on what happens to people when their relations to production are blocked, when they no longer have power over productive activity. Impotence is first and foremost that, the pall on the psyche, the gradual loss of interest in the self and the outside world, very much in formal analogy to Freud's description of mourning; the difference being that one recovers from mourning (Freud shows how), but that the condition of non-productivity, since it is an index of an objective situation that does not change, must be dealt with in another way, a way that, acknowledging its persistence and inevitability, disguises, represses, displaces, and sublimates a persistent and fundamental powerlessness. That other way is, of course, consumerism itself, as a compensation for an economic impotence which is also an utter lack of any political power: what is called voter apathy is mainly visible among those strata who lack the means to distract themselves by way of consumption. I want to add that the way in which (objectively, if you like) this analysis takes on the appearance of anthropology or social psychology either is itself to be reckoned back into the phenomenon we are describing: not merely is this anthropological or psychological appearance a function of a basic representational dilemma about late capitalism (which we will touch on below); it is also the result of the failure of our societies to achieve any kind of transparency; indeed it is virtually the same as that failure. In a transparent society in which our various positions in social production were clear to us and to everybody else—so that, like Malinowski's savages, we could take a stick and draw a diagram of the socioeconomic cosmology on the sand of the beach—it would not sound either psychological or anthropological to refer to what happens to people who have no say in their work: no Utopian or Nowhereon would think you were mobilizing hypotheses about the Unconscious or the libido, or foundationally presupposing a human essence or a human nature; perhaps it would sound more medical, as though you were talking about a broken leg or paralysis of the

whole right side. At any rate, it is thus, as a fact, that I would like to talk about reification: in this sense of the way in which a product somehow shuts us out even from a sympathetic participation, by imagination, in its production. It comes before us, no questions asked, as something we could not begin to imagine doing for ourselves.

But this in no way means that we cannot consume the product in question, "derive enjoyment" from it, become addicted to it, etc. Indeed, consumption in the social sense is very specifically the word for what we in fact do to reified products of this kind, that occupy our minds and float above that deeper nihilistic void left in our being by the inability to control our own destiny.

But now I want to restrict this account once again, so that it can be understood more specifically in relationship to modernism itself, and what postmodernism meant "originally," when it freed itself from this last. I want to argue that the "great modernist works" in effect became reified in this sense, and not only by becoming school classics. Their distance from their readers as monuments and as the efforts of "genius" tended also to paralyze form production in general, to endow the practice of all the high-cultural arts with an alienating specialist or expert qualification that blocked the creative mind with awkward self-consciousness and intimidated fresh production in a profoundly modernist and self-validating way. It was only after Picasso that Picasso's remarkably unselfconscious improvisations became stamped as unique activities of modernist style and genius inaccessible to other people. Most of the modernist "classics," however, wanted to stand as figures for the unblocking of human energy; the contradiction of modernism lay in the way in which that universal value of human production could achieve figuration only by way of the unique and restricted signature of the modernist seer or prophet, thus slowly canceling itself out again for all but the disciples.

This is, then, the relief of the postmodern, in which the various modernist rituals were swept away and form production again became open to whoever cared to indulge it, but at its own price: namely, the preliminary destruction of modernist formal values (now considered "elitist"), along with a range of crucial related categories such as the work or the subject. "Text" is a relief after "work," but you must not try to outsmart it and use it to produce a work after all, under cover of textuality. A playfulness of form, the aleatory production of new ones or joyous cannibilization of the old, will not put you in so relaxed and receptive a

disposition that, by happy accident, "great" or "significant" form will come into being anyhow. (In any case, it seems possible that the price of this new textual freedom is paid for by language and the linguistic arts, which retreat before the democracy of the visual and the aural.) The status of art (and also of culture) has had to be irrevocably modified in order to secure the new productivities; and it cannot be changed back at will.

IV. Groups and Representation

All of which is so much grist for the production of postmodernism's populist rhetoric, which is to say that we here touch the border between aesthetic analysis and ideology. As with so many populisms, this one is the locus for the most pernicious confusions about the matter, very precisely because its ambiguities are real and objective (or, as Mort Sahl observed about the Nixon-Kennedy election, "in my considered opinion, neither can win"). For everything that has been said in the preceding section suggests that the cultural and artistic dimension of postmodernism *is* popular (if not populist), and that it dismantles many of the barriers to cultural consumption that seemed implicit in modernism. What is misleading about this impression is, of course, the illusion of symmetry, since, during its own life span, modernism was not hegemonic and far from being a cultural dominant; it proposed an alternative, oppositional, and Utopian culture whose class base was problematic and whose "revolution" failed; or rather, if you prefer, when modernism (like the contemporary socialisms) finally did come to power, it had already outlived itself, and what resulted from this posthumous victory was called postmodernism instead.

But affirmations of popularity and appeals to the "people" are notoriously unreliable, since people will always be found out there who decline the characterization and deny any implication in the matter. Thus microgroups and "minorities," women as well as the internal Third World, and segments of the external one as well, frequently repudiate the very concept of a postmodernism as the universalizing cover story for what is essentially a much narrower class-cultural operation serving white and male-dominated elites in the advanced countries. This is clearly also true, and we will examine the class base and content of postmodernism later on. But it is no less true that the "micropolitics" that corresponds to the emergence of this whole range of small-group, nonclass political practices is a profoundly postmodern phenomenon,

or else the word has no meaning whatsoever. In that sense, the foundational description and the "working ideology" of the new politics, as it is found in Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's fundamental *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, is overtly postmodern and must be studied in the larger context we have proposed for this term. It is true that Laclau and Mouffe are less attentive to the tendency to differentiation and separatism, infinite fission and "nominalism," in small-group politics (it does not seem quite right to call it sectarianism any longer, but there is certainly a group parallel with the various existentialisms on the level of individual experience), for they see the passion for "equality" from which the small groups spring as the mechanism which will also forge them—by way of the "chain of equivalents," the expansive power of the equations of identity—into alliances and reunified Gramscian hegemonic blocs. What they retain of Marx is thus his diagnosis of the historical originality of *his own* time, as the moment in which the doctrine of social equality had become an irreversible social fact; but with the omission of Marx's causal qualification (that this social and ideological development is the consequence of the universalization of wage labor),[12] this view of history tends rapidly to transform itself into the more mythical vision of the radical "break" of modernity and the radical difference between Western and precapitalist, or hot and cold, societies.

The emergence of the "new social movements" is an extraordinary historical phenomenon that is mystified by the explanation so many postmodernist ideologues feel themselves able to propose; namely, that the new small groups arise in the void left by the disappearance of social classes and in the rubble of the political movements organized around those. How classes could be expected to disappear, save in the unique special-case scenario of socialism, has never been clear to me; but the global restructuration of production and the introduction of radically new technologies—that have flung workers in archaic factories out of work, displaced new kinds of industry to unexpected parts of the world, and recruited work forces different from the traditional ones in a variety of features, from gender to skill and nationality—explain why so many people have been willing to think so, at least for a time. Thus the new social movements and the newly emergent global proletariat both result from the prodigious expansion of capitalism in its third (or "multinational") stage; both are in that sense "postmodern," at least in terms of the account of postmodernism offered here. Meanwhile, it becomes a little clearer why the alternative view, that the small groups are, in fact,

the *substitute* for a disappearing working class, makes the new micropolitics available for the more obscene celebrations of contemporary capitalist pluralism and democracy: the system congratulating itself for producing ever greater quantities of structurally unemployable subjects. What really needs to be explained here is not the ideological exploitation but rather the capacity of a postmodern public to conceive of two such radically incommensurable and contradictory representations all at once: the tendential immiseration of American society (filed away under the rubric of "drugs") and the self-congratulatory rhetoric of pluralism (generally activated in contact with the topic of socialist societies). Any adequate theory of the postmodern ought to register this historic progress in schizophrenic collective consciousness, and I will offer an explanation for it later on.

Pluralism is thus the ideology of groups, a set of phantasmic representations that triangulate three fundamental pseudoconcepts: democracy, the media, and the market. This ideology cannot, however, be adequately modeled and analyzed unless we realize that its conditions of possibility are real social changes (in which "groups" now play a more significant role), and without somehow marking and specifying the historical determinacy of the ideological concept of the group itself (quite different from that of Freud's or LeBon's period, for example, let alone the older revolutionary "mob"). The problem, as Marx put it, is that "the subject . . . is given, both in reality and in the mind, and that therefore the categories express forms of being, determinations of existence—and sometimes only individual aspects—of this particular society, of this subject, and that even from the scientific standpoint it therefore by no means begins at the moment when it is first discussed as such."[13]

The "reality" of groups then must be related to the institutional collectivization of contemporary life: this was, of course, one of Marx's fundamental prophecies, that within the "integument" of individual property relations (private ownership of the factory or enterprise), a whole new web of collective production relations was coming into being incommensurate with its antiquated shell, husk, or form. Like the three wishes in the fairy tale, or the devil's promises, this prognosis has been fully realized, with only the slightest of modifications that make it unrecognizable. We have touched briefly on property relations in the postmodern in a previous chapter; suffice it to say now that in itself, private property remains that dusty and drearily old-fashioned thing

whose truth one used to glimpse when traveling in the older nation-states and observing, with Mr. Bloom's "grey horror" that sears the flesh, the hoariest antique forms of British commerce or French family firms (Dickens remaining the most precious imperishable afterimage of the juridical exfoliation of these entities, unimaginable crystalline growths like some cancerous Antarctica). "Immortality" and the joint-stock company do nothing to change this; but one has not grasped the spirit and the impulse of the imagination of the multinationals in postmodernism, which in new writing like cyberpunk determines an orgy of language and representation, an excess of representational consumption, if this heightened intensity is not grasped as sheer compensation, as a way of talking yourself into it and making, more than a virtue, a genuine pleasure and jouissance out of necessity, turning resignation into excitement and the baleful persistence of the past and its prose into a high and an addiction. This is surely the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle today, which has migrated from concepts to representations, and where the thrill of multinational business and the peculiar opulence of the yuppie life world has (for the mind's libidinal eye) an attraction far outweighing the nineteenth-century charm of the Hayek-Friedmann arguments about the market as such.

The other, social face of this tendential reality—the organization and collectivization of individuals after the long period of individualism, of social atomization and existential anomie—is perhaps better grasped by way of daily life; that is to say, by way of the new structures of oppositional groups and "new social movements" rather than in the workplace or the corporation, whose "organization men" and new white-collar conformism were already recorded by Whyte and C. Wright Mills in the 1950s, when they then served as topics for public discussion and "cultural critique." The process is, however, more visible, and more easily grasped as an objective historical tendency, when it is seen to affect rich and poor alike, indifferently, and on both sides of the political spectrum. And this is in turn more easily demonstrated by registering the disappearance, from postmodern society, of the older kinds of solitude: not only the pathetic misfits and victims of anomie (abundantly collected and catalogued from naturalism to Sherwood Anderson) no longer present in the nooks and crannies of a then more natural and capacious social order, but the solitary rebels and existential antiheroes who used to allow the "liberal imagination" to strike a blow at the "system" have also vanished, along with existentialism itself, and their former embod-

iments have become the "leaders" of various groupuscules. No current media topic illustrates this better than the "bag people" (also known, in media euphemism, as the "homeless"). No longer solitary freaks and eccentrics, they are a henceforth recognized and accredited sociological category, the object of the scrutiny and concern of the appropriate experts, and clearly potentially organizable when they are not in fact already organized in good postmodern fashion. This is the sense in which, even if Big Brother is not everywhere watching you, Language is; media and specialized or expert language that seeks tirelessly to classify and categorize, to transform the individual into the labeled group, and to constrict and expel the last spaces for what was in Wittgenstein or Heidegger, in existentialism or in traditional individualism, the unique and the unnameable, the mystical private property of the ineffable and the unspeakable horror of the incomparable. Everyone today is, if not organized, then at least organizable: and the ideological category that slowly moves into place to cover the results of such organization is the concept of the "group" (this last is sharply differentiated, in the political unconscious, from the concept of *class* on the one hand, but also from that of *status* on the other). What someone once said about Washington, D.C., that you only apparently met individuals there, who all eventually turned out to be lobbies in the end, is now true of the social life of advanced capitalism generally, except that everyone "represents" several groups all at once. This is the social reality that psychoanalytic currents on the left have analyzed in terms of "subject-positions," but in reality the latter can be grasped only as the forms of identity afforded by group adherence. Meanwhile, Marx's other insight, that the emergence of collective (universal or abstract) forms encourages the development of concrete historical and social thinking more vigorously than individual or individualistic forms did (which function to conceal the social), is also corroborated: thus we know at once, and reckon into our definition of the "bag people," that they are the consequence of the historical process of land speculation and gentrification at a very precise moment of the history of the postcontemporary city, while the "new social movements" themselves are immediately enabled by the expansion of the state sector in the 1960s and bear this causal origin within their consciousness as a badge of identity and a map of political strategy and struggle.

(It should be stressed, however, that something fundamental has been achieved by the now more widely shared awareness of the correlation between consciousness and group adherence: this is, indeed, something

like the postmodern's version of that theory of ideology invented or discovered by Marx himself, which posited a formational relationship between consciousness and class adherence. The new or postmodern development, indeed, remains progressive to the degree to which it dispels any last illusions as to the autonomy of thought, even though the dissipation of those illusions may reveal a wholly positivist landscape from which the negative has evaporated altogether, beneath the steady clarity of what has been identified as "cynical reason." In my view, the method whereby a healthy sociologization of the cultural and conceptual can be prevented from disintegrating into the more obscene consumerist pluralisms of late capitalism as such is by way of the same philosophical strategy adopted by Lukács for the development of class-ideological analysis—namely, to generalize its analysis of the constructive links between thought and a class or group *standpoint*, respectively, and to project a full-blown philosophical theory of the standpoint in which the generative production or transfer point between conceptuality and collective experience is brought to the foreground.)

What is sometimes now called "professionalism" is evidently a further intensification of this "new historical" sense of the relationship between group identity and history, which is also in some peculiar sense self-fulfilling. A historical examination of the disciplines, for example, undermines their claims to correspond to truth or to the structure of reality, by betraying the opportunistic way in which they swiftly readapt to this or that current hot topic, for them perceived as an immediate problem or crisis (the topic of postmodernism is just such a crisis). Thus Lester Thurow's *Dangerous Currents* ends up portraying the economists as professionals who have had to scramble from one topical problem area to another in such a way that the field itself, as such, has seemed in the process to dissolve; meanwhile Stanley Aronowitz and his colleagues have discovered that (despite the lag in academic institutional arrangements and the persistence of the ontological illusion that the science departments, taken together, somehow model the physical world) virtually all research in the hard sciences today involves this or that form of physics, life sciences outside of molecular biology, for example, having thereby become as archaic as alchemy.[14]

It does no good, of course, to distinguish origins from validity and to insist patiently that the fact that something can be seen to have emerged historically is not an argument against its truth content (any more than

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It does no good, of course, to distinguish origins from validity and to insist patiently that the fact that something can be seen to have emerged historically is not an argument against its truth content (any more than

the fall in its scholarly stock-exchange rating testifies to its essential falsity). Not only is history (and change) still strongly felt to be the opposite of nature and being, what seems to have human and social causes (very often economic ones) is felt to be the contrary of the structure of reality or the world. As a consequence, a kind of historical thinking develops that reads all that as a kind of self-reinforcing panic; and it suffices to mention the unmentionable—that all these sciences are in historical evolution—for the very rate of that historical modification to be intensified, as though to point out the absence of an ontological ground or foundation was suddenly to loose all the moorings that had traditionally held the disciplines in place. Now suddenly, in English departments, the canon, in the very middle of the debate on its existence, begins furiously to melt away, leaving a great rubble pile of mass culture and all kinds of other noncanonical and commercial literature behind it—a kind of "quiet revolution" even more alarming than those in Quebec and Spain where semifascist and clerical regimes, under the warming impact of consumer society, turned into swinging sixties-like social spaces overnight (something that now seems imminent in the Soviet Union as well and suddenly calls into question all our notions about the traditional, about social inertia, and about Edmund Burke's slow growth of social institutions). Above all, we begin to question the temporal dynamics of all that, which have either accelerated, or were always more rapid than we registered in an older mind's eye.

This is very precisely what has happened in the art world also, and it vindicates Bonito-Oliva's diagnosis[15] of the end of modernism as the end of the modernist developmental or historical paradigm, where each formal position built dialectically on the previous one and created a whole new kind of production in the empty spaces, or out of the contradictions. But this could be registered from the modernist perspective with a certain pathos: everything has been done; no more formal or stylistic invention is possible, art itself is over and to be replaced by criticism. From the postmodern side of the divide, it does not look like that, and the "end of history" here simply means that anything goes.

There remain then the groups themselves and the identities that had seemed to correspond to them. Just because economics, poverty, art, and scientific research have become "historical" in some new sense (which one had better call neohistorical), bag people, economists, artists, and scientists have not disappeared; rather, the nature of their group identity has been modified and become seemingly more questionable, like a choice of fashion. And indeed neohistory, having nowhere else to channel the increasingly swift currents of its Heracleitean stream, seems almost certain to turn to fashion and the market, that now being understood as a deeper ontological economic reality that is as mysterious and final as nature once was. Neohistorical explanation thus leaves the new groups in place, does away with ontological forms of truth, and pays lip service to some more secular, ultimately determining, instance by anchoring its findings in the market rather than in the modifications of capitalism. The return to history everywhere remarked today demands closer scrutiny in the light of this "historical" perspective—only it is not a return exactly, seeming rather to mean incorporating the "raw material" of history and leaving its function out, a kind of flattening and appropriation (in the sense in which it has lately been said that neo-expressionist German artists today are lucky to have had Hitler). Yet the most systemic and abstract analysis of this tendency—towards a collective organization that envelops business and its underclasses alike—assigns the ultimate systemic condition of possibility for all such group emergence (what used to be called its causalities) to the dynamics of late capitalism itself.

This is an objective dialectic that populists have often found repellent and which has often been more narrowly rehearsed in the form of the paradox or the paralogism: the emergent groups as so many new markets for new products, so many new interpellations for the advertising image itself. Is not the fast-food industry the unexpected solution—as with philosophy, its fulfillment and abolition all at once—to the debate on pay for housework? Are minority quotas not to be understood first and foremost as the allocation of segments of television time, and is not the production of the appropriate new group-specific products the truest recognition a business society can bring to its others? Finally, then, is not the very logic of capitalism itself ultimately as dependent on the equal right to consumption as it once was to the wage system or a uniform set of juridical categories applicable to everyone? Or, on the other hand, if individualism is really dead after all, is not late capitalism so hungry and thirsty for Luhmannian differentiation and the endless production and proliferation of new groups and neoethnicities of all kinds as to qualify it as the only truly "democratic" and certainly the only "pluralistic" mode of production?

Two positions must be distinguished here, which are both wrong. On the one hand, for a properly postmodern "cynical reason," and in the spirit of the preceding rhetorical questions, the new social movements are simply the result—the concomitants and the products—of capitalism itself in its final and most unfettered stage. On the other hand, for a radical-liberal populism such movements are always to be seen as the local victories and the painful achievements and conquests of small groups of people in struggle (who are themselves figures for class struggle in general, as that has determined all the institutions of history, very much including capitalism itself). In short, and no longer to put so fine a point on it, are the "new social movements" consequences and aftereffects of late capitalism? Are they new units generated by the system itself in its interminable inner self-differentiation and self-reproduction? Or are they very precisely new "agents of history" who spring into being in resistance to the system as forms of opposition to it, forcing it against the direction of its own internal logic into new reforms and internal modifications? But this is precisely a false opposition, about which it would be just as satisfactory to say that both positions are right; the crucial issue is the theoretical dilemma, replicated in both, of some seeming explanatory choice between the alternatives of agency and system. In reality, however, there is no such choice, and both explanations or models—absolutely inconsistent with each other—are also incommensurable with each other and must be rigorously separated at the same time that they are deployed simultaneously.

But perhaps the alternative of agency or system is just that old dilemma of Marxism—voluntarism versus determinism—wrapped up in new theoretical material. I think this is so, but the dilemma is not limited to Marxists; nor is its fatal reappearance particularly humiliating or shameful for the Marxian tradition, since the conceptual limits it betrays seem to be closer to Kantian limits on the human mind itself. But just as the identification of the base-superstructure dilemma with the old mind-body problem does not necessarily debunk or reduce the former, but rather restages the latter as a distorted and individualistic anticipation of what finally turns out to be a social and historical antinomy, so here also the identification of earlier precursive philosophical forms of the antinomy between voluntarism and determinism rewrites those genealogically as earlier versions of this. In Kant himself, clearly, such an "earlier version" is offered by the superposition and coexistence of the two parallel worlds of the noumenon and the phenomenon, which seem rigorously to occupy the same space, but of which (like waves

or particles) only one can be "intended" by the mind's eye at any point. Freedom and causality then in Kant rehearse a dialectic altogether comparable to this one of agency and system, or—in its practical political or ideological form—voluntarism versus determinism. For the phenomenal world in Kant is "determined" at least to the degree that in it the laws of causality reign supreme and tolerate no exception. Nor would "freedom" be such an exception, exactly, since it evokes another intelligibility altogether and simply does not compute within the causal system, even as some inversion or negation of this last. Freedom, which equally characterizes the human and social world when its individuals are grasped as things in themselves (they cannot really be so grasped conceptually, but the Kantian resonances of Sartre's existential period give something of a feeling of what that would look like, even though the whole point of the noumenon is that it precisely cannot "look like" anything), in that sense can only be understood as an alternative code for the same realities that are also causal (in another world). Kant showed that we cannot hope to use these codes together or coordinate them in any meaningful way, and above all, that it would be vain (and metaphysical) to hammer them together into a "synthesis." He did not exactly suggest, I think, that we were thereby condemned to an alternation between them; but that would seem to be the only conclusion to draw.

An even earlier precursor of this Kantian version of what would seem to be the antinomy of historical change and collective praxis redirects our attention to a rather different feature of the dilemma, since this version—more actively ethical than Kant's (who simply presupposes the existence and possibility of a proper conduct)—seeks in some distress to reconcile "causality," or "determinism," with the very possibility of action itself. The predestination debate[16] is, of course, more dramatically contradictory than the later and more secular bourgeois and proletarian forms we have been considering in Kant and Marx; the awkwardness of its "solutions" are more embarrassing for the modern mind. Nonetheless, some conception of divine pansynchronism, of the providential anticipation or the thoroughgoing predestination of all the acts of history, is surely the first mystified form whereby people (in the "West") attempted to conceptualize the logic of history as a whole, and to formulate its dialectical interrelationship and its telos. To wonder, then, how the necessity of my future acts is to be squared with any active obligation on my part to struggle to make them come out right is to tap the same anxiety that will confront political activ-

ists later on when a doctrine of historical necessity and inevitability seems on the point of sapping their militant resolve. The equivalent of James Hogg's well-known reductio ad absurdum (in which one of the elect concludes that he is then free to commit any crime or enormity that passes through his head)[17] would then turn out to be—mutatis mutandis—the seemingly more respectable figure of the *Katheder-sozialist*, or perhaps the "renegades" and revisionists of the Second International.

Yet it seems possible that the ideologues of the predestination debate found a "solution" which on a little reflection is nowhere near as ludicrous as one might first presume, and furthermore proves to be genuinely dialectical or, at the very least, an admirably creative leap of the philosophical imagination. "The outward and visible signs of inward election": the formula has the merit of including and acknowledging a freedom that it outsmarts and outflanks at the same time. Its genuine conceptual rigor solves its problems by disqualifying it at the same time that it raises it to a higher level: your free choice of right action does not then qualify you for election or earn your right to salvation, but it is the latter's sign and external mark. Your freedom and praxis is thereby itself enveloped within the larger "deterministic" scheme, which foresees your capacity for just this agonizing encounter with free choice in the first place. The later distinction between individual and collective can then clarify this antiquated machinery of clarification, since it makes a little clearer how the very condition of possibility of individual commitment and action is given within the development of the collective itself. In that sense, there never is an alternative between voluntarism and determinism (which is exactly what the theologians sought to argue): your commitment to praxis is then not a disproof of the doctrine of objective circumstances (the situation being or not being "ripe") but, on the contrary, testifies to this last from the inside and confirms it, just as "infantile" or suicidal voluntarism confirms it the other way round, being itself fully as much a product of social circumstances as collective praxis. The distinction clearly solves nothing from the individual or existential point of view, for, like Hegel's "ruse of reason" or Adam Smith's "invisible hand" (not to speak of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*), the whole point is to follow one's nature and one's passion in the first place. The point where "determinism" or a collective logic of history spirals around those choices and passions and reincludes them at a higher level can be glimpsed when we reflect not merely that such passions and values are

themselves social but that the very proclivity to be demoralized and discouraged by a logic of circumstances, the appropriation of that as an excuse and an alibi for passivity and for temporizing withdrawal, is also social and is thus factored into the larger perspective while still remaining a free choice in the individual sense. One's reaction to necessity, in other words, is itself an expression of freedom.

Meanwhile, the two versions we have examined, the theological and the dialectical, both seem to cheat on the present and its agonizing choices by shifting the perspective to the very ends of time: theology spreading everything forward from a beginning in which it is all foretold in the first place; the dialectic "winging its flight at dusk" and pronouncing on the historic necessity of what has already taken place (if it happened that way, it is because it had to happen that way). But what had to happen included all the forms of individual agency, very much including their convictions as to their own freedom and their own efficacity. It is a fable one can tell, the other way round, perhaps, about the Cuban Revolution, in which, notoriously, the old Cuban Communist party failed to participate until very late in the day, owing to its assessment of "objective historical possibility." One can then deduce a facile lesson about the debilitating effect of a belief in historical inevitability and the energizing capacities of certain voluntarisms. On a larger view, however, it has been argued that[18] whatever the immediate assessment and practical decision of the party in the fire of the event, its own work among Cuban workers in the previous decades played an incalculable part in an ultimate revolutionary victory for which it was not itself immediately responsible. The creation of a revolutionary culture and consciousness—along the lines of Marx's image of the "mole of history"—is no less a form of agency than the final struggle: but it is also itself part of the objective circumstances and the historical necessities that from a more immediate angle of praxis seem incompatible with action and agency in the first place.

Such "philosophical solutions," which proceed, as we have said, by a differentiation of incompatible codes and models (and which I have tried to reformulate in the doctrine of levels in *The Political Unconscious*), of course, themselves still lie in the phenomenal world and are thus susceptible to transformation into ideological alibis: all science is also necessarily ideology at one and the same time, insofar as we cannot but take the position of the individual subject on what vainly attempted to stand beyond the perspectives of individual subjectivity.

Nonetheless, the proposal is clearly immediately relevant to the issue of the "new social movements" and their relationship to capitalism inso-far as it provides the simultaneous possibility of active political commitment along with disabused systemic realism and contemplation, and not some sterile choice between those two things.

Meanwhile, if we object that the philosophical dilemma or antinomy hereby evoked holds only for absolute change (or revolution), and that these problems disappear when the sights are lowered to punctual reforms and to the daily struggles of what we may metaphysically call a kind of local politics (where systemic perspectives no longer hold), we have of course located the crucial issue in the politics of the postmodern as well as the ultimate stake in the "totalization" debate. An older politics sought to coordinate local and global struggles, so to speak, and to endow the immediate local occasion for struggle with an allegorical value, namely that of representing the overall struggle itself and incarnating it in a here-and-now thereby transfigured. Politics works only when these two levels can be coordinated; they otherwise drift apart into a disembodied and easily bureaucratized abstract struggle for and around the state, on the one hand, and a properly interminable series of neighborhood issues on the other, whose "bad infinity" comes, in postmodernism, where it is the only form of politics left, to be invested with something of Nietzsche's social Darwinism and with the willed euphoria of some metaphysical permanent revolution. I think myself that that euphoria is a compensation formation, in a situation in which, for a time, genuine (or "totalizing") politics is no longer possible; it is necessary to add that what is lost in its absence, the global dimension, is very precisely the dimension of economics itself, or of the system, of private enterprise and the profit motive, which cannot be challenged on a local level. I believe that, *en attendant*, it will be politically productive, and will remain a modest form of genuine politics in its own right, to attend vigilantly to just such symptoms as the waning of the visibility of that global dimension, to the ideological resistance to the concept of totality, and to that epistemological razor of postmodern nominalism which shears away such apparent abstractions as the economic system and the social totality themselves, such that for an anticipation of the "concrete" is substituted the "merely particular," eclipsing the "general" (in the form of the mode of production itself).

That the "new social movements" are postmodern, insofar as they are effects and consequences of "late capitalism," is however virtually a

tautology which has no evaluative function. What is sometimes characterized as a nostalgia for class politics of some older type is generally more likely to be simply a "nostalgia" for politics *tout court*: given the way in which periods of intense politization and subsequent periods of depolitization and withdrawal are modeled on the great economic rhythms of the boom and bust of the business cycle, to describe this feeling as "nostalgia" is about as adequate as to characterize the body's hunger, before dinner, as a "nostalgia for food."

