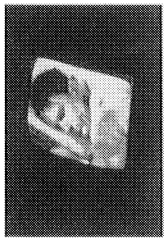

There is an old story in which a couple of tourists, driving on an English country road and hopelessly lost, stop to ask directions from a local inhabitant who happens to be sitting on a fence by the road. "Excuse me," they ask, "What's the best way to get to Canterbury?" He thinks for a while. "Well," he finally says, "if I were you, I wouldn't start from here." Those who sit on fences may imagine otherwise, but the directions we take unavoidably begin where we are, and in relation to where we have been. I teach history and theory of contemporary visual culture in an American university, to which I came from England. In the first part of my introduction I shall glance back at the specific history that grounds the meaning of "theory of visual culture" as I intend it here—a meaning closely allied to the project of analysis of visual images which began as (French) "semiology," and to the view of "culture" defined within the project of (British) "cultural studies." I do not provide this trace of a course taken by many of my generation simply to confess "where I am coming from." It is also offered as an aide-mémoire contribution to a history of still unresolved debates in cultural studies around identity and representations. I hope that by recalling this history we may avoid repeating it. Of the paths leading out of this history, the one I took has led me to consider the space and time of visual representations in which components of identity coalesce. Issues of the production of space have their own particular history in recent studies of contemporary culture. In the second part of my introduction I shall retrace a small part of this history in order to indicate in what way, for

me, these "two histories" come into confluence. My itinerary will include intellectual sites and monuments already familiar to readers of recent cultural theory. But to return is not necessarily to repeat, provided we approach the place we know by a different road.

PART 1: CULTURES IN CULTURAL STUDIES

> Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive.
>
> **Karl Marx**[2]

From Sweetness and Light to Semiotics and Psychoanalysis The expression "cultural studies," used to name an academic discipline, dates from the founding of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies—at Birmingham University, England—in 1964. In his book *Keywords,* Raymond Williams begins his account of the word *culture* by remarking that it is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language."[3] The particular sense of the word as it first established the horizon of British cultural studies derives from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the impact of industrialization and democracy gave rise to a conception of "culture" as something separate from and "above" civil society. Writing in the early nineteenth century, the English poet and social theorist Samuel Coleridge elevates "culture" over what he calls "civilization" in arguing the political necessity of a "clerisy" of "cultivated" men, an intellectual elite learned in the liberal arts and sciences. This "clerisy" would consciously articulate, and translate into principles of government, the human values intuitively held in common by the rest of the populace. Following Coleridge, another English poet and social theorist, Matthew Arnold, sees the essence of these supposedly universal values as embodied in the greatest works of art,

primarily literary works. In his book of 1869, *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold gives his celebrated definition of culture as "the best which has been thought and said." Both Coleridge and Arnold wrote at a time of violent class conflict in France and Germany, and at a time when the Chartist movement was progressively politicizing the British urban working class. For Arnold it was precisely the pursuit of narrowly utilitarian class interests that threatened to lead to the "anarchy" referred to in the title of his book. Previously, religious belief had provided the primary social cement holding together the nation state. With religious belief on the wane however only culture, the source of "sweetness and light," now stood in the way of anarchy. For Arnold this "sweetness and light" was most potently distilled in great works of literature. Literature was the privileged means by which the culture of a ruling elite was to trickle downward through the class structure to secure the hegemony of the values of that elite. In Arnold's day one of the earliest professors of English Literature, George Gordon, declared in his inaugural lecture at Oxford University: "England is sick, and . . . English Literature must save it."[4] In the modern university, the English Literature department is the still enduring monument to Arnold's teaching. Art History, a relative newcomer to the university, has in the main been equally Arnoldian in its mission. So has modernist art criticism. Clement Greenberg's influential essay of 1939, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in spite of its professed Marxism, makes fundamentally the same argument as Arnold's book of 1869. In the title of Greenberg's essay, the term "Avant-Garde" stands in the place of Arnold's "Culture," and "Anarchy" is now represented by "Kitsch." The difference from Arnold's argument is that whereas Arnold sees "culture" as a singular and solitary thing, Greenberg sees culture as threatened by an uncanny and grotesque double—in Greenberg's words, "that thing to which the Germans give the wonderful name of *Kitsch:* popular, commercial art and literature with their chromeotypes, magazine covers, illustrations, ads, slick and pulp fiction, comics, Tin Pan