V. The Anxiety of Utopia

Where one may be permitted to differ from the programmatic formulations of some of the ideologues of postmodern politics probably is to be located in the content rather than the form of the assertions. Laclau and Mouffe's exemplary description of the way in which alliance politics function—in the establishing of an axis of "equivalence" along which the parties line up—has nothing to do, as they themselves point out, with the content of the issues around which the equivalence is constructed. (They allow, for example, for the theoretical possibility, in a specific and unique conjecture, that "what occurs at *all* levels of society . . . [might be] absolutely determined by what happens at the level of the economy.")[19] Very often, obviously, the equivalence will be hammered together on nonclass issues such as abortion or nuclear energy. What those who are "nostalgic for class politics" assert in such circumstances is not that these alliances are "wrong," whatever that might mean, but that they are generally not as durable as those organized around class; or better still, that such alliances become more durable forces and movements by developing in the direction of class consciousness. As hapless postmodern standardbearers have occasionally accused me of "disavowing" the non-class-based movements and have recommended the Rainbow Coalition instead,[20] it ought to be noted here that the Jackson experience is exemplary in this respect, inasmuch as he rarely makes a speech in which working-class experience is not "constructed" as the mediation around which the equivalence of the coalition is to find its active cohesion. But this is very precisely what is meant by the rhetoric of class politics and the language of totalization, an operation which Jackson has virtually reinvented for our time in the political area.

As for "totalization" itself—evidently, for postmodernists, one of the most sordid residual vices to be eradicated from the populist health and fitness of the new era—individuals, like Humpty Dumpty, cannot make

it mean what they want it to mean, but groups can, and in the face of current doxa (" 'to totalize' does not just mean to unify, but rather means to unify with an eye to power and control; and as such, this term points to the hidden power relations behind our humanist and positivist systems of unifying disparate materials, be they aesthetic or scientific")[21] one can only patiently review the real history of the word—somewhat as one rescues the histories of minorities or underclasses that have fallen into oblivion—and then let it go at that.

The term—a Sartrean coinage linked to the project of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*—should initially be sharply distinguished from that other stigmatized word, *totality*, to which I will return later on. Indeed, if the word *totality* sometimes seems to suggest that some privileged bird's-eye view of the whole is available, which is also the Truth, then the project of totalization implies exactly the opposite and takes as its premise the impossibility for individual and biological human subjects to conceive of such a position, let alone to adopt or achieve it. "From time to time," Sartre says somewhere, "you make a partial summing up." The summing up, from a perspective or point of view, as partial as it must be, marks the project of totalization as the response to nominalism (something I will discuss below, with particular reference to Sartre). What ought first to be evoked, in the totalizations of modernism and the "wars on totality" of the postmodern, is then very precisely that concrete social and historical situation itself, before we come to possible responses to it.

If the meaning of a word is its use, we can best grasp "totalization" in Sartre through its function—to envelope and find a least common denominator for the twin human activities of perception and action. A younger Sartre had already combined these activities by way of one of their dominant features, under the concept of negation and nihilation (*néantisation*) since for him both perception and action were forms through which the actually existing world was negated and made into something else (the complications involved in affirming this about perception—or cognition—are part of the burden of his great early book, *The Imaginary*, in which, for example, sense perception is characterized by the strong awareness that the color or texture is above all *not* me, *not* consciousness). "Nihilation" was then for the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* already a totalizing concept, so to speak, since it aimed at uniting the twin realms of contemplation and action with a view towards dissolving the former into the latter. This was reinforced by the later proposed equivalent of "praxis," under which perception and

thought are also subsumed (except for peculiarly specialized bourgeois attempts in both areas to escape that humiliating subsumption). A fading afterimage of Gestalt psychology will now be helpful in specifying the advantages of the new word "totalization" as an equivalent for "praxis" itself; it cannot be denied that the concept is designed in part to stress the unification inherent in human action; and the way in which what was formerly called negation can also be seen as the forging of a new situation—the unification of a construct, the interrelating of a new idea to the old ones, the active securing of a new perception, whether visual or auditory, its forced conversion into a new form. Totalizing, in Sartre, is, strictly speaking, that process whereby, actively impelled by the project, an agent negates the specific object or item and reincorporates it into the larger project-in-course. Philosophically, and barring some genuine mutation of the species, it is hard to see how human activity under the third, or postmodern, stage of capitalism could elude or evade this very general formula, although some of postmodernism's ideal images—schizophrenia above all—are clearly calculated to rebuke it and to stand as unassimilable and unsubsumable under it. As for "power," it is equally clear that praxis or totalization always aims at securing the fragile control or survival of an even more fragile subject within a world otherwise utterly independent and subject to no one's whims or desires. I suppose it can be argued that the disempowered do not want power, that "the Left wants to lose," as Baudrillard once put it, that in such a corrupt universe failure and weakness are more authentic than "projects" and "partial summings up" in the first place. I doubt if many people really feel this way, however; in order to be utterly admirable such an attitude would surely have to be absolutized to the point of Buddhism; at all events, this was equally obviously not the lesson the Jackson campaign had for us. As for all the scare images of *1984*, they are even more ludicrous in the Gorbachev period than they were before; and it is, to say the least, a difficult and contradictory operation to proclaim the death of socialism and issue spine-chilling messages about its totalitarian bloodlust in one breath.

The hostility to the concept of "totalization" would thus seem to be most plausibly decoded as a systematic repudiation of notions and ideals of praxis as such, or of the collective project.[22] As for its apparent ideological cognate, the concept of "totality," we will see later on that it is to be grasped as one philosophical form of the notion of a "mode of production," a notion that it would seem equally strategic for the postmodern to evade or to exclude.

Yet some final word needs to be said about some of the more philosophic disguises of these disputes, in which "totality" and "totalization," indistinctly confounded, are taken as the signs, no longer even of a Stalinism of the mind so much as of a properly metaphysical survival, complete with illusions of truth, a baggage of first principles, a scholastic appetite for "system" in the conceptual sense, a yearning for closure and certainty, a belief in centeredness, a commitment to representation, and any number of other antiquated mindsets. It is curious that, simultaneously with the newfound pluralisms of late capitalism, but in the tangible decline of any active political praxis or resistance, such absolute formalisms should begin to make their way; they diagnose the survival of content within a given intellectual operation as the telltale mark of "belief" in some older sense, as the stain left behind it by the continuing existence of metaphysical axioms and illicit presuppositions, which have not yet, following the basic Enlightenment program, been expunged. It is clear (not least from its proximity to John Dewey and to a certain pragmatism) that Marxism itself must have much sympathy for the challenging of concealed presuppositions, which it, however, identifies as ideology, just as it unmasks the privileging of a given type of content as "reification." The dialectic is in any case not exactly a philosophy in that sense, but rather that peculiar other thing, a "unity of theory and practice." Its ideal (which famously involves the realization and the abolition of philosophy all at once) is not the invention of a better philosophy that—in opposition to all of Gödel's well-known laws of gravity—seeks to do without premises altogether, but rather the transformation of the natural and social world into a meaningful totality such that "totality" in the form of a philosophical system will no longer be required.

But there is an existential argument frequently concealed and presupposed within such now conventional anti-Utopian attitudes, which are triggered indifferently by a whole range of stigmatized terms—from "identity" as it is posited in the philosophy of the Frankfurt School all the way to the cognate language of "totalization" (Sartre) and "totality" (Lukács) already touched on here—and also, and not least, by the very language of Utopia itself, now generally recognized as a code word for the systemic transformation of contemporary society. This hidden argument posits the end or master term of all such themes as this or that variant of a still essentially Hegelian notion of "reconciliation" (*Versöhnung*): which is to say, the illusion of the possibility of some ultimate reunion between a subject and an object radically sundered or

estranged from each other, or even (the term betraying its debt to schematic and potted accounts of Hegel in the manuals) to some new "synthesis" between them. "Reconciliation" in this sense, then, becomes assimilated to this or that illusion or metaphysic of "presence," or its equivalent in other postcontemporary philosophical codes.

Anti-Utopian thought therefore here involves a crucial mediation, which it does not always spell out. It argues that the social or collective illusion of Utopia, or of a radically different society, is flawed first and foremost because it is invested with a personal or existential illusion that is itself flawed from the outset. According to this deeper argument, it is because the metaphysics of identity are at work everywhere in private life that it can be projected onto politics and the social. Such reasoning, of course, implicit or explicit, betrays a very old middle-class notion of the collective and the political as unreal, as a space onto which subjective and private obsessions are noxiously projected. But this notion is itself the effect of the split between public and private existence in modern societies and can take familiar, low-level forms such as the characterization of the student movement in terms of Oedipal revolt. Contemporary anti-Utopian thought has, however, erected far more complex and interesting arguments on this seemingly tired and unpromising basis.

Meanwhile, the political sequels to this first move, which condemns political vision on the strength of existential illusion, require responses of a different type, which will not be spelled out here. Foremost of these conclusions is that Utopian thinking—although seemingly benign, if not altogether ineffectual—is in reality dangerous and leads among other things to Stalin's camps, to Pol Pot, and (freshly rediscovered during the bicentenary period) to the "massacres" of the French Revolution (which themselves lead us back immediately to the ever vital thought of Edmund Burke, who first warned us about the violence that was bound to emerge from the hubris of human attempts to tamper with and transform the organic fabric of the existing social order).

Yet a rather different "conclusion" often coexists with this one, and it is the libidinal fear or fantasy that Utopian society, the Utopian "reconciliation of subject and object," will somehow be a place of renunciation, of the simplification of life, of the obliteration of exciting urban difference and of the muting of sensory stimulus (fears of sexual repression and taboo are here explicitly deployed), a place, finally, of the return to simple "organic" village forms of "rural idiocy," from which everything interestingly complex about "Western civilization" has been amputated. This fear or anxiety about "Utopia" is a concrete ideological and

psychological phenomenon that demands sociological investigation in its own right. As for its intellectual expression, however, the late Raymond Williams has succinctly disposed of it with the retort that socialism will not be simpler than capitalism, but much more complicated; and that to imagine the daily life and the organization of a society in which, for the first time in human history, human beings are fully in control of their own destinies makes demands on the mind which are forbiddingly difficult for subjects of the present "administered world" and often understandably frightening to them.

But to put it this way is also to recall that it is the socialist ideal which finally seeks to put an end to metaphysics, and to project the first elements of a vision of some achieved "human age," in which the "hidden hand" of God, nature, the market, traditional hierarchy, and charismatic leadership will definitely have been disposed of. Not the least contradiction of contemporary anti-Utopian positions, then, lies in the way in which what is (quite properly) identified as metaphysical in the existential illusions of reconciliation and presence is then "projected" onto a secular political ideal which in fact for the first time seeks to have done with metaphysical authority on the level of human society itself.

The philosophical content of anti-Utopian thought, however, is to be located in what we have called its intermediary step, namely, the conflation of "identity" with this or that form of dialectical "reconciliation," to which we now return. Ironically, the power of this moment of the argument is itself relatively dialectical, since what it generally stresses is not the immediate experience of reconciliation or of presence—for which few except mystics of various kinds would claim genuine existence—but rather the damage done by the illusion of its possible future existence, or, what amounts to the same thing, but its logical presupposition, its implication within our working concepts. Thus, to take this second danger first, concepts such as those of "subject" and "object" will be flawed by the way in which they seem to imply, and are thus logically founded on, a notion of the "reconciliation" of subject and object, which is illusory. Those who manipulate such "dialectical" concepts, therefore—whatever they go on to *say* about the concrete possibilities of reconciliation (and no reader of Adorno will find much reassurance along those lines)—nonetheless by logical implication perpetuate the hidden foundational "synthesis" in what then seems to work out into a virtually narrative or even historical pattern—a moment of "primal unity" before the separation of subject and object, and a

moment of unity reinvented at the end of time when subject and object are once again "reconciled." A nostalgic-Utopian triad thus emerges which is handily identified as the Marxist "vision of history": a golden age before the fall, that is to say, before capitalist dissociation, which can optionally be positioned where you like, in primitive communism or tribal society, in the Greek or the Renaissance polis, in the agricultural commune of whatever national or cultural tradition before the emergence of state power; the "modern age" or in other words capitalism; and then whatever Utopian vision can be appealed to replace that. But the notion of a "fall" into civilization, the modern, the "dissociation of sensibility," is rather, unless I am mistaken, a feature of the right-wing critique of capitalism which preceded Marx, and of which T. S. Eliot's view of history is still the most familiar version for humanists; while the Marxian conception of a multiplicity of "modes of production" makes this nostalgic and triadic narrative relatively unthinkable.

In the case of Adorno and Horkheimer, for example, the peculiar originality of their conception of a "dialectic of enlightenment" is that it excludes any beginning or first term and specifically describes "enlightenment" as an "always-already" process whose structure lies very precisely in its generation of the illusion that what preceded it (which was also a form of enlightenment) was that "original" moment of myth, the archaic union with nature, which is the vocation of enlightenment "proper" to annul. If it is a matter of telling a historical story, therefore, we must read Adorno and Horkheimer as positing a narrative without a beginning in which the "fall," or dissociation, is always there already. If, however, we decide to reread their book as a diagnosis of the peculiarities and the structural limits and pathologies of historical vision or narrative itself, then we may conclude, in a somewhat different fashion, that the strange afterimage of "primal unity" always seems to be projected after the fact onto whatever present the historical eye fixes as its "inevitable" past, which vanishes without a trace when frontal vision is displaced onto it in turn.

Derrida's influential version of all this, which turns on Rousseau's own primordial version, is more subtle and complicated than the analysis outlined above, since he adds into the picture the very language used by the Utopianist to evoke a state by definition lacking in language itself. Here, conceptual confusion or philosophical error (matters of "consciousness" and thinking) have been displaced by the fatalities of sentence structures, which cannot be made to do what the Utopian "thinker" needs to have them do, namely, to secure something radically different

from his own present of speaking and writing. Meanwhile, that "present" of speaking and writing being itself illusory (since sentences have to move in time according to the laws of the hermeneutic circle), it can scarcely be called upon to stage any adequate picture of a present or a presence elsewhere in "time." Derrida's conception of supplementarity has often been enlisted in the anti-Utopian arsenal of polemic weapons and arguments; it may now be preferable to see whether it cannot be read in a somewhat different way as an ensemble of consequences to be drawn about the sentence itself.

When projected back out of the linguistic realm onto the existential, however, in the form of a kind of Derridean "ideology," this position on "reconciliation" conflates with other versions into a kind of ethic of temporality best dramatized in an older Sartrean language (even though the Sartrean heritage of such thinking was obscured, not to say occulted, by the energetic break between emergent structuralism and Sartrean phenomenology). In *Being and Nothingness*, for example, "presence" or the reconciliation between subject and object is staged as the inescapable but impossible longing (of "being-for-itself" or consciousness) to incorporate the stable plenitude of the "being-in-itself" of things: what constitutes consciousness in the first place is just this longing to absorb "being" without actually becoming a thing outright, or, in other words, dying. All human temporality is driven by this mirage of the plentitude of subject-object reconciliation just out of reach before us: and the advantage of Sartre's phenomenological terminology is to enlarge this drama well beyond the merely epistemological or aesthetic and to show it at work fully as much in the interstices and micrologies of everyday life as in the grandest metaphysical stances and conflicts. Thus, the very drinking of a glass of water in thirst deploys a ghostly imminence of the plenitude of thirst quenched, which then recedes into the past without achieving realization.

This mirage of being, which also governs our ambitions and our tastes, our sexuality and our ways of handling other people, our leisure as well as our labor, then inspires a diagnosis and an ethic which can readily be translated into the "textual" or deconstructive ones: namely, the effort to imagine a way of living that could radically eschew these illusions, already designated as metaphysical in Sartre: a life in time capable of doing without the longing to become the "in-itself-for-itself" ("what the religions call God"), and this down to the very microstructure of our most minute gestures and feelings. This ethical ideal of anti-transcendent human existence (which Sartre calls "authenticity" and which his own

fragmentary philosophical sequels were unable to work out fully in terms of purely individual existence) is surely one of the most glorious of all post-Nietzschean Enlightenment visions, which tracks religion, metaphysics, and transcendence into the most seemingly secular spaces and events of an only apparently "enlightened" modern world. It is much more closely related to the Derridean scrutiny of the metaphysical than to Adorno's conception of Enlightenment. The latter clearly admires Sartre but implacably repudiates the individual focus of existential thinking and analysis, for him inseparable from the work of his great political and philosophical adversary, Heidegger.

Yet what is worth asking today about this seemingly Utopian and unrealizable vision of an authentic or a "textualized" existence in full postmodernism is whether it has not already in some sense become socially realized, and whether it may not very precisely be one of the transformations of everyday life and of the psychic subject designated by the term postmodern. In that case, the critique of the metaphysical shadows and traces that persist within modernity paradoxically turns around into a replication of that very postmodern triumph over the metaphysical remnants of the modern, where to call for the shedding of any illusion about psychic identity or the centered subject, for the ethical ideal of good molecular "schizophrenic" living, and for the ruthless abandonment of the mirage of presence may turn out to be a description of the way we live now, rather than its rebuke or subversion. Adorno's life ended at the threshold of this "new world," which he envisioned only intermittently, and on the prophetic mode; but his position on the impossibility of transcendence and metaphysics is still instructive, if only to make it plain that the lament over the passing of these things need not be conservative or nostalgic: for he saw in the loss of philosophy's metaphysical and speculative vocation not a program for restoring the latter on the mode of "as if," but rather a supreme historical symptom of the technocratization of contemporary society.

There is, however, another conclusion to be drawn from this long excursus on the existential presuppositions of contemporary anti-Utopian thought, for it suggests that, rather than conflate the individual and existential metaphysics of presence, plenitude, or "reconciliation" with the political will to transform the social system itself, we must break the link between the two. The unexamined premise of this new conservatism was that the political vision of a radically different society was somehow a projection of the personal metaphysics of identity, and therefore must be renounced along with this last. Politically and ideologi-

cally, however, the situation is in fact reversed; and it is the power of the philosophical critique of existential metaphysics which is pressed into service in the project to dismantle political visions of social change (or in other words "Utopias"). But there is no reason to think that these two levels have anything in common; anti-Utopianism mainly affirms their "identity" without arguing it, and the Utopian ideal of a fully human and immensely more complex society than this one need not be invested with any of the longings and illusions unmasked by the existential critique. What ultimate anxieties such a society involves are materialist and biological, the deconcealment of human history as a dizzying sequence of dying generations and as a generalized demographic scandal for the mind: things Adorno consigns to the realm of natural rather than human history. But the foundational texts for that realm are neither Thomas More nor Dostoyevsky's "Grand Inquisitor," but probably something closer to Kafka's "Josephina the Mouse-Singer," or perhaps the classics of Buddhism.

VI. The Ideology of Difference

Thus the ideology of groups and difference does not really strike a blow, either philosophically or politically, against tyranny. But as Linda Hutcheon suggests, its real target may lie elsewhere in that somewhat different thing (which, however, Toqueville still identified with "tyranny"), namely, consensus:

> What is important in all these internalized challenges to humanism is the interrogating of the notion of consensus. Whatever narratives or systems that once allowed us to think we could unproblematically and universally define public agreement have now been questioned by the acknowledgement of differences—in theory and in artistic practice. In its most extreme formulation, the result is that consensus becomes the illusion of consensus, whether it be defined in terms of minority (educated, sensitive, elitist) or mass (commercial, popular, conventional) culture, for *both* are manifestations of late capitalist, bourgeois, informational, postindustrial society, a society in which social reality is structured by discourses (in the plural)—or so postmodernism endeavors to teach.[23]

But if this is so, then a transfer of social and political targets has imperceptibly taken place, and for one mode of production another has been substituted. "Tyranny" meant the ancien régime; its modern ana-

logue, "totalitarianism," intends socialism; but "consensus" now designates representative democracy, with its ballots and public opinion polls, and it is now this that, already objectively in crisis, finds itself politically challenged by the new social movements, none of which find the appeal to majority will and consensus particularly legitimate any longer, let alone satisfactory. What will concern us here for another moment is, on the one hand, the suitability of the general ideology or rhetoric of difference to articulate those concrete social struggles, and, on the other, the deeper implicit representation or ideological model of the social totality on which the logic of groups is based and which it perpetuates —a model which also involves, as has been suggested in an earlier chapter, a metaphorical exchange of energies with those other two characteristic postmodern systems (or representations!) which are the media and the market.

For the very concept of difference itself is booby-trapped; it is at least pseudodialectical, and its imperceptible alternation with its sometimes indistinguishable opposite number, Identity, is among the oldest language and thought games recorded in (several) philosophical traditions. (Is the difference between the Same and the Other the same as the difference between the Other and the Same, or is it different?) Much of what passes for a spirited defense of difference is, of course, simply liberal tolerance, a position whose offensive complacencies are well known but which has at least the merit of raising the embarrassing historical question of whether the tolerance of difference, as a social fact, is not the result of social homogenization and standardization and the obliteration of genuine social difference in the first place. The dialectic of neoethnicity, then, clearly belongs here, for there is a "difference," one would think, between one's being condemned to be identified as a member of a group and a more optional choice of the badge of group membership because its culture has become publicly valorized. Ethnicity in the postmodern, in other words—*neo*-ethnicity—is something of a yuppie phenomenon, and thereby without too many mediations a matter of fashion and the market. On the other hand, the acknowledgment of Difference can under those circumstances come as something of an offense as well, as the non-Jew who identifies Jews as such involuntarily triggers all the old signals of anti-Semitism in spite of himself. The mirage held out by the neoethnic groups—it was stronger in the sixties than it is today—is still the cultural envy of the achieved collective: the "groupie," something of a caricature of the class traitor, is one who casts his or her lot with a collective that is fantasized as being more strongly

cohesive and archaic than your own. The class content of the phenomenon persists, since it is a feature of the social dynamic of capitalism (and perhaps of other modes of production) that in a first moment, and before a reaction of panic whereby they pull back together, the ruling class will be less cohesive socially and more given over to individualism and anomie than the subordinate ones, whom economic necessity holds together. If the fundamental premise of any Marxian social psychology lies in the well-nigh ontological attraction and force of gravity of the achieved collective as such,[24] then the envy and nostalgia of elites for the realer people of the underclasses is at once given (and something of the same effects can be distributed spatially, by imperialism and tourism, among the metropolis and the Third World). Nonetheless this particular appeal of ethnicity seems on the wane today, perhaps because there are now too many groups, and because their affiliation to representation (most often of a media type) is clearer and undermines the ontological satisfactions of the fiction in question.

On the other hand, if "difference" is a doubtful political slogan full of inner slippages—for example, it quite properly prolongs the sixties defense of what are sometimes horribly called "life-style issues," until at the last minute veering around into a Cold War-type antisocialism, —"differentiation," surely the fundamental sociological instrument for grasping the postmodern (and the conceptual key to the ideology of "difference" in the first place), is no less unreliable. This is then the deeper paradox rehearsed by the attempt to grasp "postmodernism" in the form of periodizing or totalizing abstraction; it lies in this seeming contradiction between the attempt to unify a field and to posit the hidden identities that course through it and the logic of the very impulses of this field, which postmodernist theory itself openly characterizes as a logic of difference or differentiation. If what is historically unique about the postmodern is thus acknowledged as sheer heteronomy and the emergence of random and unrelated subsystems of all kinds, then, or so the argument runs, there has to be something perverse about the effort to grasp it as a unified system in the first place. The effort at conceptual unification is, to say the least, strikingly inconsistent with the spirit of postmodernism itself; perhaps, indeed, ought it not to be unmasked as an attempt to "master" or "dominate" the postmodern, to reduce and exclude its play of differences, and even to enforce some new conceptual conformity over its pluralistic subjects? Yet, leaving the gender of the verb out of it, we all do want to "master" history in whatever ways turn out to be possible: the escape from the nightmare of

history—the conquest by human beings of the otherwise seemingly blind and natural "laws" of socioeconomic fatality—remains the irreplaceable will of the Marxist heritage, whatever language it may be expressed in.

But the notion that there is something misguided and contradictory about a unified theory of differentiation also rests on a confusion between levels of abstraction: a system that constitutively produces differences remains a system; nor is the idea of such a system supposed to be in kind "like" the object it tries to theorize, any more than the concept of dog is supposed to bark or the concept of sugar to taste sweet. It is felt that something precious and existential, something fragile and unique about our own singularity, will be lost irretrievably when we find out that we are just like everybody else. In that case, so be it; we might as well know the worst; the objection is of course the primal form of existentialism (and phenomenology), and it is rather the emergence of such anxieties that needs first to be explained. Objections to the global concept of postmodernism in this sense seem to me to recapitulate, in other terms, the classical objections to the concept of capitalism itself—something scarcely surprising from our perspective here, which consistently affirms the identity of postmodernism with capitalism itself in its latest systematic mutation. For those objections turned essentially around one form or the other of the following paradox: namely that although the various precapitalist modes of production achieved their capacity to reproduce themselves through various forms of solidarity or collective cohesion, the logic of capital is, on the contrary, a dispersive and atomistic, "individualistic" one, an antisociety rather than a society, whose systematic structure, let alone its reproduction of itself, remains a mystery and a contradiction in terms. Leaving aside the answer to the conundrum (the market), what may be said is that this paradox is the originality of capitalism, and that the verbally contradictory formulas we necessarily encounter in defining it point beyond the words to the thing itself (and also give rise to that peculiar new invention, the dialectic). We will have occasion to return to problems of this kind in what follows: suffice it to say all this more crudely by pointing out that the very concept of differentiation itself (whose most elaborate development we owe to Niklas Luhmann[25]) is itself a systematic one; or, if you prefer, it turns the play of differences into a new kind of identity on a more abstract level.

All of which is further complicated by the intellectual and philosophical obligation to distinguish between inert or extrinsic difference

and dialectical opposition or tension: a differentiation that produces the first kind of merely external difference disperses phenomena in a random and "heterogeneous" way (to use another term that is charged and valorized in postmoderism). But this kind of distinction (black is not white) is everything but "the same" as an opposition that depends on its opposite in its very being (black people are *not* white people) and must thus be analyzed in terms of a dialectical conceptuality in which the central notion of *contradiction*—which has no equivalent in analytic systems—still reigns supreme.

Philosophically, these paradoxes are virtually the central terrain of post-Marxism and the stage for its strategic regression to Kant and Kantianism. What is at stake here, as the work of the most brilliant of such thinkers, Lucio Colletti, emblematically testifies, is the rolling back of Hegel and Marx by way of the conceptual discrediting of contradiction and dialectical opposition. From the feeling—virtually universal in "Western Marxism"—that the dialectic was not likely to occur "in nature," and that Engels's illicit transformation of inert, external, natural, and physical differences (water is not an ice cube) into dialectical oppositions (the basis for much of "dialectical materialism") was philosophically shoddy and ideologically suspect, to the conviction that "dialectical oppositions" are not even "in society" and that the dialectic is itself a mystification—from the first of these positions to the second is not quite what you would call a "mere step," since it involves political apostasy and a deconversion in shame and betrayal; but it is surely the central philosophical step in what is called post-Marxism.

As always, however, we have every interest in separating out the levels and distinguishing from each other cognate topics that in the postmodern often seem generically to fold back into each other. For one thing, a very crucial feature of the topic of difference is foregrounded by the modernist version of it, which insisted on the radical break between the West and the rest, between the modern and the traditional, as we shall see later on (this is the feature according to which Marxism can be said itself to be one of the modernisms—perhaps the only one).

But we must also disentangle from the social version of group difference (as well as from the philosophical debates on the difference between contradiction and opposition) the reigning aesthetic and psychic (or psychoanalytic) forms of this topic, not least because any number of political category-mistakes can often be identified as illicit transfers from the aesthetic itself). The aesthetics of difference—what is often called textuality or textualization—foregrounds a perceptual modification in

the apprehension of postmodern artifacts, which I have characterized, in the opening chapter by way of the slogan of "difference relates"; later on I will offer a further, spatial analysis of this new kind of perception. As for the psychic subject and its theories, this is the area colonized by the Deleuze-Guattari notion of the ideal schizophrenic—that psychic subject who "perceives" by way of difference and differentiation alone, if that is conceivable; of course, the conceiving of it is the construction of an ideal which is, so to speak, the ethical—not to say the political—task proposed by their *Anti-Oedipus*. I think one cannot too often emphasize the logical possibility, alongside both the old closed, centered subject of inner-directed individualism and the new non-subject of the fragmented or schizophrenic self, of a third term which would be very precisely the non-centered subject that is a part of an organic group or collective. Indeed, the final form of Sartre's theory of totalization emerges in the very attempt to theorize such a group and the subject-positions within it.) Meanwhile, although the theory and the rhetoric of multiple subject-positions is an attractive one, it should always be completed by an insistence on the way in which subject-positions do not come into being in a void but are themselves the interpellated roles offered by this or that already existing group. Whatever truce or alliance one wants to stage between one's various subject-positions, therefore (deliberately excluding the stigmatized possibility that one might try to unify them), what will ultimately be at stake is some more concrete truce or alliance between the various real social groups thereby entailed.