Alley music, tap dancing, Hollywood movies, etc., etc."[5] To all such manifestations of what he called "ersatz culture," Greenberg opposes "genuine culture," "art and literature of a high order." For Greenberg, as for Arnold, it is the historical mission of high culture to guarantee the stability of the social order, a mission it can only fulfill through the continuity of its traditions. His view of culture, then, is not substantially different from that of Arnold. Indeed, Arnold's book *Culture and Anarchy* remains the generally unacknowledged founding text of American cultural conservatism to this day—that which seeks to preserve the hegemony of the European Arts and Humanities "great works" tradition, and whose line passes through such otherwise disparate figures as T. S. Eliot and Alan Bloom.

Arnold's conservative theory of culture as a totalizing force, working to perpetuate the established social order, was soon opposed by another theory of the totality, that of Marxism. In a Marxist analysis, the culture that Arnold and his followers claimed as disinterested, universal, and historically transcendent is unmasked as a supremely interested, geographically local, and historically contingent *class* culture. According to this analysis there are two cultures: the official culture of the economically and politically dominant class, and the elided culture of the dominated. A corresponding cultural politics therefore sought to recover the working-class culture that had been expunged from the pages of official history, and to put the means of new cultural production into the hands of the proletariat. Historically, in the West, the 1920s and the early 1930s were richest in such initiatives: for example, the *Proletkult* movement in the Soviet Union, or the *Arbeiter-Fotograf* movement in Germany. In these and other initiatives, in both Europe and the United States, Left artists and writers taught their skills to workers. In Britain, what was to become known as "cultural studies" similarly began in Workers' Educational Association classes, and other adult-education courses run by the extramural departments of British universities. The founding figures of British

cultural studies, Richard Hoggart, E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and, later, Stuart Hall, all began by teaching in such programs. Against the Arnoldian view of culture as "the best of what has been thought and said" Williams defined culture as the "whole way of life" of a social class. In his book of 1957, *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart, himself from the working class, had already described his own experience of working-class culture and the ways in which that culture was being transformed. The Hoggart/Williams project of the recovery of working-class culture as a "whole way of life" clearly informs the early project of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. The Birmingham Centre was founded by Hoggart in 1964 as a research group within the English Department of the University of Birmingham. Its initial location within a department of literary studies marks its provenance out of the English Literature–based Workers' Educational Association initiatives of earlier years—which in turn may be seen as agreeing with Arnoldian priorities at least in their object of study. The work of the Birmingham Centre is today most associated with the name of its second director, Hall. As Hall's work is deservedly well known, it will serve me as a common reference point throughout this summary account. Under Hall, in 1968, the Birmingham Centre began publishing occasional papers written by its faculty and graduate students. In 1971 it published the first issue of a biannual journal, *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*. In his introduction to the first issue of *Working Papers*, Hall describes the aim of the Centre as being "to develop a critical study of the sources, direction and meaning of cultural change in Britain and other advanced industrial societies, and the forces shaping that change." At that moment these changes were in fact undermining the very premises on which the Cultural Studies movement was originally founded. As I have observed, cultural studies in Britain began with a rejection of the Arnoldian idea of culture as a *singular* accretion of "the best of what has been thought and said" in favor of the idea that there are two cultures: the culture of the oppressor and the culture

of the oppressed. Such a division between cultures could clearly be noted in British society up until the Second World War. Up to this time Britain had experienced comparative social and political stability. Unlike other European countries Britain had for two centuries experienced no social revolutions, foreign occupations, or mass immigrations. Under these conditions a certain type of Marxist assumption that cultural formations necessarily correspond to economic class formations could be easily maintained. After the war however British social formations changed. The confidence and continuity of established British culture faltered in the face of the progressive loss of Empire and declining world economic and military power. The increasingly transnational activities of the major industrial corporations, and the increasingly global nature of the money markets, further undermined national economic and political autonomy. In 1946, as part of their plan of building a new Jerusalem on the rubble of bomb-ruined Britain, the postwar Labor government had pushed through the Education Act that extended higher education to increasing numbers of working-class children, blurring—albeit not removing—the old boundaries of class. (I myself am a beneficiary of this legislation.) Later, increasing immigration from the former colonies would progressively perplex established notions of an essential national identity. Together with all of this there was the rise, mainly on the US side of the Atlantic, of a capital-intensive high-technology entertainment industry. The United States had emerged at the end of the war with three-quarters of the world's invested capital and two-thirds of its industrial capacity; it was mainly American mass-cultural products—films, television programs, and popular music—which were progressively taking the place of what indigenous popular cultural forms remained in Europe. The process was uneven (for example, in France the domestic tradition of popular song proved relatively resistant to Anglo-American "pop" music), but British culture in 1971, at the time Hall was writing his introduction to the first issue of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, had more in common with