As for Althusser's influential but now somewhat outmoded model of "interpellation," what needs to be said is that it was already a group-oriented theory to begin with, since class as such can never be a mode of interpellation, but rather only race, gender, ethnic culture, and the like. (It is no accident that Althusser's examples are religious ones. Indeed, the deeper ground of rhetorics of difference can always be shown to involve fantasms of culture as such, in the anthropological sense, which are themselves authorized and legitimized by notions of religion, always and everywhere the ultimate "thought of the other.") It is only in the cinema (in Fellini's *I Vitelloni*, to be exact) that wealthy young ne'er-do-wells shout "down with the workers!" from the window of their speeding car at the road gangs outside. But it is in reality that group affiliation becomes a daily badge of shame and reproach of inferiority. Or perhaps this should be said in a more complicated way: namely, that class consciousness as such—something infrequently achieved and only laboriously conquered throughout social history—marks the moment

in which the group in question masters the interpellative process in a new way (different from the usual reactive mode), such that it becomes, however momentarily, capable of *interpellating itself* and dictating the terms of its own specular image.

In what follows, however, I will not pursue these registers of the topic. Rather, I will concentrate on the complementary problem (which already anticipates that of cognitive mapping) of the potential representability of the new category of groups as compared to the older one of social classes. For the proposition that we now map or represent our social world to ourselves by way of the category of groups now sheds a somewhat different light on these various developments. Group representation is above all anthropomorphic and, unlike representation in terms of social classes, gives us to understand the social world as divided up and colonized down to the last segment by its collective actors and allegorical representatives, betokening a real world "as full as an egg," as Sartre used to say, and as human as Utopia (or as that "pure poetry" in which none of the remnants of matter or contingency slosh around in the bottom like dregs or stick out like sore thumbs—the plays of Racine, the novels of Henry James). Class categories are more material, more impure and scandalously mixed, in the way in which their determinants or definitional factors involve the production of objects and the relations determined by that, along with the forces of the respective machinery: we can thus see down through class categories to the rocky bottom of the stream. Meanwhile, classes are too large to figure as Utopias, as options you choose and identify with in phantasmatic ways. Besides the occasional stray fascism, the only Utopian gratification offered by the category of social class is the latter's abolition. But groups are small enough (at the limit, the famous "face-to-face" plaza or city-state) to allow for libidinal investment of a more narrative kind. Meanwhile, the externality carried around within the category of the "group" like a skeleton is not *production* but rather *institution*, already, as we shall see, a more suspicious and equally anthropomorphic category —whence the superior mobilizing force of groups over classes: one can come to love one's guild or fraternity and die for it, but the cathexis determined by the three-field rotational system or the universal lathe is probably of a somewhat different and less immediately politicizable type. Classes are few; they come into being by slow transformations in the mode of production; even emergent they seem perpetually at distance from themselves and have to work hard to be sure they really exist as such. Groups, on the other hand, seem to offer the gratifications of

psychic identity (from nationalism to neoethnicity). Since they have become images, groups allow the amnesia of their own bloody pasts, of persecution and untouchability, and can now be consumed: this marks their relationship to the media, which are, as it were, their parliament and the space of their "representation," in the political fully as much as the semiotic sense.

The political horror of consensus—mistaken for a dread of "totalization"—is then simply the justified reluctance of groups that have conquered a certain pride in their own identity to be dictated to by what turn out to be simply other groups, since now everything in our social reality is a badge of group membership and connotes a specific bunch of people. The high-literary "canon," transformed into the class furniture of older white males of a certain distinctive class background, is only one example; the U.S. political party system is another, as are most of the other institutional habits of the superstate, with the signal exception of the media and the market, which, alone among what ought to be institutions, are somehow universal and thereby uniquely privileged in other ways that will be discussed in a moment. It is important, however, to grasp both the links and the differences between this personification of the institutions by group ideology and the older dialectical critique of the social and ideological function of institutions. That the former somehow grew out of the latter—by way of the black box of the 1960s—is likely enough; but on the other (Marxian) view, the class function of a given institution is mediated by the system as a whole, and thus only personalized in the crudest caricatural way (no one, as Marx never tired of saying, thinks all businessmen are individually wicked). Thus the newspaper plays an ideological role in our social order, but not because it is the plaything of a specific social group; for example, commentators, paparazzi, anchormen and -women, and the lords of Fleet Street are from a class perspective merely the class fractions determined by the institutional structure. But in postmodern group consciousness, newspapers and the news portions of the media generally somehow actually *belong* to what is now a new (and powerful) social unit in its own right, a collective actor on the historical scene, feared by politicians and tolerated by the "public," wearing some well-known faces and in its anthropomorphic structure virtually a human being in its own right (although without much depth, even as a narrative character). The sixties had already begun to think in these terms when it projected its struggle against the Vietnam War onto the authoritarian figures of Johnson and the generals, who were thought to be pursuing this war (it is true that

rational motives for it were not easy to deduce) out of sheerly patriarchal malignancy. But once the collective cast of characters gets fixed, each acquires a representational semiautonomy, and it is not easy to square the category of "media journalists," for example, with that more functional older class one of ideologues of big business (or if you prefer something more colorful, "lackeys of capitalism"), even though the great media campaigns (the panic about small children being violated in day-care centers, the assurances about the death of Marxism and socialism everywhere, the "drug war," or the allegedly noxious effects of budget deficits) sweep predictably across all the channels of diffusion with all the regularity of metereological events or of the party directives in the "socialist" countries.

The representational paradoxes involved in any narrative whose fundamental category is the postmodern "group" can then be articulated as follows: since the ideology of groups comes into being simultaneously with the well-known "death of the subject" (of which it is simply an alternate version)—the psychoanalytic undermining of experiences of personal identity, the aesthetic attack on originality, genius and modernist private style, the waning of "charisma" in the media age and of "great men" in the age of feminism, the fragmentary, schizophrenic aesthetic alluded to above (which in reality begins with existentialism) —the consequence will be that these new collective characters and representations that are groups cannot any longer, by definition, be subjects. This is, of course, one of the things that problematize the visions of history or "master narratives" of either bourgeois or socialist revolution (as Lyotard has explained), for it is hard to imagine such a master narrative without a "subject of history."

Virtually Marx's first published essay, the "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction," in a remarkable philosophical leap discovered just such a new subject of history—the proletariat. Marx's early format was then maintained for other such now marginal subjects —blacks, women, the Third World, even, somewhat abusively, students —in the rewriting of the doctrine of "radical chains" during the 1960s. Now, however, in the pluralism of the collective groups, and no matter how "radical" the immiseration or the marginalization of the group in question, it can no longer fill that structural role, for the simple reason that the structure has been modified and the role suppressed. Historically, this is scarcely surprising, since the transitional nature of the new global economy has not yet allowed its classes to form in any stable way, let alone to acquire genuine class consciousness, so that the very

lively social struggles of the current period are largely dispersed and anarchic.

What is more surprising, and perhaps more immediately serious politically, is that the new representational models also foreclose and exclude any adequate representation of what used to be represented—however imperfectly—as a "ruling class." Several features necessary to such a representation are indeed missing, as we have already seen: the dissolution of any conception of production or of an economic infrastructure, and its replacement by the already anthropomorphic notion of an institution, means that no *functional* conception of a ruling group, let alone class, can be conceived. There are no levers for them to control and not much in the way of production for them to manage. Only the media and the market are visible as autonomous entities, and whatever falls outside them, and outside the apparatus of representation in general, will be covered by the amorphous term *power*, whose ubiquity—despite its singular ineptness for describing an increasingly "liberal" global reality —ought to inspire some deeper ideological suspicions.

This lack of functionality in our picture of the social groups, along with the breakdown of their capacity to constitute a subject or an agency, means that we tend to dissociate the acknowledgment of the individual existence of a group (pluralism as a value) from any attribution of a project that becomes registered not as a group but as a *conspiracy*, and thereby falls to another, different slot in the representational apparatus. Reagan's businessmen, for example, about whom by now just about virtually everybody is willing to admit the virtually immediate link between private gain and the most varied legislative program, are perceived —from that perspective—as a list of names in the newspaper, a local network of cronies that you could expand into a regional confraternity (southern California, the Sunbelt); what is most paradoxical, however, is the fact that thus perceived, they shed no discredit on business or businessmen at all. The taxonomy of groups is thus remarkably elastic ideologically and can differentiate in such a way as to preserve the innocence of the original collective, always provided that is secured from breaking that fundamental conceptual barrier or taboo which separates a group from a social class.

That the "new narratives" lack the allegorical capacity to map or model the system can also be seen when we turn to the managerial role of the business class and its command relationship to modifications in daily life. I believe that since we now grasp social reality synchronically—in its strongest sense, which has lately been revealed as that of a *spatial*

system—changes and modifications in daily life must henceforth be deduced after the fact rather than experienced. Bertrand Russell once evoked a very postmodern temporality in which the world itself, in fact freshly created only a second ago, was carefully "antiqued" in advance and deliberately endowed with the artificial traces of deep wear and age and use, so that it seemed to carry a past and a tradition within itself intrinsically (just as its human subjects—as with *Bladerunner's* androids—were furnished with seemingly private stocks of personal memory images, like photograph albums of a spurious family and childhood). The discontinuing of traditional products on the market must now be reconstructed like a word on the tip of the tongue: in most cases the sheer absence of something is hard to recast in the form of an act or a decision to be explained and which can be supposed to imply an agent. The discussions in a boardroom are thus difficult to link up narratively to changes in daily life that are themselves only perceivable ex post facto, and not in the making. As for the future, it is equally absent from the synchronous mint world of the postmodern, whose entire system is, however—like the departure of the area's only major factory—subject to reshuffling without warning, like a deck of fortune-telling cards that are real. The impact of postmodern unemployment on postmodern time consciousness is bound to be considerable, but perhaps unexpectedly indirect: indexing versus catastrophe, the immediate modification of all the valences on the next rollover, as in automatically adjusting mortgage interest rates. Insurance companies—in many ways archaic holdovers from an older temporal (and realist or modernist) universe in which the "life destiny" was still a meaningful narrative category and the funeral home a very central place in the ethnic neighborhood—seem obnubilated with a spurious apotheosis in which to the naked eye they seem on the point of transmogrification into socialism (infrared photography, however, reveals a more humdrum business reality). A new kind of fear—rather than Lenin's famous bribes—now seals this system in, since you have a personal stake in its smooth and unobstructed reproduction, something beginning to happen so fast it is no longer visible. Nor is your fear, now systemic, visible, either, having been experientially repressed; the need to avoid evaluations of the system as a whole is now an integral part of its own internal organization as well as its various ideologies.

This is indeed another reason why the representation of "decision-making"—whether it be the old-fashioned realistic picture of the boardroom or some modern indirect and modernist approach by way of

the problem of representing it in the first place—breaks off unceremoniously in the postmodern, which presupposes as its entry ticket a kind of blasé knowledge in advance of how the system functions. Adorno and Horkheimer's intuition of Hollywood was in this respect prophetic of the later system as a whole: "the truth that [movies and radio] are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce."[26] They had in mind the now classic Hollywood defense of mediocrity, not merely in terms of the general public's taste but in terms of their own function as a business selling products to a public with those tastes. As with all arguments from the "public," then, a seriality results in which the public becomes a phantasmatic other to every single one of its members, each of whom—whatever his or her reactions to this particular mediocre product—has also learned and interiorized the profit motive doctrine that excuses it on the grounds of the motivations of "everyone else." It is like left-handed people being forced to use tools made for right-handers: the knowledge is built into the consumption, which it discounts in advance. As Europeans, Adorno and Horkheimer were obviously scandalized by the openness and vulgarity with which the great movie magnates alluded to the business dimension of their operations and gloried in the profit motive shamelessly attached to each feature, whether modest or pretentious in its "artistic ambitions."

Our own mass culture today, in full postmodernism, naturally enough seems a good deal more sophisticated than the radio and the movies of the thirties and forties; the television public is presumably better educated and also has a good deal more experience of images than its parents had in the Eisenhower era. But I want to argue that if anything, Adorno and Horkheimer's intuition of the ideology of the thing is even more profoundly true today than it was then. For that very reason—its very universalization and interiorization—it is less visible as such and has been transformed into a veritable second nature. To try to represent and visualize the boardroom and the ruling class is uncool because it involves an old-fashioned commitment to content in a situation in which only form as such—that most formalistic of all types of law or regularity, the profit motive (which clearly outweighs even such more vivid ideological slogans as "efficiency")—counts, and in which the commitment to form, the tacit presupposition of the profit motive, is assumed in advance and not subject to reexamination or to thematization as such. This Occam's razor clearly shears away a great many henceforth metaphysical topics of conversation once indulged by earlier generations in

a less purely functioning capitalist system, and can, indeed, be characterized as a certain end of idealism constitutive of the postmodern.

The formalism of the profit motive is then transmitted—but no longer in the cumbersome form of those religious doctrines whose role it supplants—to a kind of external nouveau riche public, which, from the age of the "organization men" of the 1950s to that of 1980s "yuppies," has grown ever less shameless in its pursuit of success, now reconceptualized as the "life-style" of a specific "group." But I also want to argue that it is no longer exactly profit as such that forms the ideal image of the process (money is merely the external sign of inward election, but fortune and "great wealth" are harder to represent, let alone libidinally to conceptualize, in an epoch in which numbers like billions and trillions are more frequently encountered). Rather, what is at stake is know-how and knowledge of the system itself: and this is no doubt the "moment of truth" in postindustrial theories of the new primacy of scientific knowledge over profit and production; only the knowledge is not particularly scientific, and "merely" involves initiation into the way the system functions. But now those in the know are too proud of their lesson and their know-how to tolerate any questions about why it should be like that, or even worth knowing in the first place. This is the insider cultural capital of the nouveaux riches which includes the etiquette and table manners of the system; along with cautionary anecdotes, your enthusiasm—fanned into a veritable frenzy in cultural spinoffs like the cyberpunk corporate fiction already mentioned—has more to do with having the knowledge of the system than it does with the system itself. The social climbing of the new yuppie in-group knowledge now spreads slowly downward, via the media, to the very zoning boundaries of the underclasses themselves; legitimacy, the legitimation of this particular social order, being secured in advance by a belief in the secrets of the corporate life-style that includes the profit motive as its unspoken "absolute presupposition," but which you can't learn and question all at once, any more than you can mentally redesign a sailboat you are doing your first sailing in. Lenin's theory of the bribery of advanced sectors of the working class thus needs to be replaced by a theory of status bribery and of the distribution of postmodern cultural badges, which is I suppose more or less what Bourdieu currently offers us—except that, as we have already seen, such concepts of "status," evolved for the postmodern group, need to be sharply distinguished from the traditional sociological theories in which the concept of status was an alternative to the concept of class (and in which, therefore, a certain structure of

the feudal ancien regime was being played off against an awareness of the originality of bourgeois society).

But if yuppies can find some satisfaction in sheer know-how, the staff and maintenance personnel of the postmodern may not be so easy to please. For them, then, a certain synchronic blackmail is available which is historically and socially unique only in the way it is locked into time perception and simultaneously repressed (as though it was the most natural thing in the world). It's democratic too, and the entire upper level of management may have vanished without a trace the day before the plant itself shuts down. It is as though you were part of a computer game whose constellations are subject to change without notice and include *you* among their optional tokens: even good behavior may not be sufficient grounds nowadays for retaining a position or keeping a job.

For the foreigners, meanwhile, a third type of motivation, of a more religious type, is now again available, and what is here practiced with all the disinterested frenzy of drug addiction shows up on un-American television sets as a beneficent vision of the Utopia of the market; what we take for granted they still think is this year's latest model, confusing consumerism with consumption and getting the discount store mixed up with democracy. Driven out of the Third World by our own counter-insurgencies, and lured out of the Second by our media propaganda, the would-be immigrants (whether spiritual or material), not understanding how little they are wanted here, pursue a delirious vision of transubstantiation in which it is the world of the products that is desired, like a landscape, and no one of them in particular: products particularly obsessional like the word processor or the fax machine being themselves allegorical emblems of the whole, mesmerizing properly aesthetic postmodern structures in which the identity of the media and the market is perceptually reenacted, something like a high-tech special effects dramatization of the ontological proof.

The crucial nexus that demands investigation, then, is the way in which the very representation of the media itself manages to represent the market, and vice versa, while "democracy" (not generally in our system represented or indeed representable) steams off of each as a connotation and one of the more recognizable of the thirty-seven flavors.

We have already seen, indeed, how easy it is to slip from the market to the media about which the intervention in real politics must also be registered before the reappropriation of that intervention by the media's ideology can be observed.[27] That the media (save when carefully excluded, as in our invasion of Grenada, but even then they were in a

position to make noise about it had they wanted to) has a benign restraining influence on world torture and civic law enforcement and police repression cannot be doubted, although the now global concern for the national or governmental reputation is generally mediated by worry about American funding, except where it turns out to be more lucrative to be conquered by the United States in the first place. American television reporting, whose specific version of preparing for the last war consists in its (praiseworthy) determination not to humiliate itself again by covering for something like Vietnam in the future, can also be counted on with unfailing reliability to reproduce the most tendentious Cold War attitudes when it comes to socialism (as most recently in the networks' truly obscene coverage of Gorbachev's 1989 visit to Cuba, where Fidel was compared to Ferdinand Marcos!). As to a specific new or postmodern media *politics*, it has also clearly long since come into being (sometimes in the form of so-called terrorism) as one of the rare weapons available to powerless minorities or subgroups screened out and censored with the latest equipment. The world does seem at least relatively less violent—however such a thing might be measured—than in Hitler's day, let alone in the nineteenth-century bourgeois nation-state or under the feudal absolutism of the ancien régime (with its public executions so dear to Foucault!). Nonetheless, and apart from the genesis of genuinely high-tech instruments of torture as well, media politics turns out not to be a substitute for politics as such, and the image smuggled out or the leaked facts fall quickly into the sterile ground of exhausted material and overly familiar punchlines, unless its implementation of politics by other means can also mobilize the ordinary ones, support groups, popular pressure, alliances, and a certain healthy identification of their own self-interest by oppressed groups in this particular "image of the other."

On the other hand, the end of "privacy" in all the sex-and-violence senses, the prodigious enlargement of what we can still call a public sphere, if we really mean all the senses of "public" by it, also results in an enormous enlargement of the idea of rationality itself, in what we are willing to "understand" (but not endorse), as what we can no longer have removed from the visible record as "irrational" or incomprehensible, unmotivated, insane or sick.

It is finally necessary to add about the "media" that it also failed to come into being; it did not, finally, become identical with its own "concept," as Hegel liked to say, and can thus be counted among the innumerable "unfinished projects" of the modern and the postmodern, to

use Habermas's polite phrase. What we have now, what we call "media" is not that, or not yet that, as might be demonstrated by one of its more revealing episodes. In modern North American history, of course, the assassination of John F. Kennedy was a unique event, not least because it was a unique collective (and media, communicational) experience, which trained people to read such events in a new way.

Yet it would be too simple to explain this extraordinary resonance on the basis of Kennedy's public position. Rather, there are grounds for thinking that his posthumous public meaning is better grasped the other way round, as the projection of a new collective experience of reception. It has often been pointed out, indeed, that Kennedy's personal popularity and prestige were at a particularly low ebb at the moment of his death; what is less often remarked is that this event was also something like the coming of age of the whole media culture that had been set in place in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Suddenly, and for a brief moment (which lasted, however, several long days), television showed what it could really do and what it really meant—a prodigious new display of synchronicity and a communicational situation that amounted to a dialectical leap over anything hitherto suspected. Later events of this kind were then recontained by sheer mechanical technique (as with the instant playbacks of the Reagan shooting or the *Challenger* disaster, which, borrowed from commercial sports, expertly emptied these events of their content). Yet this inaugural event (which may not even have had the emotional charge of Robert Kennedy's death, or that of Martin Luther King, Jr., or of Malcolm X.) gave what we call a Utopian glimpse into some collective communicational "festival" whose ultimate logic and promise is incompatible with our mode of production. The sixties, often taken as the moment of a paradigm shift toward the linguistic and the communicational, can also be said to begin with this death, not because of its loss or the dynamics of collective grief, but because it was the occasion (like May 1968 later on) for the shock of a communicational explosion, which could have no further consequences within this system but which scars the mind with the briefly glimpsed experience of radical difference, to which collective amnesia aimlessly returns in its later forgetfulness, imagining itself to be brooding over trauma where it is in fact seeking to produce a new idea of Utopia.

No wonder, then, that the small screen longs for yet another chance at rebirth by way of unexpected violence; no wonder also that its truncated afterlife is available for new semiotic combinations and prosthetic sym-

bioses of all kinds, of which the marriage to the market has been the most elegant and socially successful.

VII. Demographies of the Postmodern

Media populism, however, suggests a deeper social determinant, at one and the same time more abstract and more concrete, and a feature whose essential materialism can be measured by its scandalousness for the mind, which avoids it or hides it away like plumbing. To speak, however, of the role of the media globally in terms of what is virtually a literal figure of enlightenment, that is, of the reduction of public state violence by means of the glare of worldwide information, is perhaps to get things backward. For the sense of epochal change can just as adequately be expressed in terms of some new self-consciousness of the world's peoples, after the great wave of decolonization and movements of national liberation in the 1960s and 1970s. The West thus has the impression that without much warning and unexpectedly it now confronts a range of genuine individual and collective subjects who were not there before, or not visible, or—using Kant's great concept—were still *minor* and under tutelage. Everything that is condescending about this very ethnocentric view of global reality (reflected in everything from the albums of stamp collectors all the way to the syllabi of courses on world literature in English) clearly falls back ignominiously on the viewer, but equally clearly does not diminish the interest of the "impression" itself. Here, for example, is a savage recapitulation of the matter by a radical writer, whom, as will be apparent in a moment, we have other reasons for quoting in this context: "Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred million *men* and one thousand five hundred million *natives*. The former had the Word; the others merely had use of it."[28] Sartre's figure mocks European racism at the same time that it grounds its objectivity as an ideological illusion in history (it is only *since* decolonization and its aftermath that the "natives" have turned out to be "human beings") and in a certain philosophy of the subject and of the recognition of the Other as a subject which he shares with Fanon, and which stresses not the inert fact of my existence as a subject but rather the active and energetic, violent, gesture whereby I compel *recognition* of my existence and my status as a human subject. The old Hegelian fable of the master and the slave—by now as familiar as Aesop—shows through this philosophy like an archetype, again demonstrating its reliability for what it

explains not of revolution itself or liberation but rather of their consequences: the emergence of new subjects; that is to say, new people, other people, who were somehow not even there before, even though their bodies and their lives filled the cities and certainly did not suddenly materialize yesterday. Such media developments now seem to mobilize what Habermas calls a "public sphere," as though those people were not in it before, not visible, not public somehow, but have become so by virtue of their new existence as recognized or acknowledged subjects. So it was not just the extra cables and the klieg lights, the hand-carried camera equipment, and the fortuitous presence of Western reporters in "godforsaken" places, but rather some new visibility of the "others" themselves, who occupy their own stage—a kind of center in its own right—and compel attention by virtue of their voice and of the act of speaking itself, which—far above and beyond Fanon's old punctual act of physical violence—becomes for a language-conscious generation the first primordial violent act by which you force yourself on another's attention. *Que de royaumes nous ignorent!* Is this not simply a global parochialism, thrust with astonishment into the teeming, humdrum daily life of other places and other planets? Are these momentous discoveries any more than global equivalents of the newfound liberal tolerance of the post-1960s media, with its refurbished mailing lists of newly recognized and accredited minorities and neoethnicities? For, as has already been suggested, the apparent celebration of Difference, whether here at home or on the global scale, in reality conceals and presupposes a new and more fundamental identity. Whatever the new liberal tolerance is, it has little to do with the exotic range of the emblematic Family of Man exhibit, in which the Western bourgeoisies were asked to show their deeper human affinity with Bushmen and Hottentots, bare-breasted island women and aboriginal craftsmen, and others of the anthropological type who are unlikely to visit you as tourists. These new others, however, are at least as likely to visit us as are immigrants or *Gastarbeiter;* to that degree they are more "like" us, or at least "the same" in all kinds of new ways, which new internal social habits—the forced social and political recognition of "minorities"—help us to acquire in our foreign policy. This ideological experience may well be limited to First World elites (although even if it was, it would still have dramatic and incalculable effects on everybody else): all the more reason to factor it into the description of the postmodern, where it emerges—somewhat more crudely (or *materialistically*, as I began to put it)—in the form of sheer *demography* itself. There are more people now, and that "fact" has impli-

cations that transcend mere spatial discomfort and the prospect of the intermittent shortage in luxury goods.

We need to explore the possibility that there exists, in what quaintly used to be called the moral realm, something roughly equivalent to the dizziness of crowds for the individual body itself: the premonition that the more other people we recognize, even within the mind, the more peculiarly precarious becomes the status of our own hitherto unique and "incomparable" consciousness or "self." That does not change, of course, nor are we magically endowed with any greater sympathy (in the immemorial philosophical sense) with those increasingly numerous others, with whom, in fact, we can less and less individually sympathize. Rather, as with the undermining of a very fundamental kind of false consciousness or ideological self-deception, we are led to anticipate the imminent collapse of all our inward conceptual defense mechanisms, and in particular the rationalizations of privilege and the well-nigh natural formations (like extraordinary crystalline structures or coral formations excreted over millennia) of narcissism and self-love. That phobia is no doubt the fear of a fear, the sense of that approaching collapse, rather than the thing itself, the terror of anonymity imminent; and it can be called upon to explain political opinions and reactions, even though it is mostly handled by that form of repression which is oblivion and forgetfulness, a self-deception that does not want to know and tries to sink ever deeper into a willful involuntarity, a directed distraction. Such an existential hypothesis would go a long way toward documenting the status of demography as materialism, indeed as a new kind or dimension of materialism: neither that of the individual body (as in bourgeois mechanical materialism or positivism), for multiplied bodies, although they do not fuse together into some monstrous physical collective oversoul, reduce the precious individual corporality to something trivially biological or evolutionary; nor that of Marx's "real, concrete individuals" (those from whom in *The German Ideology* "we" famously "set out"), since they are still redolent of personal identities and names, and even workers in the mass do not seem demographic enough, threatening to lead on or lapse back into "humanism." Still, even Marx's concrete individuals offered a kind of materialism, in the strict sense not of some materialist system but of a mental operation of materialist reversal and demystification—alone the feature by which "materialism" as such can be identified. Marx's operation, however, as its immediate context (but also its conceptual shape and thrust) testifies, is directed against the idealisms of the various disciplines (not the "history of ideas" or ideology or the sciences, etc.—the great Hegelian continuities of forms and thoughts—but rather individual people in their swarming, far more synchronous, history). The materialist reversal inherent in demography[29] also flips over the rug of this still anthropomorphic history, but substitutes for it not so much statistical aggregates as the sheer being of natural history itself. It is not the content of the historical vision or paradigm thus substituted (itself always a representation and thus susceptible again to the framing and the domestication of the various ideologies, as is the reversal effect itself that confronts us starkly for the moment with a nonanthropomorphic, indeed a well-nigh in- or non-human, reality that we cannot conceptually assimilate. Demography, conceived as a dimension of materialism, would indeed go a long way toward stripping from this last its own representational and idealizable features (specifically those thematized around a "notion" of matter itself).

Few enough thinkers have credited this enlargement of the peopled universe with radical cultural effects, or have, for example, attributed the very stylization and "formidable erosion of contours" of the modern movement itself, as a movement toward a kind of universalism, to just such

> unresting preoccupation with the surprise of the gulf between each tiny occasion of the daily life and the vast stretches of time and place in which every individual plays his role.
>
> By that I mean the absurdity of any single person's claim to the importance of his saying: "I love!" . . . "I suffer!" when one thinks of the background of the billions who have lived and died, who are living and dying, and presumably will live and die.
>
> This was particularly developed in me by the almost accidental chance that having graduated from Yale in 1920, I was sent abroad to study archaeology at the American Academy in Rome. We even took field trips in those days and in a small way took part in diggings. When one has swung a pickaxe which will reveal the curve of a street four-thousand years covered over which was once an active, much traveled highway, you are never quite the same again. You look at Times Square as a place about which you imagine some day scholars saying: "There appears to have been some kind of public center here."[30]

This testimony, however, is still essentially a modernist one, which inflects the results and consequences of the demographic experience in the direction of abstraction and universalization, it is of a piece with

the modernist disjunction of the sign from the referent, with a view towards constructing an "open work" which the multiple fragmented publics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century imperialist states can freely recode and recontextualize. The formulation is polemically sharpened against the conquest of the unique furniture of the realist and naturalist stage, with its dating and its weather, its here-and-now anchored in the newspapers of empirical national time. But the subsequent postmodern reaction against this modernist abstraction and stylization—which were themselves determined by a revulsion with such bric-a-brac and with the ephemeral trappings of an unsubstantial individualism—marks a "return to the concrete" with a difference; its schizophrenic nominalism includes the rubble and the ruins of much of that—place, personal names, etc.—without the personal identity or the temporal and historical progression, the coherence of the situation and its logic (however desperate), that gave bourgeois realism its tension and its substance. Perhaps, indeed, we here observe the great philosophical and Hegelian logical triad—specificity, universality, individuality (or particularity)—in reverse, as though in history the concrete individual came first, then the repressive system, then the breakup into random empirical features.

At any rate, the dispersive impact of demography is another very different and perhaps more characteristically postmodern effect, felt first and foremost in our relationship to the human past. It would seem, according to some reports, that the quantities of human beings now alive today on earth (some five billion) is rapidly approaching the total number of hominids who have already lived and died on the planet since the beginning of the species. The present is thus like some new thriving and developing nation-state, whose numbers and prosperity make it an unexpected rival for the old traditional ones. As with bilingual speakers in the United States, one can at least predictively calculate the moment when it will overtake the past: that demographic moment is already at hand, as a rapidly approaching point in the not so distant future, and thereby to that degree already part of the present and the realities with which it must reckon. But if this is so, then the relationship of the postmodern to historical consciousness now takes on a very different appearance, and there is some justification, and a plausible argument to be made, for consigning the past to oblivion as we seem to be doing; now that we, the living, have the preponderance, the authority of the dead—hitherto based on sheer numbers—diminishes at a dizzying rate (along with all the other forms of authority and legitimacy). It used to be like an old family, old houses in an old village with only a few young people around, who had to sit in the darkened rooms at night and listen to the elders. But (with the few horrible exceptions we know) there has not been a major war for several generations or two: the curve of births rising sharply augments the proportion of teenagers to the rest of the population, marauding bands making noise in the street outside and leaving the old people to their television sets. If we outnumber the dead, in other words, we win; we are more successful merely by virtue of the fact of having been born (Beaumarchais's account of aristocratic privilege readapting unexpectedly to the generational luck of the yuppies).

What the past has to tell us is therefore little more than a matter of idle curiosity, and indeed our interest in it—fantastic genealogies, alternate histories!—comes to look a little like an in-group hobby or adoptive tourism, like the encyclopedic specialization in the late show or Pynchon's interest in Malta. The salute to non-great-power languages or extinct provincial traditions is, of course, politically correct and a cultural spinoff of the micropolitical rhetoric discussed earlier.

As far as I know, the only philosopher to have taken demography seriously, and to have produced concepts on the basis of an evidently idiosyncratic lived experience of it, was Jean-Paul Sartre, who wanted no children as a result, but whose other historic philosophical originality —to have made a philosophical problem out of that peculiar thing we all take for granted, namely, the existence of other people—may, in fact, turn out to be the consequence of this one, rather than the other way round. It would obviously have been more logical and Cartesian to proceed from the simpler issue—is this really an Other?—to the more complicated one (why are there so many of them?): but Sartre's characters seem to move from the multiple to the individual, in that strange experience it is permitted to call synchronicity:

> I hear the wind carrying a siren's call. I'm all alone. . . . At this very instant there are boats on the open sea that are echoing with music; lights are going on in all the cities of Europe; Communists and Nazis are fighting in the streets of Berlin, unemployed workers are pounding the pavement in New York, women, sitting in front of their mirrors, in a warm room, are putting shadow on their eyelids. And I'm here, in this empty street, and every shot that rings out of a window in Neukölln, every bloody gasp from wounded bodies being carried away, the most minute gestures of those women making

themselves up, syncopates each one of my footsteps, each heartbeat of my heart.[31]

This pseudoexperience, which must be marked as a fantasy and as a failure to achieve representation (by means of representation), is also a second-degree, reactive effort, an attempt to recuperate what lies beyond the reach of my own senses and life experience and, drawing that back inside, to become, if not self-sufficient, then at least protectively self-contained, like a hedgehog. It seems at the same time to be a relatively aimless and exploratory fantasy as well, as though the subject were afraid of forgetting something but could not quite imagine the consequences: Will I be punished if I forget all the others busy living simultaneously with me? What benefit could I possibly derive from doing so when it is in any case impossible to do the job right? Nor would the achievement of conscious synchronicity enhance my own immediate situation, since by definition the mind overleaps that toward others personally unknown to me (and therefore, in the detail of their existences, by definition unimaginable). The effort is thus voluntaristic, an assault of the will on what is "by definition" structurally impossible of achievement rather than something pragmatic and practical that seeks to augment my information about the here and now. The Sartrean character would seem to have launched a preemptive strike or probe: to imagine, mentally to encompass in advance, those numerical multitudes that, ignored, might otherwise ontologically overwhelm you.

The probe must also fail because, as Freud observed, there can be no meaningless invented numbers, and a psychoanalysis of Sartre (or of his characters) would presumably end up thematizing the content of the items willed to be random. Nor is the solitude of the imagining subject irrelevant (the lone siren triggers this "associative" project), nor, above all, the time itself, the historical moment in which the manifold from which this range of individual existences is to be culled at random is itself being unified—indeed, here it may be identified as what we now call *nominalism* as a personal and historical situation and dilemma. This is the sense in which, for all the web threads flung out beyond my "situation" into the unimaginable synchronicity of other people, Sartre is also (like Rousseau) the philosopher of small-group politics, the face-to-face event, which, no matter how large—the aerial shot of the plaza open into the crowded back streets of the polis itself—has to remain available to "live experience" (a less misleading expression than the rhetoric of the individual body and its senses, which evokes

a rather different type of philosophy). What lies beyond that—as in social class itself—is somehow real but untrue, thinkable but unrepresentable, and thus doubtful and unverifiable for an existence philosophy that above all wants to avoid being cheated or shortchanged in its life experience. "Totalizing" does not imply a belief in the possibility of access to the totality, but rather a playing with the boundary itself, like a loose tooth, the comparison of notes and measurements that finally allows you to deduce the sound barrier itself, which, like the line between the analytic and the dialectic in Kant, can never be transgressed and somehow itself transcends experience. Yet that impossible experience that lies beyond it, the horror of multiplicity, is nothing more than sheer Number, which Sartre's philosophy alone in our century archaically reinvented for us, outdoing Heidegger's in its return to a well-nigh pre-Socratic primality. Too many people begin to cancel my own existence with their ontological weight; my personal life—the unique form of private property remaining to me—grows pale and dim like the Homeric ghosts, or like a piece of real estate whose value has been driven down to a worthless handful of crumpled bills. This now starts to become postmodern, however, in the planetary influence it exerts over temporal thoughts and the possibility of representing time. Sartre is still very much a modern, but it is instructive to observe the gravitational mass of sheer synchronic numbers bend back on temporal themes to warp them into the only "concept" that can now be squeezed out between history and demography, the only relevant spatio-temporal category that could also, in a pinch, be made to do double duty as an experience: namely, the concept of synchronicity itself, the ultimate limit of representation until you reach television, at which point all these unimaginably multiple bulbs light up again, the metaphysical problem they seemed to designate and to rehearse vanishes away, and postmodern global space replaces and annuls the Sartrean problematic of totalization. With this transformation also, as we have had occasion to see in so many other instances, the essential tension of the modern and the commitment to the impossible drama of representation also weaken and fade away. Global totality is now drawn back inside the monad, on flickering screens, and the "interior," once the heroic proving ground of existentialism and its anxieties, now becomes as self-sufficient as a light show or the inner life of a catatonic (while in the spatial world of real bodies the extraordinary demographic displacements of mass migrant workers and of global tourists invert this individual solipsism to a degree unparalleled in world history). The term *nominalism* can now also serve for

this result, from which the universals have paled save for spasmodic intermittencies of a sublime or a new mathematical infinite; but in that case it would be a nominalism which is no longer conceived as a problem and thus has in the process lost its own proper name as well.

VIII. Spatial Historiographies

With this new experience of demography, however, and its unexpected consequences, we are back in the spatial itself (as well as in postmodernism as culture, as ideology and representation). The notion of a predominance of space in the postcontemporary era we owe to Henri Lefebvre[32] (to whom, however, the concept of a postmodern period or stage is alien: his experiential framework was essentially the modernization of France in the postwar, but above all in the Gaullist, era), and it has perplexed any number of readers who recall the Kantian conception of space and time as empty formal containers, as categories of experience so all-encompassing that they cannot themselves enter into the experiences of which they stand as the framework and the structurally enabling presupposition.

These wise restrictions, which include a salutary warning as to the essential impoverishment of the themes themselves, did not prevent the modernists from making much of time, whose empty coordinates they tried to conjure into the magical substance of an element, a veritable experiential stream. But why should landscape be any less dramatic than the Event? The premise, in any case, is that memory has been weakened in our time, and that the great rememberers are a virtually extinct species: for us, memory, when it is a strong experience and still able to testify to the reality of the past, only serves to annihilate time and that past along with it.

What Lefebvre wanted to stress, however, was the correlation between these hitherto universal and formal organizational categories—which for Kant presumably held good for all experience throughout human history—and the historical specificity and originality of the various modes of production, in each of which time and space are lived differently and distinctively (if that is indeed the way to put it and if, as against Kant, we are capable of any direct experience of space and time). Lefebvre's emphasis on space did more than correct a (modernist) imbalance; it also acknowledged the increasing share, in our life experience fully as much as in late capitalism itself, of the urban and the new globality of the system. In effect, Lefebvre called for a new kind of spatial imagination capable of confronting the past in a new way and reading its less tangible secrets off the template of its spatial structures—body, cosmos, city, as all those marked the more intangible organization of cultural and libidinal economies and linguistic forms. The proposal demands an imagination of radical difference, the projection of our own spatial organizations into the well-nigh science-fictional and exotic forms of alien modes of production. But for Lefebvre *all* modes of production are not merely organized spatially but also constitute distinctive modes of the "production of space"; postmodernism theory, however, infers a certain supplement of spatiality in the contemporary period and suggests that there is a way in which, even though other modes of production (or other moments of our own) are distinctively spatial, ours has been spatialized in a unique sense, such that space is for us an existential and cultural dominant, a thematized and foregrounded feature or structural principle standing in striking contrast to its relatively subordinate and secondary (though no doubt no less symptomatic) role in earlier modes of production.[33] So, even if everything is spatial, this postmodern reality here is somehow more spatial than everything else.

Why that should be so is easier to see than *how* it could be so. The predilection for space, among postmodernism's theorists, is, of course, easiest understood as a predictable (generational) reaction against the official and long since canonized rhetoric of temporality of the critics and theorists of high modernism, the reversal making for dramatic and visionary accounts of the new order and its new thrills. But the thematic axis was not an arbitrary or gratuitous one, and it can be explored, in turn, for its own conditions of possibility.

In my opinion, a closer new look at the modern would disclose the root of its distinctive experience of temporality in the modernization processes and dynamics of turn-of-the-century capitalism, with its glorious new machinery (celebrated by the futurists and so many others, but no less dramatically deplored and demonized by other writers we also call "modernists"), which has nonetheless not yet completely colonized the social space in which it is emergent. Arno Mayer has reminded us, with a salutary shock, of the persistence of the old regime[34] well up into the twentieth century, and the very partial nature of the "triumph of the bourgeoisie" or of industrial capitalism in the modernist period, still predominantly rural and at least statistically dominated by peasants and landlords with feudal habits, among which the occasional motorcar strikes a jarring but exciting note, along with intermittent electrification and even the sparse aviational pyrotechnics of World War

I. First and foremost of the great oppositions not yet overcome by capitalism in this period is therefore that between town and country, and the subjects or citizens of the high-modern period are mostly people who have lived in multiple worlds and multiple times—a medieval pays to which they return on family vacations and an urban agglomeration whose elites are, at least in most advanced countries, trying to "live with their century" and to be as "absolutely modern" as they know how. The very value of the New and of innovation (as these are reflected in everything from First World hermetic forms to the great drama of Old and New played out variously in the Third and Second World countries) clearly enough presupposes the exceptionality of what is felt to be "modern"; while deep memory itself, which inscribes and scars the differentiation of experience into time and evokes something like the intermittencies of alternate worlds, would seem also to depend on "uneven development" of an existential and psychic, fully as much as on an economic, kind. Nature is related to memory not for metaphysical reasons but because it throws up the concept and the image of an older mode of agricultural production that you can repress, dimly remember, or nostalgically recover in moments of danger and vulnerability.

Implicit in all this is the thud of the predictable second shoe, namely, the effacement of Nature, and its precapitalist agricultures, from the postmodern, the essential homogenization of a social space and experience now uniformly modernized and mechanized (where the generation gap passes between the models of the products rather than between the ecologies of their users), and the triumphant achievement of the kind of standardization and conformity feared and fantasized in the 1950s but now clearly no longer a problem for the people successfully molded by it (and who can no longer even recognize or thematize it as such). This is why we were led earlier to define *modernism* as the experience and the result of *incomplete* modernization, and to suggest that the postmodern begins to make its appearance wherever the modernization process no longer has archaic features and obstacles to overcome and has triumphantly implanted its own autonomous logic (for which, of course, at that point the word *modernization* becomes a misnomer, since everything is already "modern").

Memory, temporality, the very thrill of the "modern" itself, the New, and innovation are thus all casualties of this process in which not only Mayer's residual ancien régime is obliterated but even classical bourgeois culture of the belle epoque is liquidated. Akira Asada's proposition[35] is thus even more grimly profound than it is witty, that the usual

figuration for the stages of capitalism (early, mature, late or advanced) is a misnomer that ought to be reversed: the earliest years now being designated as senile capitalism because it is still the affair of boring traditionalists from an older world; mature or adult capitalism would then retain its characterization, in order to reflect the coming into their own of the great robber barons and adventurers; whereas our own, hitherto late, period can henceforth be known as "infantile capitalism," inasmuch as everyone has been born into it, takes it for granted, and has never known anything else, the friction, resistance, effort of the earlier moments having given way to the free play of automation and the malleable fungibility of multiple consumer publics and markets: roller skates and multinationals, word processors and overnight unfamiliar postmodern downtown high rises.

On this account, however, neither space nor time is "natural" in the sense in which it might be metaphysically presupposed (as ontology or human nature alike): both are the consequence and projected afterimages of a certain state or structure of production and appropriation, of the social organization of productivity. Thus, for the modern, we have read a certain temporality back off its characteristically uneven space; but the other direction can be no less productive, which leads to some more articulated sense of postmodern space by way of postmodern fantastic historiography, as that is found alike in wild imaginary genealogies and novels that shuffle historical figures and names like so many cards from a finite deck. If it makes sense to evoke a certain "return to storytelling" in the postmodern period, the "return" can at least be witnessed here in its full emergence (alongside which the emergence of narrative and narratology in postmodern theoretical production can also be identified as a cultural symptom of changes more basic than the mere discovery of a new theoretical truth). At that point, all the precursors fall into place in the new genealogy: the legendary generational strings of the writers of the Boom, like Asturias or García Márquez; the tedious autoreferential fabulations of the short-lived Anglo-American "new novel"; the discovery, by the professional historians, that "all is fiction" (see Nietzsche) and that there can never be a correct version; the end of "master narratives" in much the same sense, along with the recovery of alternate histories in the past (silenced groups, workers, women, minorities whose scanty records have been systematically burned or expunged out of everything but the police archives) at a moment when historical alternatives are in the process of disappearing, and if you want to have a history, there is henceforth only one to participate in.

In short, postmodern "fantastic historiography" takes up the slack of these historical "tendencies" and combines them into a genuine aesthetic that seems to know two variants or mirror spirals. In the one, you make up a chronicle (generational or genealogical) whose grotesque succession and unrealistic personnel, ironic and melodramatic destinies, and heartrending (and virtually cinematographic) missed opportunities mime real ones, or to be more precise about it, resemble the dynastic annals of small-power kingdoms and realms very far from our own parochial "tradition" (the secret history of the Mongols, for example, or well-nigh extinct Balkan languages which were once the dominant power in their little universe). Here, a semblance of historical verisimilitude is vibrated into multiple alternate patterns, as though the form or genre of historiography was retained (at least in its archaic versions) but now for some reason, far from projecting the constraints of the formulaic, seems to offer postmodern writers the most remarkable and untrammeled movement of invention. In this peculiar form and content—real sewer systems with imaginary crocodiles in them—the wildest Pynchonesque fantasies are somehow felt to be thought experiments of all the epistemological power and falsifiable authority of Einstein's fables, and in any case to convey the feel of the real past better than any of the "facts" themselves.

Such fabulations—not unexpectedly cheered on by a whole generation of ideologues complacently but with relish announcing the death of the referent, if not the end of history itself—also clearly enough show signs of that release and euphoria of the postmodern to which we have already referred, and for much the same reasons. These historical fantasies, unlike those of certain other epochs (as in the pseudo-Shakespearean historical romance of the early nineteenth century), do not aim essentially at the derealization of the past, the lightening of the burden of historical fact and necessity, its transformation into a costumed charade and misty revels without consequence and without irrevocability. Nor does postmodern fantastic historiography seek, as in naturalism, to diminish the grisly and deterministic historical event into the minute workings of natural law, viewed from the epicycle of Mercury and thus receivable with textbook stoic resignation of a force and concentration capable of reducing to a minimum the anguish of decision and converting the pessimisms of failure into the more gratifying and musical falling cadences of a Wagnerian-Schopenhauerian worldview. The new free play with the past, however—the delirious nonstop monologue of its postmodern revision into so many in-group narratives—is obviously

equally allergic to the priorities and commitments, let alone the responsibilities, of the various tediously committed kinds of partisan history.

Nonetheless, these narratives can be seen as entertaining a more active relationship to praxis than has been suggested above or would be allowable under some more literal minded reflection theory of history: here the making up of unreal history is a substitute for the making of the real kind. It mimetically expresses the attempt to recover that power and praxis by way of the past and what must be called fancy rather than imagination. Fabulation—or if you prefer, mythomania and outright tall tales—is no doubt the symptom of social and historical impotence, of the blocking of possibilities that leaves little option but the imaginary. Yet its very invention and inventiveness endorses a creative freedom with respect to events it cannot control, by the sheer act of multiplying them; agency here steps out of the historical record itself into the process of devising it; and new multiple or alternate strings of events rattle the bars of the national tradition and the history manuals whose very constraints and necessities their parodic force indicts. Narrative invention here thus by way of its very implausibility becomes the figure of a larger possibility of praxis, its compensation but also its affirmation in the form of projection and mimetic reenactment.

The second form of postmodern historiographic narrative is in some ways the inverse of this one. Here, the purely fictional intent is underscored and reaffirmed in the production of imaginary people and events among whom from time to time real-life ones unexpectedly appear and disappear: Doctorow's practice in *Ragtime*, with its Morgans and Fords, its Houdinis and Thaws and Whites, was my earlier reference[36] and may be maintained here, where it is, however, characteristic of a whole range and variety of such collage effects, in which a newspaper figure is pasted onto a painted backdrop, or the tickertape of a set of statistics unrolls in the middle of a domestic romance. These effects are not mere replications of Dos Passos, who still respected categories of verisimilitude when it came to his world-historical individuals; nor does this kind of fictional history have anything to do with that other characteristic postmodern product I have called nostalgia film, in which the tone and style of a whole epoch becomes, in effect, the central character, the actant and the "world-historical individual" in its own right (with a significant diminution in the kind of wild imaginative energy manifested by both types of historiographic fantasies in question here).

What one can affirm about this second type (in which the well-known formula is returned to its upright position and the toads again become

"real" while the gardens grow imaginary) is that it is very precisely a kind of spatial historiography which has unique things to tell us both about postmodern spatiality and about what happened to the postmodern sense of history in the first place.

Spatiality is here registered, as it were, in second-degree form, as the consequence of some prior specialization—a kind of intensified classification or compartmentalization which I am tempted to describe as a division of labor of the mind and its modes of scanning and mapping the realm. Classical psychic fragmentation—for example, the separation of imagination and knowledge—was always a consequence of the division of labor in the social world; now, however, it is the very rational or knowledge functions of the mind which become somehow internally segmented and assigned to different floors and different office buildings.

Thus, for example, we may imagine (in such a postmodern narrative) the visit of the great Prussian neoclassical architect Schinkel to the new industrial city of Manchester: the conceit is historically possible, and offers the relatively postmodern charm of an episode that falls through the cracks (did the young Stalin actually go to London once? how about Marx's incognito inspection of the American Civil War?): Do I wake or sleep? But what is fundamentally postmodern about this is the incongruence of romantic Germany, glowing from within with all the magic realism of Caspar David Friedrich encountering the misery and surplus labor of Engels's great nascent factory city. It is a comic-book juxtaposition, somewhat like a schoolboy exercise in which all kinds of disparate materials are put together in new ways. The visit also happened in reality, it turns out; but by now one is tempted to recall Adorno's wisecrack about something else, namely, that "even if it was a fact, it wouldn't be true." The postmodern flavor of the episode returns upon the "historical record" to derealize and denature it and endow it with something of the fantastic aura of a Gabriel García Márquez version of Latin American history, about which in any case Carpentier famously and pointedly observed that it was magic-realist (*real-maravilloso*) to begin with.[37] But the question now is whether all of what used to be called History has not become precisely that.

Those are, however, the cultural and ideological effects of the structure, whose conditions of possibility lie very precisely in our sense that each of the elements involved, and thus incongruously combined, belong to radically distinct and different registers: architecture and socialism, romantic art and the history of technology, politics and the imitation of

antiquity. Even if these registers do oddly and dialectically coincide, as in the matter of urbanism, in which "Schinkel" is fully as much an encyclopedia entry as Engels's book on Manchester, our preconscious minds refuse to make or acknowledge the link, as those these cards came from different files.

The dissonance and incompatibility in fact have "literary" analogies, which it is very strange to rediscover here, in the area of social and historical reality itself. Indeed, this peculiar mismatch reminds one of nothing quite so much as of generic discordance, as when a writer or an orator misguidedly incorporates a text of an incompatible type or lapses into a different register of discourse. In literature, of course, the disappearance of genres as such, along with their conventions and the distinct reading rules they project, is a familiar story. It would now seem that, far from becoming extinct, the older genres, released like viruses from their traditional ecosystem, have now spread out and colonized reality itself, which we divide up and file away according to typological schemes which are no longer those of subject matter but for which the alternative topic of style seems somehow inadequate. Yet it is surely something like the "style" of the encyclopedia entry "Schinkel," which simply does not go with the style of "Engels," even though the computer would turn both of them up under the headings "German," "nineteenth century," and so forth. In other words, the two entries do not "go together" or match in the "real world," that is, the world of historical knowledge; but they do go together in that realm we have been characterizing as postmodern historiography (a cultural genre thus itself generically separated from the other one called historical knowledge), where it is very precisely their interesting dissonance and the garish magic realism of their unexpected juxtaposition which is the bonus of pleasure to be consumed.

It should not be thought that the postmodern narrative in any way overcomes or transcends the bizarre discursive separation at issue here: the latter is not at all to be grasped as a "contradiction" to which the postmodern collage affords a semblance of "resolution." The postmodern effect, on the contrary, ratifies the specializations and differentiations on which it is based: it presupposes them and thereby prolongs and perpetuates them (for if some genuinely unified field of knowledge emerged, where Schinkel and Engels lay down side by side like the lamb and the lion, so to speak, all postmodern incongruity would at once evaporate). The structure thus confirms the description of postmodernism as something for which the word *fragmentation* remains

much too weak and primitive a term, and probably too "totalizing" as well, particularly since it is now no longer a matter of the breakup of some preexisting older organic totality, but rather the emergence of the multiple in new and unexpected ways, unrelated strings of events, types of discourse, modes of classification, and compartments of reality. This absolute and absolutely random pluralism—and perhaps it is the only referent for which that charged term should be reserved, a kind of reality-pluralism—a coexistence not even of multiple and alternate worlds so much as of unrelated fuzzy sets and semiautonomous subsystems whose overlap is perceptually maintained like hallucinogenic depth planes in a space of many dimensions is, of course, what is replicated by the rhetoric of decentering (and what informs official rhetorical and philosophical attacks on "totality"). This differentiation and specialization or semiautonomization of reality is then prior to what happens in the psyche—postmodern schizo-fragmentation as opposed to modern or modernist anxieties and hysterias—which takes the form of the world it models and seeks to reproduce in the form of experience as well as of concepts, with results as disastrous as those that would be encountered by a relatively simple natural organism given to mimetic camouflage and trying to approximate the op art laser dimensionality of a science-fictional environment of the far future. We have learned much from psychoanalysis, and most recently from the speculative mapping of fractured and multiple subject positions, but it would be a pity to attribute those to some unimaginably complex new internal human nature rather than to the social templates that project them: human nature, as Brecht showed us, being capable of an infinite variety of forms and adaptations, and along with it, the psyche itself.

Meanwhile, the distinct differential structures (formalized by Doctorow in the minor but extraordinarily symptomatic patterns of *Ragtime*'s historiography) also go a long way toward justifying the earlier account of postmodern perception in terms of the slogan that "difference relates." The new modes of perception seem indeed to operate by way of the simultaneous preservation of just such incompatibles, a kind of incommensurability-vision that does not pull the eyes back into focus but provisionally entertains the tension of their multiple coordinates (so that, if you thought the dialectic had to do with producing new "syntheses" of various preformed and prearranged "opposites" calculated to fit together effortlessly, then to be sure all this would be decidedly "postdialectical").

But it must also be considered a *spatial* phenomenon in the most

fundamental sense since, whatever the provenance of the various items combined in their postmodern incompatability—whether they stem from different zones of time or from unrelated compartments of the social and material universe—it is their spatial separation that is strongly felt as such. Different moments in historical or existential time are here simply filed in different places; the attempt to combine them even locally does not slide up and down a temporal scale (except to the degree that the spatial character of these figures here comes due and presents its bill) but jumps back and forth across a game board that we conceptualize in terms of distance.

Thus the movement from one generic classification to another is radically discontinuous, like switching channels on a cable television set; and indeed it seems appropriate to characterize the strings of items and the compartments of genres of their typologization as so many "channels" into which the new reality is organized. Channel switching, so often taken by media theorists as the very epitome of a postmodern attention and perceptual apparatus, does indeed seem to offer a useful alternative to the psychoanalytic model of multiple subject positions evoked earlier, which can, of course, still be retained as an alternate code in the process of transcoding so profoundly characteristic of postmodern theory itself, and which can now itself be grasped as the theoretical equivalent of channel switching on the perceptual, cultural, and psychic levels. "We" thus turn out to be whatever we are in, confront, inhabit, or habitually move through, provided it is understood that under current conditions we are obliged to renegotiate all those spaces or channels back and forth ceaselessly in a single Joycean day. The literary representation of this new reality would thus seem to be Vargas Llosa's remarkable "memoir" of the old days of the radio serials in Latin America, *La Tia Julia y el Scribidor*, where the separate daytime programs slowly begin to infect each other and colonize their neighbors, amalgamating in the most alarming—but as we have just seen, the most archetypically postmodern—of ways: such interfection is then the very prototype of what we may call the postmodern mode of totalizing.

It also characterizes our contemporary mode of historical and political as such, and it will be by way of Lefebvre's conception of a new kind of spatial dialectic that we need to grasp the preceding structures as implying more than mere cultural or fictional patterns. For our comprehension of current events also takes place against the background of the compartmentalization of reality that has been evoked in grasping the peculiarities of postmodern writing. It was never easy to grasp the pres-

ent as history, since virtually by definition the manuals all stopped and were printed a year or two earlier in time, but a politically conscious collectivity can keep itself up-to-date by a ceaseless multiple or hydra-headed scrutiny of and commentary on the latest unexpected peripety. Today, however, collectivity in that form has been drawn back inside the media, leaving us as individuals bereft even of the feeling of being alone and individual. The occasional flash of historical understanding that may strike the "current situation" will thus happen by the well-nigh postmodern (and spatial) mode of the recombination of separate columns in the newspaper:[38] and it is this spatial operation that we continue to call (using an older temporal language) historical thinking or analysis. The Alaska oil spill thus sits cheek by jowl with the latest Israeli bombing or search-and-destroy mission in southern Lebanon, or follows closely on its heels in the segmentation of television news. The two events activate altogether different and unrelated mental zones of reference and associative fields, not least because within the stereotypical planetarium of current "objective spirit," Alaska is on some other side of the physical and spiritual globe from the "war-torn Middle East." No introspective examination of our personal history, but no inspection of the various objective histories either (filed under Exxon, Alaska, Israel, Lebanon), would in itself be enough to disclose the dialectical interrelatedness of all these things, whose legendary Ur-episode can be found in the Suez War, which determined the building of larger and larger oil tankers to circumnavigate the Cape of Good Hope, on the one hand, with its sequel, on the other, in 1967, a sequel that fixed the political geography of the Middle East in violence and misery for more than a generation. What I want to argue is that the tracing of such common "origins" —henceforth evidently indispensable for what we normally think of as concrete historical understanding—is no longer exactly a temporal or a genealogical operation in the sense of older logics of historicity or causality. The "solution" to a juxtaposition—Alaska, Lebanon—that is not yet even a puzzle until it is solved—Nasser and Suez!—no longer opens up historiographic deep space or perspectival temporality of the type of a Michelet or a Spengler: it lights up like a nodal circuit in a slot machine (and thus foreshadows a computer-game historiography of the future even more alarming).

But if history has become spatial, so also has its repression and the ideological mechanisms whereby we avoid thinking historically (the Alaskan example, indeed, offers the blueprint of a kind of reading well calculated to allow you to ignore the spatially contiguous columns); but

now mean a larger aesthetic of information in which the generic incompatibilities detected in postmodern fiction now comes into a different kind of force in postmodern reality, dictating a peculiar new decorum or high cool in which the obligation to disregard items classified in other columns or compartments opens up a means for constructing false consciousness which is tactically far more advanced than older and more primitive tactics of lying and repression and can do without the now cumbersome and Ptolemaic technologies of classical ideology. This is a new way of defusing information, making representations improbable, discrediting political positions and their organic "discourses," and, in short, effectively separating "the facts" from "the truth," as Adorno put it. The superiority of the new method lies in its capacity to coexist perfectly adequately with information and full knowledge, something already implicit in the separation of subsystems and topics in various unrelated parts of the mind, which can only be activated locally or contextually ("nominalistically") in distinct moments of time and by various unrelated subject positions, so that a stylistic taboo is here combined with the human characteristic of finitude ("I can only be in one place—one discourse!—at one time") to exclude not merely older kinds of syntheses but even the therapeutic estrangement effects that used to result from confronting one piece of evidence with a seemingly unconnected one—as in dramatic reconstructions of the crime where two witnesses are unexpectedly brought face to face.

"Postmodernism" is itself the prime example of the conceptuality that results from such a system, in which reality itself is organized a little like those networks of political cells whose members have only met their immediate opposite numbers. Within this "concept," then, that coexistence of distinct representations we already know, but whose unique operations we have not sufficiently admired, can be compared to schizophrenia, if this last is really what Pynchon tells us it is ("Day by day, Wendell is less himself and more generic. He enters a staff meeting and the room is suddenly full of people").[39] A roomful of people, indeed, solicit us in incompatible directions that we entertain all at once: one subject position assuring us of the remarkable new global elegance of its daily life and forms; another one marveling at the spread of democracy, with all those new "voices" sounding out of hitherto silent parts of the globe or inaudible class strata (just wait a while, they will be here, to join their voices to the rest); other more querulous and "realistic" tongues reminding us of the incompetences of late capitalism, with its delirious paper-money constructions rising out of sight, its Debt,

the rapidity of the flight of factories matched only by the opening of new junk-food chains, the sheer immiseration of structural homelessness, let alone unemployment, and that well-known thing called urban "blight" or "decay" which the media wraps brightly up in drug melodramas and violence porn when it judges the theme perilously close to being threadbare. None of these voices can be said to contradict the others; not "discourses" but only propositions do that, and the identity of identity and nonidentity does not seem very satisfactory for this one, for which "coexistence" is too reassuring a term as well, implying some ultimate chance of intergalactic collision in which matter and antimatter might finally meet and shake hands. Even Brecht's modest hypothesis about Hollywood, that in it God economized and planned but the one establishment ("heaven: it serves the unprosperous and unsuccessful as hell"), is much too functional, even though the notion of a city, and of that particular city! does rise imperiously in the mind as one of the last few thinkable "representations": postmodernism is alive and well in boutiques and fashionable little restaurants (we are indeed told that nowadays the remodeling of restaurants makes up a significant bulk of the postmodern architect's commissions), while the other realities wander around outside in old cars or on foot. As an ideology which is also a reality, the "postmodern" cannot be disproved insofar as its fundamental feature is the radical separation of all the levels and voices whose recombination in their totality could alone disprove it.

IX. Decadence, Fundamentalism, and Hightech

The last desperate stages of hide-and-seek suggest some final logical closets in which History (unmasked as sheerly spatial in its diachronic costumes) might still be found, despite the grim silence, house-deep, that leads you to conclude it might have smothered to death in its gags. Might it not still be possible, however, to generate history out of the present itself and to endow today's fantasy projections and wish fulfillments with the force if not of a reality, then at least of what grounds and inaugurates realities, as Heidegger liked to say (*stiften*).

These projections run in opposite directions, even though they can both be detected in the most substantial corpus of such symptoms —contemporary science fiction. The directions I hesitate to characterize as our old friends past and future, but perhaps they are new and postmodern versions of those, in a situation in which neither past nor future has, as we have seen, much in the way of legal claims on our

attention or responsibility. Decadence and high technology are indeed the occasions and the launchpads for such speculation, coming themselves in antithetical guises and modes.

For while high technology is omnipresent and unavoidable, particularly in its various religious forms, *decadence* compels by its absence, like a smell nobody mentions or a thought all the guests are visibly making an effort not to think. One would have thought that the world of headphones and Andy Warhol, of fundamentalism and AIDS, of exercise machines and MTV, yuppies and books on postmodernism, punk hairdos and fifties'-style crewcuts, the "loss of historicity" and the *éloge* of schizophrenia, the media and obsessions with calcium and cholesterol, the logic of "future shock" and the emergence of scientists and counterinsurgency strike forces as new types of social groups, would have all the qualifications to pass for ripely decadent in the eyes of any sensible Martian observer; but it is corny to say so, and one of the other tactical achievements of the postmodern discursive system lies in the relegation of the *laudator temporis acti* to the storeroom of no longer very plausible or believable literary characters. To be sure, where the former norm has become just another "life-style," the category of the eccentric loses its reason for being; but the moderns still had this concept, which they sometimes acted out in a way that in our time only Fellini's great *Satyricon* recaptures, in the guise of a "nostalgia film" about the late Roman Empire, with this signal difference: that the nostalgia may somehow be real, in which case it must be identified as a hitherto unknown and unclassified species of feeling altogether (unless the whole thing is simply a costume remake of *La Dolce Vita*; in which case Fellini is just another moralizer without interest, something his film disproves by triumphantly eschewing the narcissistic pathos of its contemporary counterpart). Fellini here manages to construct a time machine in which we can still seize a glimpse not of the world as lived by the decadent Romans of the silver age but of that of high Modernists (at least in their first, symbolist stage), who unlike us could still think the concept of decadence concretely and with Flaubertian force. Meanwhile, as Richard Gilman pertinently reminds us,[40] the Romans in question had no such concept, and unlike the character in the costume drama who announces that he is off for the Thirty Years' War, but like ourselves, the postmoderns, were very far from pinching themselves at every moment to remind themselves that they were living "in the Decadence."

Gilman goes on to tell us to stop using this noxious concept, unaware that everyone else has long since done so; but it still offers an interest-

ing laboratory in which to observe the peculiar behavior of that phenomenon called "the sense of historical difference." The paradox in the conceptual problems rehearsed by Fellini's representation draws its paralogical motor force from the paradoxes of difference in the first place: the "decadents" being as different from us as in another sense they are somehow the same, and the vehicles for our disguised symbolic identification. But "decadence" in that sense and as a theme or ideologeme is not some mere room in the imaginary museum (housing a "culture," for example, more peculiar than that of the Polynesians); nor is it, as Gilman sometimes thinks, a "theory" that includes presuppositions about psychic and racial health or imbalance; it is a secondary spin-off of a whole theory of history, and a special-case subset of what the Germans call *Geschichtsphilosophie*. Unfortunately, therefore, one must start from that and work one's way down to Des Esseintes or Fellini's Romans; it is a task that involves some reflection on the specificity of "modern times" and on the way in which it defines itself by way of its own difference from the rest of history, something Latour has recently and conveniently rebaptized "the Great Divide" (as though there were not any number of those still around!), but what is also sometimes called "the West and the rest," otherwise known as Western Reason, Western metaphysics, or indeed (Latour's own special preoccupation) Science itself, about which it is unnecessary to specify that it is Western in the first place (except for readers of Joseph Needham or Lévi-Strauss). Latour has cooked up a wonderful table of the synonyms and disguises of this view of Western exceptionalism, in which a number of old Marxist friends will also be found:

the modern world
secularization
rationalization
anonymity
disenchantment
mercantilism
optimization
dehumanization
mechanization
westernization
capitalism
industrialization
postindustrialization
technicalization
intellectualization
sterilization
objectivization
Americanization
scientization
consumer society
one-dimensional society
soulless society
modern madness
modern times
progress[41]

Clearly enough, Latour has telescoped several historical stages into these positions, something which only underscores the deeper continuity of the situations from which they spring and which they express; meanwhile the "complicity" of the Left and Marxism in the perpetuation of this myth of Western exceptionalism is here made perfectly clear for anyone who had forgotten the pages of *The Communist Manifesto* devoted to the celebration of the new and historically unique dynamics of capitalism itself. In my opinion, however, it is modernism itself (or rather "modernity"; unless in reality it be "modernization") that stands accused, the novelty rather lying in the association of Marxism with all that, as just another modernism.

In fact, the stages aspect of historical materialism can be reframed in an unconventional way that transforms the absolute break most often (and rightly) felt to be present in Marxism between capitalism (and socialism) and the so-called precapitalist modes of production. Indeed, in the tradition, a number of diversely accented breaks wander along the historical continuum, like a line of verse about which one hesitates as to its meter or relative freedom. Marxism indeed posits one kind of break between tribal societies (hunters and gatherers, primitive communism) and those later modes of production (including capitalism) which know state power (along with the surplus, writing, the division between mental and manual labor, and so forth). It posits another kind of break between precapitalist power societies and that very special dynamic of capitalism, with its infinite expansion ("both positing a limit *specific* to itself and on the other hand driving beyond *any* limit")[42] that may be said to reinvent history in a new way, and also to constitute an incomparable and hitherto novel form of social imperialism; this is, of course, the

break Latour has in mind. Meanwhile, one must also presumably posit a fundamental break between capitalism and socialism, in the sense in which this last reinvents, on a new and higher level, collective forms and experiences which make it rather more comparable to precapitalist social formations, and in that respect dissimilar from the atomic fragmentation and individualism of capitalism per se (even though, in a Hegelian move, socialism will also claim to retain the new richness of individual subjectivity developed under the market system). But this sequence, as thus traditionally presented and now that we are no longer quite so worried about its Darwinian overtones (unilinear evolution or multilinear evolution), still raises embarrassing questions which are not altogether dispelled by the dialectical notion that capitalism now inaugurates a new kind of global history, whose very logic is "totalizing" in the strict sense: with the result that, even if before there were histories —many of them, and unrelated—now there is tendentially only one, on an ever more homogeneous horizon, as far as the eye can see.

A careful reading of the *Manifesto*, however, suggests a somewhat different way of thinking about Marx's view of capitalism as a stage, for it can be grasped as a kind of enormous black box or "vanishing mediator," one extraordinarily complex and temporally distended and developed laboratory, through which precapitalist peoples must pass in order to be reprogrammed and retrained, transformed and developed, on their way to socialism. This reading (which, although structural, remains dialectical) now redistributes the features of radical difference of the older series; it excludes questions about what kind of society, collective character, and culture capitalism itself involves, since this last is now seen as a process rather than a stage in its own right; finally, it obligates us to reconsider the features attributed to postmodernism in a functional way, as new and intensified forms of a structural tendency Marx famously described in terms of separation and disjunction, reduction, disaggregation, divestment, and the like.

Returning to other varieties of the experience of modernity, however, we have already seen the way in which modernity is at least at one with the sense of difference and of impending change, whether in the imminence of the object world or the psyche itself:

> Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!
> A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
> If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!
> If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh delicate, a winged gift!

> If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed
> By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the chaos of the world
> Like a fine, an exquisite chisel, a wedge-blade inserted;
> If only I am keen and hard like the sheer lip of a wedge
> Driven by invisible blows,
> The rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find the Hesperides.[43]

It is an existential imminence that is interchangeable with so many expressions of the sense of objective change that sweeps the modern, along with a disgust for the survivals of the old, and a feeling that besides being a release and a liberation, the New is also an obligation: something you must do to yourself to rise to the occasion and be worthy of the new world tendentially in emergence all around you. But that is a world whose telltale signals tend to be technological, even though its claims and demands are subjective and involve the obligation to produce new people, wholly new forms of subjectivity. It is also, as John Berger reminds us,[44] a world whose Utopian promise will be blasted by World War I, save in the now more directed and restricted channel of systemic change and social and political revolution as such, now historically epitomized in the Soviet revolution with its remarkable new *modernist* cultural effervescence. This is not the place to recommemorate that ferment, save to observe not only that it offers a fundamental structural distinction from the postmodern (in which, everything being new, or rather, nothing any longer being "old," the excitement of the matter is greatly and dialectically diminished), but also that the vantage point of the postmodern ought now to offer new perspectives on a henceforth classical modernist heritage. What it does seem minimally possible to affirm is that modernity is inseparable from that feeling of radical difference under discussion here: moderns feel themselves to be radically different kinds of people from those of older precapitalist traditions or those in colonial areas on the globe contemporaneous with modernism (and imperialism). What is offensive here for other societies and other cultures (and, it does not seem superfluous to add, for other races as well) will now be complicated by the way in which a whole range of other societies interiorize the dilemma and in their various ways live out the drama of Old and New with dramatic anxiety. But the perfection of the grand machinery of capitalism (including its industry) is surely not some personal merit in the white (and often Protestant) northern

Europeans; it is an accident of historical circumstances and structures (or conditions of possibility), about which it ought to be a tautology to add that in it "the educators" were by definition themselves already "reeducated," since among the other technologies capitalism produces and develops is also the human one: the production of "productive labor."

Nonetheless, even this description, which no longer involves any kind of Eurocentrism, posits and presupposes the absolute difference of capitalism itself. What one wants to observe, then, about a global postmodernism in which differences of that sort are theoretically repudiated is that its own condition of possibility posits the far greater *modernization* of other segments of the globe than was the case in the modern (or classical imperialist) era.

Whence, then, this strange inner shadow or opacity within the modern of the decadence itself? Why should proud modern—or modernist—people, at best merely apprehensive about their insufficient modernity, harbor this secret fantasy of languid, neurasthetic difference, with which they then go on to tax the more ancient provinces in their empire, not to speak of their own "most advanced" artists and cultural intellectuals? Decadence is clearly something which both resists modernity and comes after it, as a future destiny in which all the promises of the modern go slack and unravel. The concept fantasizes the return of all the weirdest religious sects and foods, after the triumph of the secular, of homo economicus and of utilitarianism: it is thus the ghost of the superstructure, of cultural autonomy itself, that haunts the omnipotence of the base. "Decadence" is thus in some way the very premonition of the postmodern itself, but under conditions that make it impossible to predict that aftermath with any sociological or cultural accuracy, thereby diverting the vague sense of a future into more fantastic forms, all borrowed from the misfits and eccentrics, the perverts and the Others, or aliens, of the present (modern) system. In history, finally, or rather in the historical unconscious, "decadence" comes before us as the ineradicable otherness of the past and of other modes of production—an otherness posited by capitalism as such, but which it now, as it were, tries on, as with old costumes, since these ancient decadents (who have no concept of decadence themselves) are the others of an other, the difference of a difference: they look at their own surroundings with our eyes, seeing nothing but what is morbidly exotic, but complicitous and finally infected by that, so that the roles slowly reverse and it is we moderns who become "decadent" against the backdrop of the more natural realities of the precapitalist landscape.

Where nature has vanished, however, and along with it the very "otherness" that one can find offensive in the hubris and the exceptionalist ideology of modernity, the concept of decadence must then itself fade away, no longer available for characterizing and expressing our reactions to the postmodern. What seems to persist, on the other hand, is the historiographic stage set of all those "ends of the world" that lent the decadent moment its peculiar resonance and, as it were, its silver note. Late capitalism is in that sense a misnomer, insofar as "late" now yields none of the fin-de-siècle or late-Roman overtones we associate with it, nor are its subjects fantasized as being faint and listless with too much experience and history, too much jouissance and too many rare and occult intellectual and scientific operations. We have all those things, indeed, but we jog afterward to refresh the constitution, while by the same token computers relieve us of the terrible obligation to distend the memory like a swollen bladder retaining all these encyclopedia references.

Nonetheless, the imagination of catastrophe still retains the forms of a near and a far future category; if the atomic exchange has grown distant, the greenhouse effect and ecological pollution are, by way of compensation, ever more vivid. What we need to ask is whether such anxieties and the narratives in which they are invested really "intend" the future (in Husserl's technical sense of posing a genuine object), or somehow convolute and return to feed on our own moment of time. The paradigmatic vision of all this, the Australian film *Road Warrior* (which seems to have inherited a local tradition deriving from *On the Beach* and from the geographical sense of being the last in line for the atomic cloud), depicts what the Russians call a "time of troubles," a breakdown of civilization and a universal anarchy and regression to barbarism, which, like the more facile jeremiads of the decadence itself, could simply be taken as an unoriginal comment on and satire of the current state of things, from the oil crisis to muggings and tattoo culture.

Freud has taught us, however, that the manifest totality of a fantasy or a dream (something we can enlarge to include the mesmerization of this kind of cultural artifact) is not a reliable guide, save by inversion and negation, to the meaning of the latent content: dreams of dead loved ones proving in reality to be happy wish fulfillments about something utterly unrelated. I once suggested[45] that there could be conceived a kind of structural implication much tighter and more logical than this, in which the morbid features of the manifest content played a more imme-

diate and functional role in diverting us from whatever in the latent might offend our self-esteem (or our internalized role models). The occasion was a made-for-television science fiction film in which a group of spelunkers serendipitously avoided the universal catastrophe (resulting either from the noxious effluvia of meteors or some short-term poison gas cloud, I can't remember which). As a convenience to the filmmakers, however, the victims' bodies, along with all the other dead organic material, were volatilized on the spot, without leaving even so much as a little telltale pile of dust. The last people on earth, therefore, emerged into a forbidding landscape in which they could fill their car without charge from the gas pumps and take cans of food off the shelves in empty grocery stores; California, for them, was returned to the stage of a paradisal landscape free of overpopulation, while the survivors settled down to idyllic agricultural and communal existences, much like the (to me) Utopian outcomes of John Wyndham's various apocalypses. The show thus offered existential terror and melodramatic grief, backed with the very real advantages of a reduction in competition and a more humane way of life. I call this kind of film a Utopian wish fulfillment wrapped in dystopian wolf's clothing, and think it is only fair and prudent, as far as the nastier sides of human nature are concerned, to vigilantly scrutinize apparent nightmares of this kind for traces of that different and more egotistical drive toward individual and collective self-gratification that Freud found living on insatiably in our Unconscious.

Road Warrior, of course, has some other features that separate it from a simple-minded postatomic narrative (of the type of *A Boy and His Dog* or *Glenn and Rhonda*): in particular, its temporal perspective converts its near-future narrative into a far-future one, endowing the present with legendary dimensions of a well-nigh mythical or religious kind (something then completed and finished off, with all the *i*'s dotted and *t*'s crossed, in the rather more christological *Terminator*). But later, more urban fantasies give the game away; and it is not only the visual splendor of *Blade Runner* that suggests image consumption of a more familiar (but no less sumptuous and gratifying) type, which has little to do with futures fantasized or not, but everything to do with late capitalism and some of its favorite marketplaces.

In my opinion, what films like this "mean" (not, perhaps, the best word for it) is not the breakdown of high technology in a future time of troubles, but its conquest in the first place. As representations, such postmodern dystopian films seem to give us thoughts and hypotheses

about the future; and the thoughts and hypotheses are surely plausible enough, except for what we may now call the Adorno principle, which is as instantly activated by the future as it is by actuality: namely that even if they turn out to be facts, they may not necessarily be true. But what such films actually give us to consume are not those flimsy prognoses and dystopian meteorological bulletins but rather high technology itself and its own special effects. J. G. Ballard, himself one of the greatest postcontemporary dystopians, has found a stunning formulation for such aesthetic projections: they have reached, he tells us, a level of technology advanced enough to depict advanced technology in decline. True high technology means achieving the capacity to show historicity of high tech itself: *Wesen ist was gewesen ist* (negation is determination); you can't say what a thing is until it turns into something else; not the end of art but the end of electricity, and all the computers breaking down. The thought gives new and exemplary meaning to a haunting moment in Renoir's *La Règle du jeu*, when, at the climax of the costume ball in the chateau, now infiltrated by skeletons waving their lamps and celebrating mortality to the tune of Saint-Saëns's *Danse macabre*, the fat lady pianist, hands in her lap, can be glimpsed staring with rapt melancholia at the skeletal autonomy of the keyboard itself, behind which the piano rolls have taken charge with a vengeance. It is a fable of the work of art at that particular stage of its mechanical reproducibility, gazing at its own alienated power with morbid fascination. The postmodern has, however, reached a later stage than that; unlike the delight of the modern in its projection of wonder-working machinery, its delight with the very breakdown of that machinery at the critical point is subject to the gravest misunderstanding if we do not realize that this is precisely how postmodern technology consumes and celebrates itself.

We must, therefore, posit a kind of supplementary bonus of pleasure in the surplus of the technological image itself: since here high technology is identifiable not only in the content (the ostensible future things filmed and then screened for a jaded public) but in the process itself, the nature of this stock and equipment, the qualities of the material image and the successfulness of the "special effects," which, as in the paradoxes of the "suspension of disbelief," are judged by way of the negation of the negation to be not unlifelike, and thenceforth evaluated according to the millions of dollars spent in their construction (it is indeed well known that today big box-office successes are mainly obtained by new and remarkable "special effects," while each of these

new constructs is accompanied by a whole secondary publicity about its mode of manufacture, its engineers, its novelties, and so forth). "Special effects" are thus here a kind of crude and emblematic caricature of the deeper logic of all contemporary image production, in which it becomes an exceedingly subtle matter to distinguish between our attention to the content and our appreciation of the form. "Expensive form"—rather than the older "significant form"—that is surely now the watchword for these peculiar commodities, whose exchange value has in some complex supplementary spiral become a commodity in its own right. (This is a somewhat different—and more classical—way of talking about the kind of status connotation first anatomized by Veblen, then codified in academic sociology, and finally reinvented in rich new ways by Pierre Bourdieu in our own time: in a society with inwardly colllapsing hierarchies, the notion of status seems uncertain; but the universalization of the formal effects discussed above—what has been called a "high-tech bonus"—explains why such notions should again have become attractive.)

The abstraction of this process—in which commodification reaches new and second-degree levels and seems to propagate itself upon its earlier stages—suggests parallels with the credit system and the constructions of paper money in current stock-exchange practices. Meanwhile, if one does not want to lapse back into technological determinism, it would be necessary to examine the structure of the new technology for its capacity to sustain libidinal investment of this kind: a jubilation with the new prosthetic powers which distinguish themselves from the older machinery (combustion engine, electricity, etc.) by their non-anthropomorphic character and thus give rise to forms of idealism utterly different from the classical types. There may also be structural parallels to be established between these new "informational" machineries that are neither basely physical nor "spiritual" in any nineteeth-century sense, and language itself, whose model has become predominant in the postmodern period. On this view it would not be the informationality of the new technology that inspires a meditation on language and spurs people on to the construction of new ideologies centered on it, but rather the structural parallels themselves between two equally material phenomena which equally elude physical representation of the older type.

Meanwhile, as religion has always been one of the principles by which modernity has tried to recognize itself and to specify its own difference, it may not be inappropriate to inquire about its status under the new postmodern dispensation, in which—just as its well-known lack of historicity has apparently generated any number of "returns to history"—religious revivals also seem endemic, without one's often caring to take them at face value. In Weber already, however, religion was the mark of difference, at the same time that some religions seemed to have more affinities with a modernism on the point of eradicating them than others, of a tenaciously conservative mindset and an incorrigibly traditionalist stamp. For these last, indeed, it can just as easily be said that the modernist campaigns of laicization and enlightenment reinforced and strengthened them, as that they achieved a life- and object-world in which such religious traditionalisms were ever more bereft of legitimation. Yet in the gentler atmosphere of an uncontested postmodernism, more effortlessly secular than any modernism could have wished, such religious traditionalisms seem to have melted away without a trace, like the authoritarian clericalism of an older Quebec under the paradigmatic Quiet Revolution, while the wildest and most unexpected forms of what is now sometimes called "fundamentalism" flourish, virtually at random and seemingly obedient to other climacterics and ecological laws.

It would be abusive or sentimental to account for such new "religious" formations by way of an appeal to some universal human appetite for the spiritual, in a situation in which spirituality virtually by definition no longer exists: the definition in question is in fact that of postmodernism itself. One of postmodernism's ultimate achievements is the utter eradication of all the forms of what used to be called idealism, in bourgeois or even in precapitalist societies. This means, of course, in passing, that it is fruitless to worry about materialism either, which came into the world as idealism's therapy and corrective, and which no longer finds anything much to do; nor is it worth taxing the postmodernisms with "materialism" in the other, North American, and consumerist sense, since no contrasting conduct is any longer imaginable in a fully commodified world. The problems, meanwhile, that an older Marxian concept of ideology has had to confront in recent years surely arise from its affinity with the various forms of idealism it was wont to denounce, which are themselves extinct. As far as the religious fundamentalisms are concerned, Marvin Harris has devoted part of an incongruously passionate indictment of postmodern times[46] to a denunciation of the emphasis of the new fundamentalisms on success of whatever type (life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness—mostly financial), reminding us that no previous human religion on earth has ever valorized such things, let alone promised them. But the more "fundamental" question seems to me to be the one about tradition and the past, and how the

new religions compensate their irreplaceable absence in the depthlessness of the new social order.

For I take it as axiomatic that what is now called fundamentalism is also a postmodern phenomenon, whatever it would like to think it thinks about a purer and more authentic past. The Iranian revolution, which became Islamic and clerical, was certainly launched against the Shah as an agent of modernization—in this, it was as anti-modern as it is postmodern in its insistence on all the basic features of a modern industrialized and bureaucratic state. But the paradox of Freudian repetition would seem to hold inversely for traditionalism as a postmodern (or even a modern) program—just as with the one you cannot really have any "first" time, with the other one you cannot imagine any restoration that can really be considered traditional or authentic. Modernist restorations seem to have produced a modernist form of tradition that was more accurately filed under the varieties of the different fascisms; the postmodern sorts all seem to have much in common with what the Left calls "new social movements"; indeed, they constitute various forms and varieties of those, and not all are reactionary—witness liberation theology.

What makes it as difficult to discuss "religion" in postmodern terms as to locate cognate experiential concepts such as the "aesthetic" or the "political" is the problematization of notions of belief in a postmodern social universe, and the theoretical challenge to such peculiarly self-confirming irrational doctrines in the conceptual area, where it is as though the "otherness" inherent in the doctrine of belief as such marked it out for eradication. Belief (along with classical ideology) was of course always redolent of a rhetoric of depth, and gave itself out as peculiarly resistant to persuasion or reasoning; its ontological position in the intellectual realm masked, I think, the weirder and more basic feature of this pseudo-concept which was always to have been attributed to other people (even as a believer, "I" myself never really believe enough, or so Pascal tells us).[47]

The very concept of belief is then the casualty of a period in which otherness as such—valorized difference resulting in an exceptionalism of the present, with its subalternities of the past and of other cultures—is critically grasped as a cornerstone of the modern and as its most deeply cherished superstition about itself. The clear conscience of the postmodern in this respect has not, of course, been paid for by any principled abdication of the technological and scientific infrastructure on which modernity's claim to difference was based; rather, it has been

bought on credit and concealed by the representational transformation of that infrastructure in which the word processor replaces the assembly line in the collective mind's eye.

Still, the religious postmodernisms constitute a rolling-back of the dearly bought and deeply felt modernist sense of social and cultural difference fully as considerable as the social and cultural ones; if "gender," bourgeois distinction, and Western scientific reasoning are forms of difference which our First World forebears considered to be unique achievements, but which we have inherited with no little disgust and set about dismantling, so also a religious modernism offers the spectacle of a theological hermeneutic of great refinement, endowed with elaborate and supple casuistries, which can have no great appeal in an age that despises hermeneutics as such and has little need for casuistry.

For theological modernism seems to share with the other modernisms their constitutive sense of that radical otherness or difference of the past that constitutes us as modern people: the sense that everyone who went before us was therefore not modern, but was traditional, and in that sense radically different in their ways of thinking and behaving. All the old worlds die and become radically other from us at the moment of the birth of true modernity. The moderns thus, with their religion of the new, believed that they were somehow distinct from all the other human beings who ever lived in the past—and also from those non-modern human beings still alive in the present, such as colonial peoples, backward cultures, non-Western societies, and "undeveloped" enclaves. (For the postmodern, then, the break stands or falls with some putative opening onto these forms of psychic, social, and cultural otherness, which raises the issue of a political Third Worldism in a new way, as it does the breakdown of the Western "canon," and the possibility of some new reception of other, global cultures.)

The hermeneutic task of theological modernism emerges from the desperate requirement to preserve or rewrite the meaning of an ancient precapitalist text within a situation of triumphant modernization, which threatens scripture along with all the other relics of an agrarian past in full-scale liquidation. Peasants at the time of the English Revolution had a life experience of the land and the seasons that was probably not very different from that of the characters of the Old Testament (or of the New Testament either); it is no wonder it was still possible for them to stage their revolution in biblical terms and to conceptualize it in theological categories. That possibility no longer exists for a nineteenth-century bourgeoisie within a life-world of factories and artificial street-

lights, railroad trains and contracts, representative political institutions and telegraphs: what can stories about pastoral peoples dressed up in exotic costumes possibly mean for such modern Western men and women? A modernist hermeneutic then intervenes to save the day: the biblical narratives, including the gospel itself, are no longer to be taken literally—that way Hollywood lies! They are to be taken figuratively or allegorically and thereby stripped of their archaic or exotic content and translated into existential or ontological experiences, whose essentially abstract language and figuration (anxiety, guilt, redemption, the "question of being") can now, much like the "open works" of aesthetic modernism, be offered to a differentiated public of Western city-dwellers to be recoded in terms of their own private situations. The central hermeneutic difficulty is then clearly posed by the anthropomorphism of the narrative character of a historical Jesus; only intense philosophical effort is capable of turning this character into this or that christological abstraction. As for the commandments and the ethical doctrine, casuistry has long since settled the matter; they also need no longer be taken literally, and confronted with properly modern forms of injustice, bureaucratic warfare, systemic or economic inequality, and so forth, modern theologians and churchmen can work up persuasive accommodations to the constraints of complex modern societies, and provide excellent reasons for bombing civilian populations or executing criminals which do not disqualify the executors from Christian status.

This, then, is the modernist situation in which someone like the North American "fundamentalist" theologian John Howard Yoder[48] can be considered not merely anti-modern but also postmodern, by virtue of his affirmation of the literal claim on us today, in a fully modernized society, of the teachings of Jesus as elaborated in Scripture, specifically including the reaffirmation of the Sixth Commandment. In a situation in which such doctrinal reaffirmation is not residual (as in the traditional ideology of social groups on the point of dissolution and rationalization, in the Weberian sense), but rather appears within the postmodern environment of completed modernization and rationalization, it may be considered (without any disrespect) to have a simulated relationship to the past rather than a commemorative one, and to share characteristics of other such postmodern historical simulations. In our own context here, the striking feature of such simulation is in effect the denial of any fundamental social or cultural difference between postmodern subjects of late capitalism and the Middle-Eastern subjects of the early Roman Empire: such fundamentalism thus absolutely refuses what

Latour calls the Great Divide, particularly insofar as belief in that distinction authorized and legitimated modernity in the first place, as an experience as well as an ideology.

The example of Yoder, a Mennonite pacifist whose arguments were marshalled in opposition to the Vietnam war, can also serve as a timely reminder that the qualification of "postmodernity" does not automatically carry with it any readymade value judgment: I will assume, indeed, that for any number of readers this particular expression of postmodern fundamentalism will (like liberation theology, in contemporary Roman Catholicism) be taken much more positively than politically more reactionary expressions of the same historical phenomenon, whether in the evangelicals or the "Islamic revolution" in Iran. Both these last are, however, small-group movements in an authentically postmodern sense;[49] indeed, the Iranian case poses the very interesting problem of how far a postmodern politics (including the most modern forms of media, such as the cassettes of the Ayatollah's speeches that were smuggled into the Shah's Iran) is consistent with the totalizing and modernist seizure of state power. The deeper theoretical problem raised by these forms of postmodern religion lies, however, in their distribution across the new world system to which the postmodern corresponds: there was never any problem of understanding how a modernism could come into being on the basis of a fundamental hostility towards and repudiation of modernization as such. Here, however, in a contemporary Third World within the postmodern system, one is tempted to adapt Jencks's formula and to speak of some "late anti-modernism," even though it was presumably the extension and fulfillment of the modernizing process that made the Iranian revolution (and also the CIA-organized antirevolutionary evangelical movements in Latin America) possible in the first place.

X. The Production of Theoretical Discourse

Throughout these pages I have insisted on a characterization of postmodern thought—for it turns out to be this that we used to call "theory" in the heroic discovery period of poststructuralism—in terms of the expressive peculiarities of its language rather than as mutations in thinking or consciousness as such (and, ineffable or linguistic by turns, it would finally have to be dramatized by some larger social-stylistic characterization of the type of the culture critique). An aesthetics of this new "theoretical discourse" would probably include the following

features: it must not emit propositions, and it must not have the appearance of making primary statements or of having positive (or "affirmative") content. This reflects the widespread feeling that inasmuch as everything we utter is a moment in a larger chain or context, all statements that seem to be primary are in fact only links in some larger "text." (We think we're walking firmly on solid ground, but the planet is spinning in outer space.) This feeling also entails another one, which is perhaps only a temporal version of the preceding intuition; namely, that we can never go far enough back to make primary statements, that there are no conceptual (but only representational) beginnings, and that the doctrine of presuppositions or foundations is somehow intolerable as a testimony to the inadequacies of the human mind (which needs to be grounded on something, which in its turn proves to be nothing but fiction, religious belief, or, most intolerable of all, some philosophy of "as if"). Any number of other themes can be mobilized to enrich or inflect this one, such as the idea of nature and the natural as some ultimate content or referent, whose historical obliteration in a postnatural "human age" then centrally characterizes the postmodern as such. But the crucial feature of what we have called a theoretical aesthetic lies in its organization around this particular taboo, which excludes the philosophical proposition as such, and thereby statements about being as well as judgments of truth. The much-decried poststructural swerve away from truth judgments and categories—comprehensible enough as a social reaction to a world already overpopulated with such things—is thus a second-degree effect of a more primary requirement of language, which is no longer to frame utterances in such a way that those categories might be appropriate.

This is clearly a demanding aesthetic indeed, one in which the theorist walks a tightrope, the slightest lapse precipitating the sentences in question into the old-fashioned (system, ontology, metaphysics) or sheer opinion. What one then uses language for becomes an issue of life and death, particularly since the option of silence—a high-modernist one—is also excluded. My sense is that everyday garden-variety theoretical discourse pursues a task finally not very different from that of common-language philosophy (although it certainly does not look much like that!), namely, the exclusion of error by way of the vigilant tracking of ideological illusions (as those are vehiculated in language itself). Language can, in other words, no longer be true; but it can certainly be false; and the mission of theoretical discourse thus becomes a kind of search-and-destroy operation in which linguistic misconceptions are

remorselessly identified and stigmatized, in the hopes that a theoretical discourse negative and critical enough will not itself become the target of such linguistic demystification in its turn. The hope is, of course, vain, insofar as, like it or not, every negative statement, every purely critical operation, can nonetheless generate the ideological illusion or mirage of a position, a system, a set of positive values in its own right.

This illusion is ultimately the object of the theoretical critique (which thus becomes a *bellum omnium contra omnes*), but the latter can equally well—and perhaps somewhat more productively—mount a vigilant guard over the structural incompleteness of the sentence itself, for which saying anything at all means leaving something else out. A permanent revolution can also be staged around those omissions; and the nature of the theoretical debates since the 1960s shows that the implacability of the older Marxian ideological quarrels was itself only a foreshadowing and a crude figure for the universalization of at least this specific conception of "ideology critique" that turns on the misleading connotation of terms, the imbalance of the presentation, and the metaphysical implications of the act of expression itself.

All of which clearly tends to reduce linguistic expression generally to a function of commentary, that is, of a permanently second-degree relationship to sentences that have already been formed. Commentary indeed makes up the special field of postmodern linguistic practice generally, and its originality, at least with respect to the pretensions and illusions of philosophy in the preceding period, of "bourgeois" philosophy, that with some secular pride and confidence set out to say what things really were after the long night of superstition and the sacred. Commentary, however, also—in that curious play of historical identity and difference mentioned above—now secures the kinship of the postmodern (at least in this respect) with other, hitherto more archaic, periods of thought and intellectual labor, as with the medieval copyists and scribes or the endless exegesis of the great Oriental philosophies and sacred texts.

But in this desperately repetitive situation (which is to philosophical thought what the return to the formulaic is to the ambitions of great bourgeois modern narrative), in which the essential is absent—the sacred text that might lend a certain motivation to this life sentence to the commentary form—a linguistic solution nonetheless remains, and it turns on what has hitherto been called transcoding. For alongside the perspective in which my language comments on that of another, there is a somewhat longer vista in which both languages derive from larger

families that used to be called weltanschauungen, or worldviews, but which have today become recognized as "codes." Where I used to "believe" in a certain vision of the world, political philosophy, philosophical system, or religion as such, today I speak a specific idiolect or ideological code—the badge of group adherence, viewed from a different and more sociological perspective—which presents many of the features of an officially "foreign" language (I have to learn to speak it, for example; I can say some things more strongly in one foreign language than in another, and vice versa; there is no Ur- or ideal language of which the imperfect earthly ones, in their multiplicity, are so many refractions; syntax is more important than vocabulary, but most people think it is the other way round; my awareness of linguistic dynamics is the result of a new global system or a certain demographic "pluralism").

Under these circumstances, several new kinds of operations are possible. I can *transcode*; that is to say, I can set about measuring what is sayable and "thinkable" in each of these codes or idiolects and compare that to the conceptual possibilities of its competitors: this is, in my opinion, the most productive and responsible activity for students and theoretical or philosophical critics to pursue today, but it has the drawback of being retrospective and even potentially traditionalist or nostalgic, insofar as the proliferation of new codes is an endless process that at best cannibalizes the preceding ones and at worst consigns them to the historical dustheap.

There thereby emerges a somewhat different possibility, which has its kinship with this one: namely, what I will call the production of theoretical discourse par excellence, the activity of generating new codes, it being understood that in a situation in which new ways of thinking and new philosophical systems are by definition excluded, this activity is utterly nontraditional and demands the invention of new skills altogether.

New theoretical discourse is produced by the setting into active equivalence of two preexisting codes, which thereby, in a kind of molecular ion exchange, become a new one. What must be understood is that the new code (or metacode) can in no way be considered a synthesis between the previous pair: it is not here a question of the kinds of operations that went into the construction of classical philosophical systems. The older attempt at a Freudo-Marxism can indeed give a certain idea of the difficulties of yoking two thought systems together; these are difficulties that fall away, and reveal a strange new conceptual landscape, when it is rather a question of linking two sets of terms in such a way that each

can express and indeed *interpret* the other (in the strong sense of Peirce's interpretant). This is, no doubt, in its conditions of possibility, related to the channel-switching characterized above, and dependent in much the same way on the mutual parceling out and colonization of "reality" by various language zones and codes; only here a more active consequence is drawn than in culture as such, and the relationship between two channels, so to speak, becomes a solution rather than a problem, being maximized into an instrument in its own right. Hegemony here means the possibility of recoding vast quantities of preexisting discourse (in other languages) into the new code; meanwhile, the two codes thus identified may be seen to have something of a base and superstructure relationship, not by way of any kind of ontological priority that one is assigned over the other (rather, the new structure serves to absorb and defuse the otherwise inevitable and "natural" questions of this kind about priority) but more particularly owing to the cultural or semiotic overtones of one of the codes as opposed to the other.

Thus, in what is virtually the paradigm gesture of the new production process, Jean Baudrillard links the formula for exchange and use value (rewritten as a fraction) with the fraction for the sign itself (signifier and signified), thereby inaugurating a semiotic chain reaction whose fallout seems to have continued to the present. His own act of equivalence was no doubt modeled on the genial intuition of the great predecessors in the launching of "structuralism" itself, most notably Lacan, whose identification of the semiotic fraction with the "fraction" produced by the bar separating conscious from unconscious is well known and even more influential. More recently, Bruno Latour has combined a semiotic code with a map of social and power relations to "transcode" the scientific fact and the scientific discovery itself. Nothing, indeed, prevents the enlargement of the chain of equations to further codes. Nor are these isolated examples, as we have seen above in the theoretical chapters. Instead, they are the most visible and dramatic, owing to the naked deployment of the semiotic code itself, last and most visible of the secular postmodern idiolects.

That specific ideological effects can be derived from the new mechanism is something I have tried to show above in the example of the popular current identification between the "market" and the "media." But any theory of the production of theoretical discourse (to which the present remarks are only prolegomena and notes) will need to develop further in two distinct directions. One involves the reordering of the semiotic equation—the transcoding of the two distinct conceptual termi-

nologies, their projection onto an axis of equivalence (to use the Jakobsonian model of Laclau and Mouffe, who can in this respect be read as offering an exemplary formal description of the production of theoretical discourse)—into a hierarchical relationship or strong fraction (of the Lacanian type) which sorts itself out into something like our old friends base and superstructure, with this difference that in theoretical discourse it is always the superstructure that is determinate. That superstructure is also always itself in one way or another communicational or mediatic. The sparks struck by the "theoretical" setting of two codes in equivalence with each other always require one code to have its deeper affinities with the media itself (something I will illustrate more concretely in my concluding discussion of cognitive mapping, which can in this respect be grasped as a kind of reflexive form of "theoretical discourse").

The other proposition that demands exploration is the generation, from out of the transcoding process, of strange new ambivalent abstractions, which look like traditional philosophical universals but are in reality as specific or particular as the paper they are printed on, and tend to turn ceaselessly into each other (that is to say, into their own logical opposites). We have already confronted several such pairs of abstractions: in Identity and Difference themselves, but also in the peculiar postmodern or late capitalist indistinction between uniformity or standardization and differentiation, or between separation and unification (which in this particular mode of production turn out to be the same thing). For the most part, however, specific ideological mirages are produced, as it were, in spite of the apparatus rather than because of it. In the desperate flight from everything ontological or foundational about the old philosophical "system," a kind of antisubstantialist doctrine about sheer process is invoked, and a momentum develops—thought as operation rather than as conceptualization—that nonetheless yields the old illusion of system and ontology in the pauses between the operations and the reified appearance of discourse served up on the page. Reification, indeed, not to mention commodification, would offer another "code" in which to characterize the same general fate or destiny of theoretical discourse, as it finds itself thematized and transformed into someone's personal philosophy or system.

In reality, however, the process of ideological delegitimation is most often secured in a rather different way from this ceaseless discursive warfare that if anything perpetuates the rights of all the players. As with any other economy or logic, to the mechanisms that drive the process

forward must be added mechanisms that prevent it from slackening or lapsing back into habits or procedures of the past. Transcoding and the production of theoretical discourse are a flight forward, as the French say, and their momentum is maintained by what burns all the bridges and makes retreat impossible, namely, the growing old of the codes, the planned obsolescence of all the older conceptual machinery. A remarkable observation by Richard Rorty, whose modest Socratic dryness wants to confuse us into taking it for common sense, will serve for this particular point of new departure. He is talking about the "originality" of Derrida (for whom we may, however, substitute any distinctive form of postmodern thought); the paradox lies in the difficulty of distinguishing what made up the new and the original, the innovative, in the modern system from a postmodern dispensation in which "originality" has become a suspect concept, but where many of the basic postmodern features—self-consciousness, antihumanism, decentering, reflexivity, textualization—look suspiciously indistinguishable from the old modern ones. "What's the difference?"—a deManian question to which Rorty now responds: "It is a mistake to think that Derrida, or anybody else, 'recognized' problems about the nature of textuality or writing which had been ignored by the tradition. What he did was to think up ways of speaking which made old ways of speaking optional, and thus more or less dubious."[50]

This can now be grasped as virtually the constitutive feature in what Stuart Hall calls the "discursive struggle" over the delegitimation of opposing ideologies (or "discourses"): worse than incorrect, immoral, evil, or dangerous, is the apprehension that a particular code is simply one code among others, and an "older" one that has thereby and virtually by definition become "optional." The strategy can be seen in addition to mobilize those fears about consensus described above. Indeed, if a code attempts to assert its nonoptionality—that is to say, its privileged authority as an articulation of something like a truth—it will be seen not merely as usurpatory and repressive but (since codes are now identified with groups, as the badge of their adherence and the content of their expression) as the illicit attempt of one group to lord it over all the others. But if, in the spirit of pluralism, it makes its autocritique and humbly admits its mere "optionality," the media excitement falls away, everyone loses interest, and the code in question, tail between its legs, can shortly be observed making for the exit from the public sphere or stage of that particular moment of History or discursive struggle.

In this particular case, the riddle—if everybody loses, who wins?

—can be clarified, if not solved, by the proposition that in fact, ideologies in the sense of codes and discursive systems are no longer particularly determinant. As with so much else, it is an old 1950s acquaintance, "the end of ideology," which has in the postmodern returned with a new and unexpected kind of plausibility. But ideology is now over, not because class struggle has ended and no one has anything class-ideological to fight about, but rather because the fate of "ideology" in this particular sense can be understood to mean that conscious ideologies and political opinions, particular thought systems along with the official philosophical ones which laid claim to a greater universality —the whole realm of consciousness, argument, and the very appearance of persuasion itself (or of reasoned dissent)—has ceased to be functional in perpetuating and reproducing the system. That classical ideology once did so, in the earlier stages of capitalism, can be measured by the significance of the intellectuals themselves—professors and journalists, ideologues of all kinds—who were assigned a strategic role in inventing forms of legitimation and legitimacy for the status quo and its tendencies. Then, ideology was something a little more significant than mere discourse, and ideas, although they determined nothing in the mode of the various idealistic theories of history, still furnished the principle "forms in which people became conscious of class conflict and fought it out" (Marx). Why this should have been so fundamentally modified, and the role of intellectuals so diminished in our own time, may have several explanations, all of which finally amount to the same thing. One may, on the one hand, impute a certain enfeeblement of the individual concepts and messages, information and discourses, to a density hitherto unimaginable; on the other hand, one may also wonder, with Adorno, whether "in our time the commodity has not become its own ideology"—that is to say, whether practices have not replaced ratiocination (or rationalization), and in particular whether the practice of consumption has not replaced the resolute taking of a stand and the full-throated endorsement of a political opinion. Here too, then, the media meets the market and joins hands upon the body of an older kind of intellectual culture.

It would be a waste of time to deplore it, but autopsies are the place in which new lessons about anatomy are learned. In the present instance, the ideological or discursive strategy Rorty laid his finger on may be grasped as an unexpected extension of Marx's fundamental figure for social development and dynamics (a figure that runs through the *Grundrisse*, connecting the 1844 manuscripts in an unbroken line to

Capital itself): that is the fundamental notion of *separation* (as when Marx describes the production of the proletariat in terms of their separation from the means of production—i.e., enclosure, the exclusion of the peasants from their land). There has not yet, I think, been a Marxism based on this particular figure,[51] although it is a cognate of other figures such as alienation, reification, and commodification, which have all given rise to specific ideological tendencies (not to say schools) within Marxism itself. But the logic of separation may have become even more relevant for our own period, and for the diagnosis of postmodernism, in which psychic fragmentation and the resistance to totalities, interrelation by way of difference and the schizophrenic present, and above all the systematic delegitimation described here, all in one way or another exemplify the proteiform nature and effects of this particular disjunctive process.

XI. How to Map a Totality

So at length we return to the matter of totality itself (which we have presumably already learned to distinguish from "totalization" as an operation), a topic that will also afford me the private satisfaction of showing how the analysis of postmodernism is not alien to my earlier work but rather a logical consequence of it,[52] something I want to rehearse again myself in terms of the notion of a "mode of production," to which my analysis of postmodernism claims to make a contribution. It is first worth observing, however, that my version of all this—which obviously (but perhaps I haven't said so often enough) owes a great debt to Baudrillard, as well as to the theorists to whom he is himself indebted (Marcuse, McLuhan, Henri Lefebvre, the situationists, Sahlins, etc., etc.)—took form in a relatively complicated conjuncture. It was not only the experience of new kinds of artistic production (particularly in the architectural area) that roused me from the canonical "dogmatic slumbers": I will want to make the point later on that as I use it, "postmodernism" is not an exclusively aesthetic or stylistic term. The conjuncture also offered the occasion for resolving a long-standing malaise with traditional economic schemas in the Marxist tradition, a discomfort felt by a certain number of us not in the area of social class, whose "disappearance" only true "free-floating intellectuals" could be capable of entertaining, but in the area of the media, whose shock-wave impact on Western Europe enabled the observer to take a little critical and perceptual distance from the gradual and seemingly natural media-

tization of North American society in the 1960s. Lenin on imperialism did not quite seem to equal Lenin and the media; and it gradually seemed possible to take his lesson in a different way. For he set the example of identifying a new stage of capitalism that was not explicitly foreseen in Marx: the so-called monopoly stage, or the moment of classical imperialism. That could lead you to believe either that the new mutation had been named and formulated once and for all, or that one might be authorized to invent yet another one under certain circumstances. But Marxists were all the more unwilling to draw this second antithetical conclusion because in the meantime the new mediatic and informational social phenomena had been colonized (in our absence) by the Right, in a series of influential studies in which the first tentative Cold War notion of an "end of ideology" finally gave birth to the full-blown concept of a "postindustrial society" itself. Mandel's book *Late Capitalism* changed all that, and for the first time theorized a third stage of capitalism from a usably Marxian perspective. This is what made my own thoughts on "postmodernism" possible, and they are therefore to be understood as an attempt to theorize the specific logic of the cultural production of that third stage, and not as yet another disembodied culture critique or diagnosis of the spirit of the age.

It has not escaped anyone's attention that my approach to postmodernism is a "totalizing" one. The interesting question today is then not why I adopt this perspective, but why so many people are scandalized (or have learned to be scandalized) by it. In the old days, abstraction was surely one of the strategic ways in which phenomena, particularly historical phenomena, could be estranged and defamiliarized. When one is immersed in the immediate—the year-by-year experience of cultural and informational messages, of successive events, of urgent priorities—the abrupt distance afforded by an abstract concept, a more global characterization of the secret affinities between those apparently autonomous and unrelated domains, and of the rhythms and hidden sequences of things we normally remember only in isolation and one by one, is a unique resource, particularly since the history of the preceding few years is always what is least accessible to us. Historical reconstruction, then, the positing of global characterizations and hypotheses, the abstraction from the "blooming, buzzing confusion" of immediacy, was always a radical intervention in the here and now and the promise of resistance to its blind fatalities.

But one must acknowledge the representational problem, if only to separate it out from the other motives at work in the "war on totality." If

historical abstraction—the notions of a mode of production, or of capitalism, fully as much as of postmodernism—is something not given in immediate experience, then it is pertinent to worry about the potential confusion of this concept with the thing itself, and about the possibility of taking its abstract "representation" for reality, of "believing" in the substantive existence of abstract entities such as Society or Class. Never mind that worrying about other people's errors, generally turns out to mean worrying about the errors of other intellectuals. In the long run there is probably no way of marking a representation so securely *as* representation that such optical illusions are permanently forestalled, any more than there is any way to ensure the resistance of a materialistic thought to idealistic recuperations or to ward off the reading of a deconstructive formulation in metaphysical terms. Permanent revolution in intellectual life and culture means both that impossibility and the necessity for a constant reinvention of precautions against what my tradition calls conceptual reification. The extraordinary fortunes of the concept of postmodernism are surely a case in point here, calculated to inspire those of us responsible for it with some misgivings. But what is needed is not the drawing of the line and the confession of excess ("dizzy with success," as Stalin once famously put it) but rather the renewal of historical analysis itself, and the tireless reexamination and diagnosis of the political and ideological functionality of the concept—the part it has suddenly come to play today in our imaginary resolutions of our real contradictions.

The deeper political motivation of the "war on totality" lies elsewhere, however, in a fear of Utopia that turns out to be none other than our old friend *1984*, such that a Utopian and revolutionary politics, correctly associated with totalization and a certain "concept" of totality, is to be eschewed because it leads fatally to the Terror: a notion at least as old as Edmund Burke, but helpfully revived, after innumerable restatements during the Stalin period, by the Cambodian atrocities. Ideologically, this particular revival of Cold War rhetoric and stereotypes, launched in the de-Marxification of France in the 1970s, turns on a bizarre identification of Stalin's gulags with Hitler's extermination camps, (but see Arno Mayer's remarkable *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* for a definitive demonstration of the constitutive relationship between the "final solution" and Hitler's anticommunism[53]); what can be "postmodern" about these hoary nightmare images, except for the depolitization to which they invite us, is less clear. The history of the revolutionary convulsions in question can also be appealed to for a very different lesson; namely,

that violence springs from counterrevolution first and foremost, indeed, that the most effective form of counterrevolution lies precisely in this transmission of violence to the revolutionary process itself. I doubt if the current state of alliance or micropolitics in the advanced countries supports such anxieties and fantasies; they would not, for me at least, constitute grounds for withdrawing support and solidarity from a potential revolution in South Africa, say. Finally, this general feeling that the revolutionary, Utopian, or totalizing impulse is somehow tainted from the outset and doomed to bloodshed by the very structure of its thoughts does strike one as idealistic, if not finally a replay of doctrines of original sin in their worst religious sense.

But the question of totalizing thought can also be staged in a different way, interrogating it not for its truth content or validity but rather for its historical conditions of possibility. This is then no longer to philosophize exactly, or, if you prefer, to philosophize on a *symptomal* level, in which we step back and estrange our immediate judgments on a given concept ("the most advanced postmodern thought teaches us not to deploy concepts of totality or periodization") by way of asking the question about the social determinants that enable or shut down thought. Does the current taboo on totality simply result from philosophical progress and increased self-consciousness? Is it because we have today attained a state of theoretical enlightenment and conceptual sophistication that permit us to avoid the grosser errors and blunders of the old-fashioned thinkers of the past (most notably Hegel)? That may be so, but it ignores Rorty's lesson and would also require some kind of historical justification in its own right (in which the invention of "materialism" would presumably intervene). This hubris of the present and of the living can be avoided by posing the issue in a somewhat different way: namely, why it is that "concepts of totality" have seemed necessary and unavoidable at certain historical moments and, on the contrary, noxious and unthinkable at others. This is an inquiry which, working its way back on the outside of our own thought and on the basis of what we can no longer (or not yet) think, cannot be philosophical in any positive sense (although Adorno attempted, in *Negative Dialectics*, to turn it into a genuine philosophy of a new kind); it would certainly lead us to the intensified sense that ours is a time of nominalism in a variety of senses (from culture to philosophical thought). Such nominalism would probably turn out to have several prehistories or overdeterminations: the moment of existentialism, for instance, in which some new social sense of isolated individuals (and of the horror of demography, as we have seen, particularly in Sartre) causes the older traditional "universals" to pale and lose their conceptual force and persuasiveness; the age-old tradition of Anglo-American empiricism as well, which emerges from this death of the concept with renewed force in a paradoxically "theoretical" and hyperintellectual age. There is, of course, a sense in which the slogan "postmodernism" means all this, too; but then in that case it is not the explanation but what remains to be explained.

Speculation and hypothetical analysis of this kind that bears on the weakening of general or universalizing concepts in the present is the correlative of an operation that can often look more reliable, namely, the analysis of moments in the past when such conceptuality seemed possible; indeed, those moments in which the emergence of general concepts can be observed have often seemed to be privileged ones. As far as the concept of totality is concerned, I am tempted to say about it what I once said about Althusser's notion of structure; namely, that the crucial point to be made is this: we can acknowledge the presence of such a concept, provided we understand that there is only one of them—something otherwise often known as a "mode of production." Althusserian "structure" is that, and so is "totality," at least as I use it. As for "totalizing" processes, that often means little more than the making of connections between various phenomena, a process which, as I suggested above, tends to be ever more spatial.

We must be grateful to Ronald L. Meek for writing the prehistory of the concept of a "mode of production" (as that will later be worked out in the writings of Morgan and Marx), which in the eighteenth century took the form of what Meek calls the "four stages theory." This theory came together in France and the Scottish Enlightenment, as the proposition that human cultures historically vary with their material or productive basis, which knows four essential transformations: hunting and gathering, pastoralism, agriculture, and commerce. What will then happen to this historical narrative, above all in the thought and work of Adam Smith, is that having now produced that object of study which is the specifically contemporary mode of production, or capitalism, the historical scaffolding of the precapitalist stages tends to fall away and lend both Smith's and Marx's models of capitalism a synchronic appearance. But Meek wants to argue[54] that the historical narrative was essential to the very possibility of thinking capitalism as a system, synchronic or not; and something like that will remain my own position with respect to that "stage" or moment of capitalism some of us now seem to be calling "postmodernism."

I am here, however, essentially concerned with the conditions of possibility of the concept of a "mode of production," that is to say, the characteristics of the historical and social situation which make it possible to articulate and formulate the concept of "totality" in the first place. I will suggest, in a general way, that thinking this particular new thought (or combining older thoughts in this new way) presupposes a particular kind of "uneven" development, such that distinct and coexisting modes of production are registered together in the life world of the thinker in question. Meek describes the preconditions for the production of this particular concept (in its original forms as a "four stages theory") as follows:

> My own feeling is that thinking of the type we are considering, which lays primary emphasis on the development of economic techniques and socio-economic relationships, is likely to be a function, first, of the rapidity of contemporary economic advance, and, second, of the facility with which a contrast can be observed between areas which are economically advancing and areas which are still in "lower" stages of development. In the 1750s and 60s, in cities like Glasgow and in areas such as the more advanced provinces in the north of France, the whole social life of the communities concerned was being rapidly and visibly transformed, and it was fairly obvious that this was happening as a result of profound changes taking place in economic techniques and basic socio-economic relationships. And the new forms of economic organisation which were emerging could be fairly easily compared and contrasted with the older forms of organisation which still existed, say, in the Scottish Highlands, or in the remainder of France—or among the Indian tribes in America. If changes in the mode of subexistence were playing such an important and "progressive" role in the development of contemporary society, it seemed a fair bet that they must also have done so in that of past society.[55]

This possibility of thinking the concept of a mode of production for the first time is sometimes loosely described as one of the newly emergent forms of historical consciousness, or historicity. It is not necessary, however, to have recourse to the philosophical discourse of consciousness as such, since what are being described might equally well be termed new discursive paradigms, and this more contemporary way of talking about conceptual emergence is reinforced, for literary readers, by the presence alongside this one of yet another new historical paradigm in the novels of Sir Walter Scott (as Lukács interprets them in *The Historical Novel*). The unevenness that allowed French thinkers (Turgot, but also Rousseau himself!) to conceptualize a "mode of production" probably had as much as anything else to do with the prerevolutionary situation in the France of that period in which feudal forms stood out ever more starkly in their distinctive difference against a whole, newly emergent bourgeois culture and class consciousness. Scotland is in many ways a more complex and interesting case, for, last of the emergent First World countries, or first of the Third World ones (to use Tom Nairn's provocative idea in *The Break-up of Britain*), Enlightenment Scotland was above all the space of a coexistence of radically distinct zones of production and culture: the archaic economy of the Highlanders and their clan system, the commercial vigor of the English "partner" over the border, on the eve of its industrial "takeoff." The brillance of Edinburgh was therefore not a matter of Gaelic genetic material but rather owing to the strategic yet ec-centric position of the Scottish metropolis and intellectuals with respect to this virtually synchronic coexistence of distinct modes of production, which it was uniquely the task of the Scottish Enlightenment to "think," or to conceptualize. Nor is this merely an economic matter. Scott, like Faulkner later on, inherited a social and historical raw material, a popular memory, in which the fiercest revolutions and civil and religious wars inscribed the coexistence of modes of production in vivid narrative form. The conditions of thinking a new reality and articulating a new paradigm for it therefore seem to demand a peculiar conjuncture and a certain strategic distance from that new reality, which tends to overwhelm those immersed in it (this would be something like an epistemological variant of the well-known "outsider" principle in scientific discovery).

All of which, however, has another secondary consequence of greater significance to us here that bears on the gradual repression of such conceptuality. If postmodernism, as an enlarged third stage of classical capitalism, is a purer and more homogeneous expression of classical capitalism, from which many of the hitherto surviving enclaves of socio-economic difference have been effaced (by way of their colonization and absorption by the commodity form), then it makes sense to suggest that the waning of our sense of history, and more particularly our resistance to globalizing or totalizing concepts like that of the mode of production itself, are a function of precisely that universalization of capitalism. Where everything is henceforth systemic the very notion of a system seems to lose its reason for being, returning only by way of a "return of the repressed" in the more nightmarish forms of the "total sys-

tem" fantasized by Weber or Foucault or the *1984* people.

But a mode of production is not a "total system" in that forbidding sense; it includes a variety of counterforces and new tendencies within itself, of "residual" as well as "emergent" forces, which it must attempt to manage or control (Gramsci's conception of hegemony). Were those heterogeneous forces not endowed with an effectivity of their own, the hegemonic project would be unnecessary. Thus, differences are presupposed by the model, something that would be sharply distinguished from another feature which complicates this one, namely, that capitalism also produces differences or differentiation as a function of its own internal logic. Finally, to recall our initial discussion of representation, it is clear that there is a *difference* between the concept and the thing, between this global and abstract model and our own individual social experience, from which it is meant to afford some explanatory distance but which it is scarcely designed to "replace."

A number of other reminders about the "proper use" of the mode of production model are also advisable: that what is called a "mode of production" is not a productionist model it always seems worth saying. What also seems worth saying is that it involves a variety of levels (or orders of abstraction) that must be respected if discussions about it are not to degenerate into random shouting matches. I proposed a very general picture of such levels in *The Political Unconscious*, and in particular the distinctions that have to be respected between an examination of historical events, an evocation of larger class and ideological conflicts and traditions, and an attention to impersonal socioeconomic patterning systems (of which the well-known thematics of reification and commodification are examples). The question of agency, which arises often in these pages, has to be mapped across these levels.

Featherstone,[56] for example, thinks that "postmodernism" is on my use a specifically cultural category. It is not, and for better and for worse it is designed to name a "mode of production" in which cultural production finds a specific functional place and whose symptomatology is in my work mainly drawn from culture (this is no doubt the source of the confusion). Featherstone therefore advises me to pay closer attention to the artists themselves and to their publics, as well as to the institutions which mediate and govern this newer kind of production. (Nor can I see why any of these topics should be excluded; they are very interesting matters indeed.) But it is hard to see how sociological inquiry at that level would become *explanatory*: rather, the phenomena he is concerned with tend at once to reform into their own semiautonomous

sociological level, one which then requires a diachronic narrative. To say what the art market and the status of the artist or the consumer are now means saying what they were before this transformation, and even at some outside limit leaving a space open for some alternate configuration of such activities (as is the case, for example, in Cuba, where the art market, galleries, investments in painting, etc., do not exist).[57] Once you have written up that narrative, that series of local changes, then the whole thing gets added into the dossier as yet another space in which something like the postmodern "great transformation" can be read.

Indeed, although concrete social agents seem to make their appearance with Featherstone's proposals (postmodernists are then those artists or musicians, those gallery or museum officials or record company executives, those specific bourgeois or youth or working-class consumers), here too the requirement of differentiating levels of abstraction must be maintained. For one can also plausibly assert that "postmodernism" in the more limited sense of an ethos and a "life-style" (truly a contemptible expression, that) is the expression of the "consciousness" of a whole new class fraction that largely transcends the limits of the groups enumerated above. This larger and more abstract category has variously been labeled as a new petit bourgeoisie, a professional-managerial class, or more succinctly as "the yuppies" (each of these expressions smuggling in a little surplus of concrete social representation along with itself).[58]

This identification of the class content of postmodern culture does not at all imply that yuppies have become something like a new ruling class, merely that their cultural practices and values, their local ideologies, have articulated a useful dominant ideological and cultural paradigm for this stage of capital. It is indeed often the case that cultural forms prevalent in a particular period are not furnished by the principal agents of the social formation in question (businessmen who no doubt have something better to do with their time or are driven by psychological and ideological motive forces of a different type). What is essential is that the culture ideology in question articulate the world in the most useful way functionally, or in ways that can be functionally reappropriated. Why a certain class fraction should provide these ideological articulations is a historical question as intriguing as the question of the sudden dominance of a particular writer or a particular style. There can surely be no model or formula given in advance for these historical transactions; just as surely, however, we have not yet worked this out for what we now call postmodernism.

Meanwhile, another limitation of my own work on the subject (as formulated in the opening chapter of this book) now becomes clear; namely, that the tactical decision to stage the account in cultural terms has made for a relative absence of any identification of properly postmodern "ideologies," something I have tried partially to rectify in the subsequent chapter on the ideology of the market. But since I have been particularly interested in the formal matter of the new "theoretical discourse," and also because the paradoxical combination of global decentralization and small-group institutionalization has come to seem an important feature of the postmodern tendential structure, I have mainly singled out intellectual and social phenomena like "poststructuralism" and the "new social movements," thus giving the impression, against my own deepest political convictions, that all the "enemies" were on the left.

But what has been said about the class origins of postmodernism has as its consequence the requirement that we now specify another higher (or more abstract and global) kind of agency than any so far enumerated. This is, of course, multinational capital itself: it may as a process be described as some "nonhuman" logic of capital, and I would continue to defend the appropriateness of that language and that kind of description, in its own terms and on its own level. That this seemingly disembodied force is also an ensemble of human agents trained in specific ways and inventing original local tactics and practices according to the creativities of human freedom is also obvious, from a different perspective, to which one would only wish to add that for the agents of capital the old dictum holds: "people make their history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing." It is within the possibilities of late capitalism that people glimpse "the main chance," "go for it," make money, and reorganize firms in new ways (just like artists or generals, ideologists or gallery owners).

What I have tried to show here is that although my account of the postmodern may seem in the eyes of some of its readers and critics to "lack agency," it can be translated or transcoded into a narrative account in which agents of all sizes and dimensions are at work. The choice between these alternate descriptions—focalizations on distinct levels of abstraction—is a practical rather than a theoretical one. (It would, however, be desirable to link up this account of agency with that other very rich (psychoanalytic) tradition of psychic and ideological "subject positions.") If the objection arises that the descriptions of agency described above are merely alternative versions of the base-superstructure

model—an economic base for postmodernism on the one account, a social or class base on this other—then so be it, provided we understand that "base and superstructure" is not really a model of anything, but rather a starting point and a problem, an imperative to make connections, something as undogmatic as a heuristic recommendation simultaneously to grasp culture (and theory) in and for itself, but also in relationship to its outside, its content, its context, and its space of intervention and effectivity. How one does that, however, is never given in advance, and while the descriptions and the analyses in this book seek to characterize and measure the space of ideological and theoretical struggle, I can imagine a whole range of very different practical conclusions and political recommendations being drawn from them.

Even as far as a cultural politics is concerned, at least two different kinds of strategy seem conceivable. The more properly postmodern political aesthetic—which would confront the structure of image society as such head-on and undermine it from within (in the postmodern, paradoxically, offensive has become at one with subversion, and, as with Proust's two ways, Gramsci's war of maneuver has turned out to be the same as his war of position after all)—might be termed the *homeopathic* strategy, most dramatically and paradigmatically exemplified in our time by Hans Haacke's installations, which turn institutional space inside out by drawing the museum in which they are technically contained into themselves, as part of their thematics and subject matter: invisible spiders, whose net contains their own containers and turns the private property of social space inside out like a glove. Formally, however, as was suggested earlier, Haacke, along with many other contemporary artists of whom the photographers and the videomakers seem the most political and the most innovative, seems intent on undermining the image by way of the image itself, and planning the implosion of the logic of the simulacrum by dint of every greater doses of simulcra.

In contrast, what I have called cognitive mapping may be identified as a more modernist strategy, which retains an impossible concept of totality whose representational failure seemed for the moment as useful and productive as its (inconceivable) success. The problem with this particular slogan clearly lay in its own (representational) accessibility. Since everyone knows what a map is, it would have been necessary to add that cognitive mapping cannot (at least in our time) involve anything so easy as a map; indeed, once you knew what "cognitive mapping" was driving at, you were to dismiss all figures of maps and mapping from your mind and try to imagine something else. But it may be more desirable to

take a genealogical approach and show how mapping has ceased to be achievable by means of maps themselves. This involves the proposition (often reiterated in these pages) that the three historical stages of capital have each generated a type of space unique to it, even though these three stages of capitalist space are obviously far more profoundly interrelated than are the spaces of other modes of production. The three types of space I have in mind are all the result of discontinuous expansion of quantum leaps in the enlargement of capital, in the latter's penetration and colonization of hitherto uncommodified areas. A certain unifying and totalizing force is presupposed here—not the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, nor the party, nor Stalin, but simply capital itself; and it is at least certain that the notion of capital stands or falls with the notion of some unified logic of this social system itself.

The first of these three kinds of space is that of classical or market capitalism in terms of a logic of the grid, a reorganization of some older sacred and heterogeneous space into geometrical and Cartesian homogeneity, a space of infinite equivalence and extension of which you can find a kind of dramatic or emblematic shorthand representation in Foucault's book on prisons. The example, however, requires the warning that a Marxian view of such space grounds it in Taylorization and the labor process rather than in that shadowy and mythical entity Foucault called "power." The emergence of this kind of space will probably not involve problems of figuration so acute as those we will confront in the later stages of capitalism, since here, for the moment, we witness that familiar process long generally associated with the Enlightenment, namely, the desacralization of the world, the decoding and secularization of the older forms of the sacred or the transcendent, the slow colonization of use value by exchange value, the "realistic" demystification of the older kinds of transcendent narratives in novels like *Don Quixote*, the standardization of both subject and object, the denaturalization of desire and its ultimate displacement by commodification (or, in other words, "success") and so on.

The problems of figuration that concern us will only become visible in the next stage, the passage from market to monopoly capital, or what Lenin called the "stage of imperialism"; and they may be conveyed by way of a growing contradiction between lived experience and structure, or between a phenomenological description of the life of an individual and a more properly structural model of the conditions of existence of that experience. Too rapidly we can say that, while in older societies and perhaps even in the early stages of market capital, the immediate

and limited experience of individuals is still able to encompass and coincide with the true economic and social form that governs that experience, in the next moment these two levels drift ever further apart and really begin to constitute themselves into that opposition the classical dialectic describes as *Wesen* and *Erscheinung*, essence and appearance, structure and lived experience.

At this point the phenomenological experience of the individual subject—traditionally, the supreme raw material of the work of art—becomes limited to a tiny corner of the social world, a fixed-camera view of a certain section of London or the countryside or whatever. But the truth of that experience no longer coincides with the place in which it takes place. The truth of that limited daily experience of London lies, rather, in India or Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound up with the whole colonial system of the British Empire that determines the very quality of the individual's subjective life. Yet those structural coordinates are no longer accessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people.

There comes into being, then, a situation in which we can say that if individual experience is authentic, then it cannot be true; and that if a scientific or cognitive model of the same content is true, then it escapes individual experience. It is evident that this new situation poses tremendous and crippling problems for a work of art; and I have argued that it is as an attempt to square this circle and to invent new and elaborate formal strategies for overcoming this dilemma that modernism or, perhaps better, the various modernisms as such emerge: in forms that inscribe a new sense of the absent global colonial system on the very syntax of poetic language itself, a new play of absence and presence that at its most simplified will be haunted by the exotic and be tattooed with foreign place names, and at its most intense will involve the invention of remarkable new languages and forms.

At this point an essentially allegorical concept must be introduced—the "play of figuration"—in order to convey some sense that these new and enormous global realities are inaccessible to any individual subject or consciousness—not even to Hegel, let alone Cecil Rhodes or Queen Victoria—which is to say that those fundamental realities are somehow ultimately unrepresentable or, to use the Althusserian phrase, are something like an absent cause, one that can never emerge into the presence of perception. Yet this absent cause can find figures through which to express itself in distorted and symbolic ways: indeed, one of our basic tasks as critics of literature is to track down and make conceptu-

ally available the ultimate realities and experiences designated by those figures, which the reading mind inevitably tends to reify and to read as primary contents in their own right.

The relationship of the modernist moment to the great new global colonial network, can be illustrated by a simple but specialized example of a kind of figure specific to this historical situation. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a wide range of writers began to invent forms to express what I will call "monadic relativism." In Gide and Conrad, in Fernando Pessoa, in Pirandello, in Ford, and to a lesser extent in Henry James, even very obliquely in Proust, what we begin to see is the sense that each consciousness is a closed world, so that a representation of the social totality now must take the (impossible) form of a coexistence of those sealed subjective worlds and their peculiar interaction, which is in reality a passage of ships in the night, a centrifugal movement of lines and planes that can never intersect. The literary value that emerges from this new formal practice is called "irony"; and its philosophical ideology often takes the form of a vulgar appropriation of Einstein's theory of relativity. In this context, what I want to suggest is that these forms, whose content is generally that of privatized middle-class life, nonetheless stand as symptoms and distorted expressions of the penetration even of middle-class lived experience by this strange new global relativity of the colonial network. The one is then the figure, however deformed and symbolically rewritten, of the latter; and I take it that this figural process will remain central in all later attempts to restructure the form of the work of art to accommodate content that must radically resist and escape artistic figuration.

If this is so for the age of imperialism, how much the more must it hold for our own movement, the moment of the multinational network, or what Mandel calls "late capitalism," a moment in which not merely the older city but even the nation-state itself has ceased to play a central functional and formal role in a process that has in a new quantum leap of capital prodigiously expanded beyond them, leaving them behind as ruined and archaic remains of earlier stages in the development of this mode of production.

The new space that thereby emerges involves the suppression of distance (in the sense of Benjamin's aura) and the relentless saturation of any remaining voids and empty places, to the point where the postmodern body—whether wandering through a postmodern hotel, locked into rock sound by means of headphones, or undergoing the multiple shocks and bombardments of the Vietnam War as Michael Herr conveys

it to us—is now exposed to a perceptual barrage of immediacy from which all sheltering layers and intervening mediations have been removed. There are, of course, many other features of this space one would ideally want to comment on—most notably, Lefebvre's concept of abstract space as what is simultaneously homogeneous and fragmented—but the disorientation of the saturated space will be the most useful guiding thread in the present context.

I take such spatial peculiarities of postmodernism as symptoms and expressions of a new and historically original dilemma, one that involves our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities, whose frames range from the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable decentering of global capital itself. Not even Einsteinian relativity, or the multiple subjective worlds of the older modernists, is capable of giving any kind of adequate figuration to this process, which in lived experience makes itself felt by the so-called death of the subject, or, more exactly, the fragmented and schizophrenic decentering and dispersion of this last (which can no longer even serve the function of the Jamesian reverberator or "point of view"). But what is involved here is in reality practical politics: since the crisis of socialist internationalism, and the enormous strategic and tactical difficulties of coordinating local and grassroots of neighborhood political actions with national or international ones, such urgent political dilemmas are all immediately functions of the enormously complex new international space in question.

Let me illustrate this by way of a brief account of the greatest importance and suggestiveness (for problems of space and politics) a historical narrative of the single most significant political experience of the American 1960s. *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, by Marvin Surkin and Dan Georgakis[59] is a study of the rise and fall of the League of Black Revolutionary Workers in that city in the late 1960s. The political formation in question was able to conquer power in the workplace, particularly in the automobile factories; it drove a substantial wedge into the media and informational monopoly of the city by way of a student newspaper; it elected judges; and finally it came within a hair's breadth of electing the mayor and taking over the city power apparatus. This was, of course, a remarkable political achievement, characterized by an exceedingly sophisticated sense of the need for a multilevel strategy for revolution that involved initiatives on the distinct social levels of the labor process, the media and culture, the juridical apparatus, and electoral politics.

Yet it is equally clear—and far clearer in virtual triumphs of this kind than in the earlier stages of neighborhood politics—that such strategy is bound and shackled to the city form itself. Indeed, one of the enormous strengths of the superstate and its federal constitution lies in the evident discontinuities between city, state, and federal power: if you cannot make socialism in one country, how much more derisory, then, are the prospects for socialism in one city in the United States today?

But what would happen if you conquered a whole series of large key urban centers in succession? This is what the League of Black Revolutionary Workers began to think about; that is to say, they began to feel that their movement was a political model and ought to be generalizable. The problem that arises is spatial: how to develop a *national* political movement on the basis of a *city* strategy and politics. At any rate, the leadership of the league began to spread the word in other cities and traveled to Italy and Sweden to study workers' strategies there and to explain their own model; reciprocally, out-of-town politicos came to Detroit to investigate the new strategies. At this point it ought to be clear that we are in the middle of the problem of representation, not the least of it being signaled by the appearance of that ominous American word "leadership." In a more general way, however, these trips were more than networking, making contacts, spreading information: they raised the problem of how to represent a unique local model and experience to people in other situations. So it was logical for the league to make a film of their experience, and a very fine and exciting film it is.

Spatial discontinuities, however, are more devious and dialectical, and they are not overcome in any of the most obvious ways. Such discontinuities in fact returned on the Detroit experience as some ultimate limit before which it collapsed. What happened was that the jet-setting militants of the league had become media stars; not only were they becoming alienated from their local constituencies, but, worse than that, nobody stayed home to mind the store. Having acceded to a larger spatial plane, the base vanished under them; and with this the most successful social revolutionary experiment of that rich political decade in the United States came to a sadly undramatic end. I do not want to say that it left no traces behind, since a number of local gains remain, and in any case every rich political experiment continues to feed the tradition in underground ways. Most ironic in this context, however, is the very success of their failure: the representation—the model of this complex spatial dialectic—triumphantly survives in the form of a film and a book, but in the process of becoming an image and a spectacle, the referent seems to have disappeared, as so many people from Debord to Baudrillard always warned us it would.

The example may also serve to illustrate the proposition that successful spatial representation need not be some uplifting socialist-realist drama of revolutionary triumph but may be equally inscribed in a narrative of defeat, which sometimes, even more effectively, causes the whole architectonic of postmodern global space to rise up in ghostly profile behind itself, as some ultimate dialectical barrier or invisible limit. And the Detroit experience may now specify more concretely what is meant by the slogan of cognitive mapping, which can now be characterized as something of a synthesis between Althusser and Kevin Lynch. Lynch's classic work, *The Image of the City*, indeed spawned the whole low-level subdiscipline that today takes the phrase "cognitive mapping" as its own designation. His problematic, to be sure, remains locked within the limits of phenomenology, and his book can no doubt be subjected to many criticisms on its own terms (not the least of which is the absence of any conception of political agency or historical process). My use of the book will be emblematic or allegorical, since the mental map of city space explored by Lynch can be extrapolated to that mental map of the social and global totality we all carry around in our heads in variously garbled forms. Drawing on the downtowns of Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles, and by means of interviews and questionnaires in which subjects were asked to draw their city context from memory, Lynch suggests that urban alienation is directly proportional to the mental unmappability of local cityscapes. A city like Boston, then, with its monumental perspectives, its markers and statuary, its combination of grand but simple spatial forms, including dramatic boundaries such as the Charles River, not only allows people to have, in their imaginations, a generally successful and continuous location to the rest of the city, but gives them something of the freedom and aesthetic gratification of traditional city form.

I have always been struck by the way Lynch's conception of city experience—its dialectic between the here and now of immediate perception and the imaginative or imaginary sense of the city as an absent totality—presents something like a spatial analogue of Althusser's great formulation of ideology itself, as "the Imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence." Whatever its defects and problems, this positive conception of ideology as a necessary function in any form of social life has the great merit of stressing the gap between the local positioning of the individual subject and

the totality of class structures in which he or she is situated, a gap between phenomenological perception and a reality that transcends all individual thinking or experience; but which ideology, as such, attempts to span or coordinate, to map, by means of conscious and unconscious representations. The conception of cognitive mapping proposed here therefore involves an extrapolation of Lynch's spatial analysis to the realm of social structure, that is to say, in our historical moment, to the totality of class relations on a global (or should I say multinational) scale. Unfortunately, in hindsight, this strength of the formulation is also its fundamental weakness: the transfer of the visual map[60] from city to globe is so compelling that it ends up re-spatializing an operation we were supposed to think of in a different manner altogether. A new sense of global social structure was supposed to take on figuration and to displace the purely perceptual substitute of the geographical figure; cognitive mapping, which was meant to have a kind of oxymoronic value and to transcend the limits of mapping altogether, is, as a concept, drawn back by the force of gravity of the black hole of the map itself (one of the most powerful of all human conceptual instruments) and therein cancels out its own impossible originality. A secondary premise must, however, also be argued—namely, that the incapacity to map spatially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience. It follows that an aesthetic of cognitive mapping in this sense is an integral part of any socialist political project.

What must be stressed methodologically, in the operation of mapping as it emerges from Georgakis and Surkin's interesting text (or from the only full-dress analysis of cognitive mapping at work in a cultural artifact that I have myself succeeded in completing) is that in the present world-system, a media term is always present to function as an *analogon* or material interpretant for this or that more directly representational social model. Something thereby emerges which looks like a new postmodern version of the base-and-superstructure formula, in which a representation of social relations as such now demands the mediation of this or that interposed communicational structure, from which it must be read off indirectly. In the film I myself studied (*Dog Day Afternoon*, 1975, directed by Sidney Lumet),[61] the possibility of a class figuration in the content (the sinking of the older middle-class strata into proletarianization or wage work, the emergence of a sham "new class" in the government bureaucracy) is projected out onto the world system on the one hand, and on the other articulated by the form of the star system proper, which interposes itself and is read as the

interpretant of the content. The doctrine of the Sartrean *analogon* permitted a theorization of this indirection and its mechanisms: and showed how even representation itself needs a substitute or a *tenant-lieu*, a placeholder, and as it were a small-scale model of a radically different and more formal type for its completion. What now seems clear is that this kind of *triangulation* is historically specific and has its deeper relationship with the structural dilemmas posed by postmodernism as such. It also retroactively clarifies the provisional description of postmodern "theoretical discourse" offered above (and also rehearsed in the peculiar new ideological symbiosis, in the postmodern, between the media and the market). These are, then, not really theories, but rather themselves unconscious structures and so many afterimages and secondary effects of some properly postmodern cognitive mapping, whose indispensable media term now passes itself off as this or that philosophical reflection on language, communication, and the media, rather than the manipulation of its figure.

Saul Landau has observed of our current situation that there has never been a moment in the history of capitalism when this last enjoyed greater elbowroom and space for maneuver: all the threatening forces it generated against itself in the past—labor movements and insurgencies, mass socialist parties, even socialist states themselves—seem today in full disarray when not in one way or another effectively neutralized; for the moment, global capital seems able to follow its own nature and inclinations, without the traditional precautions. Here, then, we have yet another "definition" of postmodernism, and a useful one indeed, which only an ostrich will wish to accuse of "pessimism." The postmodern may well in that sense be little more than a transitional period between two stages of capitalism, in which the earlier forms of the economic are in the process of being restructured on a global scale, including the older forms of labor and its traditional organizational institutions and concepts. That a new international proletariat (taking forms we cannot yet imagine) will reemerge from this convulsive upheaval it needs no prophet to predict: we ourselves are still in the trough, however, and no one can say how long we still stay there.

This is the sense in which two seemingly different conclusions to my two historical essays on the current situation (one on the sixties[62] and the other the first chapter of this volume, on postmodernism) are in reality identical: in the second, I called for that "cognitive mapping" of a new and global type which has just been evoked here; in the first, I anticipated a process of proletarianization on a global scale. "Cognitive

mapping" was in reality nothing but a code word for "class consciousness" —only it proposed the need for class consciousness of a new and hitherto undreamed of kind, while it also inflected the account in the direction of that new spatiality implicit in the postmodern (which Ed Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* now places on the agenda in so eloquent and timely a fashion). I occasionally get just as tired of the slogan "postmodern" as anyone else, but when I am tempted to regret my complicity with it, to deplore its misuses and its notoriety, and to conclude with some reluctance that it raises more problems than it solves, I find myself pausing to wonder whether any other concept can dramatize the issues in quite so effective and economical a fashion.

The rhetorical strategy of the preceding pages has involved an experiment, namely, the attempt to see whether by systematizing something that is resolutely unsystematic, and historicizing something that is resolutely ahistorical, one couldn't outflank it and force a historical way at least of thinking about that. "We have to name the system": this high point of the sixties finds an unexpected revival in the postmodernism debate.

Notes

Introduction

1 In William Gibson, *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (New York, 1988). This is the place to regret the absence from this book of a chapter on cyberpunk, henceforth, for many of us, the supreme *literary* expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself.
2 Achille Bonito-Oliva, *The Italian Trans-avantgarde* (Milan, 1980).
3 Michael Speaks develops this point at some length in his dissertation, "Remodelling Postmodernism(s): Architecture, Philosophy, Literature."
4 Thus, Jost Hermand's exhaustive inventory of sixties culture, "Pop, oder die These vom Ende der Kunst" (in Stile, Ismen, Etikketen [Wiesbaden, 1978]), covers virtually all the *formal* innovations of the so-called postmodern in advance.
5 See *The Political Unconscious* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 95–98.
6 Cf. Jacques Derrida: "Each time I fall upon this expression 'late capitalism' in texts dealing with literature and philosophy, it is clear to me that a dogmatic or stereotyped statement has replaced analytical demonstration"; in "Some Questions and Responses," *The Linguistics of Writing*, Nigel Fabb, Derek Attridge, Alan Durant, and Colin MacCabe, eds. (New York, 1987), p. 254.
7 See my *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London, 1990); the topic deserves extended study. So far I have only found passing references, except for Giacomo Marramao, "Political Economy and Critical Theory," *Telos* no. 24 (Summer 1974); and also Helmut Dubiel, *Theory and Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985).
8 See Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, (in *Collected Works*, volume 28 [Moscow, 1986]), for example, pp. 66–67, 97–98, 451.
9 Accounts and versions increasingly abound, of which I will recommend: David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford, 1989); Antonio Benitez Rojo, *La Isla que se repite* (Hanover, N.H., 1990); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (London, 1989); Todd Gitlin, "Hip-Deep in Postmodernism," *New York Times Book Review*, Nov. 6, 1988; p. 1; and Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture* (Oxford, 1989).
10 In a related work (see note 7 above) I have "felt myself able," as Hayden White might put it, to adopt the German term *Spätmarxismus* for the kind of Marxism that might be appropriate for the new system's moment.

1 The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

1 Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas*, (Cambridge, Mass. 1972).
2 The originality of Charles Jencks's pathbreaking *Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (1977) lay in its well-nigh dialectical combination of postmodern architecture and a certain kind of semiotics, each being appealed to to justify the existence of the other.

Semiotics becomes appropriate as a mode of analysis of the newer architecture by virtue of the latter's populism, which does emit signs and messages to a spatial "reading public," unlike the monumentality of the high modern. Meanwhile, the newer architecture is itself thereby validated, insofar as it is accessible to semiotic analysis and thus proves to be an essentially aesthetic object (rather than the transaesthetic constructions of the high modern). Here, then, aesthetics reinforces an ideology of communication (about which more will be observed in the concluding chapter), and vice versa. Besides Jencks's many valuable contributions, see also Heinrich Klotz, *History of Postmodern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); Pier Paolo Portoghesi, *After Modern Architecture* (New York, 1982).

3 Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, eds. *Philosophies of Art and Beauty* (New York, 1964), p. 663.

4 Remo Ceserani, "Quelle scarpe di Andy Warhol," *Il Manifesto* (June 1989).

5 Ragna Stang, *Edvard Munch* (New York, 1979), p. 90.

6 This is the moment to confront a significant translation problem and to say why, in my opinion, the notion of a postmodern spatialization is not incompatible with Joseph Frank's influential attribution of an essentially "spatial form" to the high modern. In hindsight, what he describes is the vocation of the modern work to invent a kind of spatial mnemonics, reminiscent of Frances Yates's *Art of Memory*—a "totalizing" construction in the stricter sense of the stigmatized, autonomous work, whereby the particular somehow includes a battery of re- and pre-tensions linking the sentence or the detail to the Idea of the total form itself. Adorno quotes a remark about Wagner by the conductor Alfred Lorenz in precisely this sense: "If you have completely mastered a major work in all its details, you sometimes experience moments in which your consciousness of time suddenly disappears and the entire work seems to be what one might call 'spatial,' that is, with everything present simultaneously in the mind with precision" (W. 36/33). But such mnemonic spatiality could never characterize postmodern texts, in which "totality" is eschewed virtually by definition. Frank's modernist spatial form is thus synedochic, whereas it is scarcely even a beginning to summon up the word *metonymic* for postmodernism's universal urbanization, let alone its nominalism of the here-and-now.

7 For further on the 50s, see chapter 9.

8 See also "Art Deco," in my *Signatures of the Visible* (Routledge, 1990).

9 "Ragtime," *American Review* no. 20 (April 1974): 1–20.

10 Lynda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), pp. 61–2.

11 Jean-Paul Sartre, "*L'Etranger* de Camus," in *Situations II* (Paris, Gallimard, 1948).

12 The basic reference, in which Lacan discusses Schreber, is "D'Une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose," in *Écrits*, Alan Sheridan, trans. (New York, 1977), pp. 179–225. Most of us have received this classical view of psychosis by way of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*.

13 See my "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan," in *The Ideologies of Theory*, volume I (Minnesota, 1988), pp. 75–115.

14 Marguerite Séchehaye, *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*, G. Rubin-Rabson, trans. (New York, 1968), p. 19.

15 *Primer* (Berkeley, Calif., 1981).

16 Sartre, *What Is Literature?* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988).

17 Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London, 1978), p. 118.

18 See, particularly on such motifs in Le Corbusier, Gert Kähler, *Architektur als Symbolverfall: Das Dampfermotiv in der Baukunst* (Brunswick, 1981).

19 "To say that a structure of this type 'turns its back away' is surely an understatement, while to speak of its 'popular' character is to miss the point of its systematic segregation from the great Hispanic-Asian city outside (whose crowds prefer the open space of the old Plaza). Indeed, it is virtually to endorse the master illusion that Portman seeks to convey: that he has re-created within the precious spaces of his super-lobbies the genuine popular texture of city life.

"(In fact, Portman has only built large vivariums for the upper middle classes, protected by astonishingly complex security systems. Most of the new downtown centres might as well have been built on the third moon of Jupiter. Their fundamental logic is that of a claustrophobic space colony attempting to miniaturize nature within itself. Thus the Bonaventure reconstructs a nostalgic Southern California in aspic: orange trees, fountains, flowering vines, and clean air. Outside, in a smog-poisoned reality, vast mirrored surfaces reflect away not only the misery of the larger city, but also its irrepressible vibrancy and quest for authenticity including the most exciting neighbourhood mural movement in North America)." (Mike Davis, "Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism," *New Left Review* 151 [May-June 1985]: 112).

Davis imagines I am being complacent or corrupt about this bit of second-order urban renewal; his article is as full of useful urban information and analysis as it is of bad faith. Lessons in economics from someone who thinks sweatshops are "precapitalist" are not helpful; meanwhile it is unclear what mileage is to be gained by crediting our side ("the ghetto rebellions of the late 1960s") with the formative influence in bringing postmodernism into being (a hegemonic or "ruling class" style if there ever was one), let alone gentrification. The sequence is obviously the other way round: capital (and its multitudinous "penetrations") comes first, and only then can "resistance" to it develop, even though it might be pretty to think otherwise. ("The association of the workers as it appears in the factory is not posited by them but by capital. Their combination is not *their* being, but the being of capital. To the individual worker it appears fortuitous. He relates to his own association with other workers and to his cooperation with them as *alien*, as to modes of operation of capital," [Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, *Collected Works*, volume 28 (New York, 1986), p. 505]).

Davis's reply is characteristic of some of the more "militant" sounds from the Left; right-wing reactions to my article generally take the form of aesthetic handwringing, and (for example) deplore my apparent identification of postmodern architecture generally with a figure like Portman, who is, as it were, the Coppola (if not the Harold Robbins) of the new downtowns.

20 Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York, 1978), pp. 8–9.

21 See my "Morality and Ethical Substance," in *The Ideologies of Theory*, volume I (Minneapolis, 1988).

22 Louis Althusser, "Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York, 1972).

2 Theories of the Postmodern

1 The following analysis does not seem to me applicable to the work of the *boundary 2* group, who early on appropriated the term *postmodernism* in the rather differ-

ent sense of a critique of establishment "modernist" thought.

2 Written in spring 1982.

3 See his "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, Hal Foster, ed. (Port Townsend, Wash., 1983), pp. 3–15.

4 The specific politics associated with the Greens would seem to constitute a reaction to this situation rather than an exception from it.

5 See J. F Lyotard, "Answering the Question, What Is Postmodernism?" in *The Post-Modern Condition* (Minneapolis, 1984), pp. 71–82; the book itself focuses primarily on science and epistemology rather than on culture.

6 See, in particular, *Architecture and Utopia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976) and, with Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture* (New York, 1979) as well as my "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," in *The Ideologies of Theory*, volume 2 (Minneapolis, 1988).

7 See chapter 1; my contribution to *The Anti-Aesthetic* is a fragment of this definitive version.

8 See, for example, Charles Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture* (New York, 1980); Jencks here, however, shifts his usage of the term from the designations for a cultural dominant or period style to the name for one aesthetic movement among others.

9 See "The Existence of Italy" in *Signatures of The Visible* (New York, 1990).

3 Surrealism Without the Unconscious

1 Raymond Williams, *Television* (New York, 1975), p. 92. Readers of collections like E. Ann Kaplan's *Regarding Television*, American Film Institute Monograph no. 2 (Maryland: 1983), and John Hanhardt's *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation* (New York, 1986), may find such assertions astonishing. A frequent theme of these articles remains, however, the absence, tardiness, repression, or impossibility of video theory proper.

2 "Time, Work-discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (1967).

3 This is a point I have tried to argue more generally about the relationship between the study of "high literature" (or rather, high modernism) and that of mass culture, in "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," (1977; reprinted in *Signatures of the Visible*, 1990).

4 I mean here essentially the *good* anonymity of handicraft work of the medieval kind, as opposed to the supreme demiurgic subjectivity or "genius" of the modern Master.

4 Special Equivalents in the World System

1 André Malraux, *Les Voix du silence* (Paris, 1963).

2 In their *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure* (Paris, 1975).

3 For a provocative reevaluation of this moment, see D. N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism* (Urbana, Ill., 1988).

4 Robin Evans, "Figures, Doors and Passages," *Architectural Design* (April 1978), pp. 267–78.

5 Modern science fiction has often been a laboratory for such language experiments, as in Ursula LeGuin's model of the social structure of a hermaphroditic species (for which she uses only the masculine gender), in *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York, 1969), or Samuel R. Delany's elaborate "reply," in *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (New York, 1984), in which (for sexually differentiated beings of our own type) the feminine pronoun is used universally for the psychic subject, while the masculine pronoun is restricted to a person who is the object of desire (of whatever physical sex).

6 Barbara Diamonstein, *American Architecture Now* (New York, 1980), p. 46.

7 Ibid., pp. 43–44.

8 Gavin Macrae-Gibson, *Secret Life of Buildings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985); see also the useful review of criticisms and opinion about the house in Tod A. Marder's "The Gehry House," Tod A. Marder, ed., *The Critical Edge* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985).

9 Macrae-Gibson, *Secret Life of Buildings*, pp. 16–18.

10 Ibid., p. 2.

11 Ibid., p. 5.

12 Raw materials are also ways of evoking tools as such, and Gehry's biographers trace his fascination with both back to jobs in his grandfather's hardware store when he was young. (FG, p. 12). The only other generally late modern or postmodern work in which tools and materials are so insistently foregrounded is Claude Simon's *Leçon de choses*, (see chapter five, below) a conscious reply to "Marxism" and a work which, along with the Gehry house, raises the question of the comparative capacities of realism and postmodernism, respectively, to convey the reality and the being of labor and of what Heidegger called *das Gestell* (instrumentation).

13 Ibid., pp. 12, 14, 16.

14 The reference is to my analysis of Portman in "Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"; see above, chapter one.

15 Diamonstein, *American Architecture Now*, pp. 37, 40.

16 Ibid., p. 44.

17 The reference is to his novel *Now Wait for Last Year* (New York, 1966); see also chapter eight.

18 Henry Cobb, ed., *The Architecture of Frank Gehry* (New York, 1986), p. 12.

19 Macrae-Gibson, *Secret Life of Buildings*, p. 12.

20 Ibid., p. 27.

21 See, for the cognitive mapping of all this, Rayner Banham's beautiful *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Harmondsworth, 1973).

5 Reading and the Division of Labor

1 Claude Simon, *Les Corps conducteurs* (Paris: Minuit, 1971), trans. Helen R. Lane as *The Conducting Bodies* (Viking, 1974), where the first number refers to the French original and the second to the English translation. Henceforth all references will be given in this dual form within the text with the designation CC.

2 Celia Britton, *Claude Simon: Writing the Visible* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 37. In addition to this fine study, to the Heath book referred to below, and to the classic analyses of Jean Ricardou, see Ralph Sarkonak, *Claude Simon: les carrefours du texte* (Toronto, 1986).

3 David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson offer a paradigmatic discussion of genre in *Classical Hollywood Cinema* (New York, 1985), p. 6.

4 Britton, chapter two.

5 Barthes was among others notoriously responsible for this view; Barthes's best-known essays on the *nouveau roman*, republished in *Critical Essays* (Evanston, Ill., 1972), are "Objective Literature," "Literal Literature," "There Is No Robbe-Grillet School," and "The Last Word on Robbe-Grillet?"
6 Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Dans le labyrinth* (Paris, 1959), pp. 45–46.
7 Claude Simon, *La Bataille de Pharsale* (Paris, 1969), p. 132; all further references in the text are given as *BP*.
8 For Foucault, nomination would seem to have essentially been an eighteenth-century or "classical" operation: "It is the name that organizes classical discourse . . ." (quoted in Stephen Heath, *The Nouveau Roman* [Philadelphia, 1972], p. 106). In that case, the inaugural chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology* to which we are about to refer would mark the breakup of this episteme; in the present context, however, and in the hindsight afforded by the very emergence of the *nouveau roman* itself, this crisis would seem to be the beginning, rather than the end, of something (if only of the postmodern).
9 G. W. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Miller, trans., p. 66.
10 Ibid., pp. 60, 64.
11 Ibid., p. 60.
12 Niklas Luhmann, *The Differentiation of Society* (New York, 1982), pp. 230–31.
13 "Jean-Paul Sartre s'explique sur *Les Mots*," *Le Monde*, April 18, 1964, p. 13; for further on this, see Heath, p. 31.
14 "Sensible aux reproches formulés à l'encontre des écrivains qui négligent les 'grands problèmes,' l'auteur a essayé d'en aborder ici quelques-uns, tels ceux de l'habitat, du travail manuel, de la nourriture, du temps, de l'espace, de la nature, des loisirs, de l'instruction, du discours, de l'information, de l'adultère, de la destruction et de la reproduction des espèces humaines ou animales. Vaste programme que des milliers d'ouvrages emplissant des milliers de bibliothèques sont, apparemment, encore loin d'avoir épuisé.

Sans prétendre apporter de justes réponses, ce petit travail n'a d'autre ambition que de contribuer, pour sa faible part et dans les limites du genre, à l'effort général."
15 Claude Simon, "Le roman mot a mot," *Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui*, volume II: *Pratiques* (1972), pp. 73–97), where the Rauschenberg installation is invoked, and where Simon proposes a number of graphic representations (reminiscent of René Thom's catastrophe theory) for the narrative forms of several of his novels.
16 See the discussion of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* in my *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic* (London, 1990).

6 Utopianism After the End of Utopia

1 Page references are to J. G. Ballard, *Best Short Stories* (New York, 1985).
2 Berger, *The Look of Things* (New York, 1974), p. 161 (italics mine).
3 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), p. 186.
4 All page references in the text to Achille Bonito-Oliva's *The International Transavantgarde* (Milan, 1982), hereafter cited as *IT*.
5 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, 1977), p. 180.
6 J. G. Ballard, "The University of Death," in *Love and Napalm: Export U.S.A.* (American title of *The Atrocity Exhibition* [New York, 1972]), p. 27.

7 Ballard, *Best Short Stories*, p. 114.
8 See T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York, 1972), pp. 15ff.

7 Immanence and Nominalism in Postmodern Theoretical Discourse

1 Berkeley, Calif., 1987. All further references in the text are given as *GS*.
2 In W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Against Theory* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 11–28. The second installment of this article (on Derrida and Gadamer) appeared in *Critical Inquiry*. References in the text are to the former and are designated *AT*.
3 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago, 1980), p. 256.
4 T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, (Frankfurt, 1982), pp. 362–369.
5 Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France," in the *Collected Works*, vol. II (New York, 1933), p. 504.
6 Baudrillard's word for it.
7 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, 1977), p. 180.
8 But see chapter eight, below.
9 The reader of this particular book probably does not need to be told that a construction like "the cultural logic of the market (circa 1910)" has different methodological and historical implications from one like "the logic of naturalism."
10 Gertrude Stein, *Four in America* (New Haven, 1947), p. vii.
11 See *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, 1979), p. ix. All further references to this work in the text are given as *AR*.
12 Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York, 1984), p. vii.
13 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, Roger D. Masters, ed. (New York, 1964), p. 103. All further references to this work are given in the text as *RSD*.
14 J. M. D. Meiklejohn. See, for example, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (Chicago, 1952), p. 180A. Meiklejohn's English expression translates Kant's original word *aufheben*, which was to know a spectacular augmentation of fortune in the next decades.
15 See Jean-Paul Sartre's *Search for a Method* (New York, 1968), chapter three.
16 As far as the dialectic as a language experiment is concerned, I have always felt that the following remark, in the *Émile* (Paris, 1859), p. 101, note 1, contained some essential hints as to its reason for being:

"I have often reflected, in the course of writing, how impossible it is, in a long work, always to confer the same meaning on the same words. No language is rich enough to furnish as many terms, turns of phrase, or sentence-types, as our ideas have modifications. Splendid but unpractical is the method that consists in defining all the terms and ceaselessly substituting the definition for the term thereby defined; for how can this avoid circularity? Definitions could be good only if we did not need words to achieve them. Despite all this, I am convinced we can be clear, even in our linguistic poverty, not by always trying to give the same meanings to the same words, but by so proceeding that every time we use a word its provisional acceptance be adequately determined by the ideas connected with it, and that each period in which the word in question appears stands, as it were, as its definition. Thus I sometimes say that children are incapable of reasoning, and sometimes have them reason with

some acuity. I do not thereby, I believe, contradict myself in my ideas, but I am unable to dissent from the proposition that I often contradict myself in my expressions."

17 Karl Marx, *Capital*, volume 1, Ben Fowkes, trans. (London: Penguin-NLB, 1976), p. 139. All further references are given in the text as *MC*.

18 The four stages are outlined in *Capital*, volume 1, book 1, part 1, chapter 1, section 3.

19 Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds* (New York, 1987), p. 154.

20 Ibid., p. 154.

21 Denis Diderot, *Le Rêve de d'Alembert*, volume 17 of *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1987), p. 128.

22 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, part 1, chapter 3, section 6, p. 187.

23 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

24 For more on nominalism, see my *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London, 1990).

25 It will be remembered that the eudaimonic (pleasure-pain) plays the same kind of linking-separating role in Kant: "It was possible to effect this verification of moral principles as principles of a pure reason quite well, and with sufficient certainty, by a single appeal to the judgment of common sense, for this reason, that anything empirical which might slip into our maxim as a determining principle of the will can be detected at once by the feeling of pleasure or pain which necessarily attaches to it as exciting desire; whereas pure practical reason positively *refuses* to admit this feeling into its principle as a condition (*Critique of Practical Reason*, Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, trans. [Chicago, 1952], part 1, book 1, chapter 3, p. 330.

26 See his interesting remarks on de Man, in Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 266–68.

27 I realize as I write this that I have no idea how Paul himself actually felt about music; a certain satiric contempt, however, is not at all incompatible with a certain vicarious appreciation, as in Musil's portrait of his Nietzschean music enthusiasts:

> "Every time when he arrived they were playing the piano. They took it as a matter of course not to notice him until they had got to the end. This time it was Beethoven's *Hymn to Joy*; the millions sank, as Nietzsche describes it, into the dust in awe, the hostile frontiers dissolved, the gospel of universal harmony reconciled and united those who had been separated. The two of them had forgotten how to walk and talk and were about to soar up, dancing, into the ether. Their faces were flushed, their bodies hunched, and their heads bobbed and jerked up and down, while splayed claws battered at the rearing bulk of sound. Something immeasurable was happening. A dimly outlined balloon filled with hot emotion was being blown up to bursting-point, and from the excited fingertips, from the nervous wrinkling of the foreheads and the twitchings of the bodies, ever more and more feeling radiated into the monstrous private upheaval." (*The Man Without Qualities*, trans. E. Wilkins and E. Kaiser [London, 1979], vol. 1, p. 50.)

28 A recent assessment of Henrik de Man can be found in Lutz Niethammer, *Posthistorie: ist die Geschichte zu Ende?* (Hamburg, 1989), pp. 104–15.

29 See in particular Victor Farias, *Heidegger et le fascisme* (Paris: Verdier, 1987); and Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger unterwegs sur Biographie* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1988).

30 See Edouard Colinet, "Paul de Man and the Cercle du Libre Examen," in *Responses: On Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism*, Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz, and Thomas Keenan, eds. (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1989), pp. 426–37, especially p. 431.

31 See Pierre Bourdieu's *Ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* (Paris, 1988); and also J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987).

32 "Les Juifs dans la litterature actuelle," *Le Soir*, March 4, 1941, in *Paul de Man, Wartime Journalism, 1939–1943* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1988), p. 45. The concluding flourish, on sending the Jews off to an island somewhere, is obviously in hindsight ominous indeed, but refers to the so-called Madagascar "solution," discussed until the war with Britain closed the sea lanes. See Arno Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* (New York, 1988).

33 Compare the role of irony in Venturi, particularly in his *Complexity and Contradiction* (New York, 1966) but also in *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972). One of the motifs in the present book has been the survival of just such residual modernist values into full postmodernism.

8 Postmodernism and the Market

1 Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, volume 28 (New York, 1987), p. 180.

2 "Only two paths stand open to mental research: aesthetics, and also political economy." Stéphane Mallarmé, "Magie," in *Variations sur un sujet*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1945), p. 399. The phrase, which I used as an epigraph to *Marxism and Form*, emerges from a complex mediation on poetry, politics, economics, and class written in 1895 at the very dawn of high modernism itself.

3 Norman P. Barry, *On Classical Liberalism and Libertarianism* (New York, 1987), p. 13.

4 Ibid., p. 194.

5 Gary Becker, *An Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago, 1976), p. 14.

6 Ibid., p. 217.

7 Ibid., p. 141.

8 Barry, *On Classical Liberalism*, p. 30.

9 Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 28, pp. 131–32.

10 Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Democracy* (Chicago, 1962), p. 39.

11 See Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests* (Princeton, 1977), part 1.

12 "Periodizing the Sixties," in *The Ideologies of Theory* (Minneapolis, 1988), vol. 2, pp. 178–208.

13 T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, John Cumming, trans. (New York, 1972), pp. 161–67.

14 See Jane Feuer, "Reading *Dynasty*: Television and Reception Theory," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (September 1989): 443–60.

15 Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit, 1977), chapter 1.

16 See Barry, *On Classical Liberalism*, pp. 193–96.

10 Conclusion

1 See "Marxism and Historicism," *The Ideologies of Theory*, volume II (Minneapolis, 1988), pp. 148–77.

2 Nathalie Sarraute, "Flaubert the Precursor," in *The Age of Suspicion*, Maria Jolas, trans. (New York, 1963); Colin MacCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*

(London, 1979); and my three essays on Rimbaud, Stevens, and the literature of imperialism, "Rimbaud and the Spatial Text," in *Rewriting Literary History*, Tak-Wai Wong and M. A. Abbas, eds. (Hong Kong, 1984), pp. 66–88; "Wallace Stevens," in *New Orleans Review* 11, no. 1 (1984): pp. 10–19; "Modernism & Imperialism," in *Nationalism, Colonialism & Literature*, no. 14, (Field Day Pamphlet, Derry, Ireland, 1988), pp. 5–25.

3 I am indebted to Jonathan Dollimore for instructions as to the proper use of this term. As for the time-consciousness of the postmodern, John Barrell has said it all, speaking of postmodern decorators for whom "to modernise was the same thing as to antiquate," "Gone to Earth," *London Review of Books*, March 30, 1989, p. 13.

4 But see on the term, Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham, N.C., 1987) and also Peter Burger, *Prosa der Moderne* (Frankfurt, 1988) and Antoine Compagnon, *Les cinq paradoxes de la modernité* (Paris, 1990).

5 See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *L'Ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* (Paris, 1988), and Anna-Maria Boschetti, *The Intellectual Enterprise: Sartre and "Les Temps modernes"* (Evanston, Ill., 1988).

6 In much the same way, Gertrude Stein imagines Henry James as a "great general" in *Four in America* (New Haven, 1947).

7 See Ernst Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and Dialectics," *New German Critique* no. 11 (Spring 1977), pp. 22–38.

8 See Perry Anderson, "Modernism and Revolution," *New Left Review* no. 144 (March-April 1984), pp. 95–113.

9 In John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, chapter on Cubism (New York, 1977).

10 Even though a whole neo-classical politics, from Hulme and imagism on, did just that in the 1910s.

11 In his *Antiquiertheir des Menschen* (Munich, 1956).

12 For Marx, equality—or the demand for it—is the result of the equivalences instituted by wage labor, whence the suggestiveness of this remark: "The capitalist epoch is therefore characterized by the fact that labour-power, in the eyes of the worker himself, takes on the form of a commodity which is his property; his labour consequently takes on the form of wage-labour. On the other hand, it is only from this moment that the commodity-form of the products of labour becomes universal." *Capital*, volume I, Ben Fowkes, trans. (Harmondsworth, 1976), note 4, p. 274.

13 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 28 (Moscow, 1986), p. 43.

14 Lester C. Thurow, *Dangerous Currents: The State of Economics* (New York, 1983); see also Stanley Aronowitz, *Science and Technology and the Future of Work* (Minneapolis, forthcoming).

15 Achille Bonita-Oliva, *The Italian Trans-avantgarde* (Milan, 1980).

16 Its relevance is historically sharpened if, with Weber, we grasp it as a unique theoretical event in some fashion coordinated with that equally unique historical event which is the emergence of capitalism (and of the "West"). See section viii of this chapter.

17 James Hogg, *The Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824; reprint: London, 1924).

18 I am indebted to John Beverley for this insight.

19 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London, 1985), p. 77.

20 See *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique*, Douglas Kellner, ed. (Washington, D.C., 1989), pp. 324ff. Portions of this conclusion were originally published as a reply to the various critiques contained in this volume and republished separately in *New Left Review* no. 176 (July/August 1989): 31–45.

21 Lynda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (New York, 1988), p. xi.

22 To which it only remains to add the obvious paradox that Sartre's *Critique* is also in fact not only very much a theory of groups, but also one which, unfinished as it is, seems relatively uncomfortable with the larger category of social class as such.

23 Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 7.

24 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for Method* (New York, 1968): "What did begin to change me was the *reality* of Marxism, the heavy presence on my horizon of the masses of workers, an enormous somber body which lived Marxism, which practiced it, and which at distance exercized an irresistible attraction on petty bourgeois intellectuals," p. 18.

25 Niklas Luhmann, *The Differentiation of Society* (New York, 1982).

26 T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, J. Cumming, trans. (New York, 1972), p. 121.

27 But see chapter eight.

28 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Preface," to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Constance Farringon, trans. (New York, 1963), p. 7.

29 We owe a pathbreaking reintroduction of the demographic question into the Marxist problematic (so long intimidated by the example of Marx's own attacks on Malthus) to a now-classical study by Wally Seccombe, "Marxism and Demography," in *New Left Review* no. 137 (January-February 1983): 22–47. See also my discussion of Adorno's idea of natural history in *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London, 1990).

30 Interview with Thornton Wilder, *Paris Review* no. 15 (1957): 51.

31 Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée*, in *Oeuvres romanesques* (Paris, 1981), p. 67.

32 See above all *La Production de l'espace* (Paris, 1974), available at last in an English translation by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell, 1991).

33 For a valuable survey of contemporary theories of space, see Ed Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (London, 1989).

34 See the eponymous book (New York, 1981).

35 In *Postmodernism and Japan*, Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian, eds. (Durham, N.C., 1989), p. 274.

36 See chapter 1 of this book.

37 Alejo Carpentier, "Prologo" to *El Reino de este mundo* (Santiago, 1971).

38 Indeed, a postmodern Dickens swims into view when we recall (as Jonathan Arac has done for me) Walter Bagehot's comment on him: "London is like a newspaper. Everything is there, and everything is disconnected" (*Literary Studies* [London, 1898], p. 176).

39 *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York, 1982), p. 104.

40 Richard Gilman, *Decadence* (New York, 1979).

41 Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p. 207.

42 *Grundrisse*, p. 350.

43 D. H. Lawrence, "Song of a Man Who Has Come Through," *Complete Poems* (New York, 1964), p. 250.

44 See note 8, above.

45 See my "Metacommentary," in *The Ideologies of Theory*, volume I (Minneapolis, 1988), pp. 3–16.
46 Marvin Harris, *America Now* (New York, 1981).
47 For an anthropological deconstruction of the concept of belief, see Rodney Needham, *Belief, Language and Experience* (Oxford, 1972).
48 John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972).
49 Gulles Kepel's account of Islamic fundamentalism, in *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Pharoah and the Prophet*, trans. J. Rothschild (Berkeley, Calif., 1986), suggests a good many parallels with North American black movements in the sixties. See also Bruce Lawrence, *The Defenders of God* (San Francisco, 1989).
50 Quoted in Hutcheon, p. 14.
51 But see the insistence on dispersal in Sartre's *Critique*.
52 Something demonstrated by Douglas Kellner in his introduction to *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique*. Again, the text here follows the critiques contained in that volume.
53 New York, 1988.
54 Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 219, 221.
55 Ibid., pp. 127–28.
56 In *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique*, pp. 134ff.
57 On this, see the interesting research of Adelaïde San Juan.
58 Of the meager analytical literature on "yuppies," Fred Pfeil's "Making Flippy Floppy: Postmodernism and the Baby Boom PMC," *The Year Left* (1985), pp. 268–95, can be recommended; see also the literature on the so-called "professional-managerial class," in particular Pat Walker, ed., *Between Labor and Capital* (Boston, 1979).
59 Dan Georgakis and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying* (New York, 1975).
60 Baudrillard quite properly reminds us—but he has used it so often that the reminder has something of the same effect as kicking the ladder out from under himself—that in the postmodern such essentially transcoded objects or symbiotic constructions as the famous Borges map (that always springs to mind on such occasions) or the images of Magritte cannot be used as figures or allegories for anything; and in the high theory of the postmodern they have all the vulgarity and lack of "distinction" of Escher prints on the walls of middlebrow college students. "If we were able to take as the finest allegory of simulation the Borges tale where the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory (but where, with the decline of the Empire this map becomes frayed and finally ruined, a few shreds still discernible in the deserts—the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction, bearing witness to an imperial pride and rotting like a carcass, returning to the substance of the soil, rather as an aging double ends up being confused with the real thing), this fable would then have come full circle for us, and now has nothing but the discreet charm of second-order simulacra. . . . The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory . . ." ("Simulacra and Simulations," Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, (Polity, 1988), p. 166).
61 "Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film," in my *Signatures of the Visible* (New York, 1991).
62 See "Periodizing the Sixties," in my *The Ideologies of Theory*, vol. II, pp. 178–208.

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