the US culture contemporary with it than it had with the British culture of the 1930s. By the time, therefore, that "cultural studies" became named as such—with the founding of the Birmingham Centre and the publication of its journal—its founding project of recovering an elided working-class culture was already marked by nostalgia, effectively displaced by a "new world order" of mass-cultural production.

This change in cultural conditions would eventually lead to an effective splitting of the Cultural Studies project. A first trace of the contradiction may be read in the second issue of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*. Published in the spring of 1972, this issue contains an article by Paul Willis on "The Motorbike Within a Subcultural Group." Based on what Willis describes as "a case-study at a motorbike club in the Birmingham area," the object of study is fundamentally that handed down by Hoggart and Williams—working-class culture as a "whole way of life." The framing discourse however has now shifted from literary criticism to cultural anthropology. The textual material to receive commentary now comes in the form of a transcript of tape-recorded interviews with members of the motorbike club. Facing the title page of Willis's essay is a full-page photograph of a young man on a motorcycle who either is, or strongly resembles, Peter Fonda in the film *Easy Rider*. The image however is uncaptioned, and the article makes no reference either to Fonda's film of 1969 or to Stanley Kramer's movie of 1954, starring Marlon Brando, *The Wild One*. There is no place for such representations in the logocentric fantasy that the essay enacts. In this fantasy the cultural anthropologist holds his microphone to the lips of the Sphinx-like proletariat, and the authentic voice of the subculture speaks its secret. There is no part in this play for that play of representations that may have produced not only the fantasmatic identifications of the bikers but also the sociologist's own identifications with *them*—the desire that may have led him to the club in the first place and sustained his research. Immediately following Willis's article is a long piece by Hall on "The Social Eye of *Picture Post*." *Picture*

Post was a British illustrated newsmagazine that derived its format from the highly successful photo newsmagazines first developed on the European continent during the 1920s and 1930s. (The US equivalents were *Life* and *Look*.) Hall describes the complex articulations of image and text through which *Picture Post* constructed the representations of social life in which the British were invited to recognize themselves *as* "British." Unlike Willis's article, Hall's essay contains no assumption that there is a self-possessed and "authentic" culture out there simply waiting to be "expressed"; on the contrary, one of the tasks the essay undertakes is a critique of the ideology of "transparency" that informs all "realisms," whether in cultural anthropology, in photojournalism, or in the cinema. Hall's long essay began as a book review of a published collection of materials from *Picture Post* compiled by one of its former editors. In a sense, then, the article might be seen as a regression to textual exegesis in the tradition of literary studies. Both object and discourse however are radically changed. The object is not a "great work" of literature but a product of the mass media, and to the analytical method of sociology there has been added that of semiology.

It had long been common for people to speak loosely of "the language of" this or that activity—including, of course, "the language of painting," "the language of photography," "the language of film." However, it was only in the late 1950s to mid-1960s that the supposed analogy between "natural language" (speech and writing) and signifying systems other than language began to be interrogated from the standpoint of modern linguistic science. The classic locus of this work is a long essay by Roland Barthes, "Elements of Semiology," which was first published in 1964 in the French journal *Communications*. This same issue of *Communications* contains another essay by Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," which applies some of the principles laid out in the longer essay to the analysis of an advertisement. (The first English translation of "Rhetoric of the Image" would appear seven years later in the first issue of *Working*

Papers in Cultural Studies.) The same issue of *Communications* also contains an important article by Christian Metz in which the Saussurian semiology outlined by Barthes is brought to bear on the cinema. This single issue of the journal *Communications*, then, provided the outline of a methodology—"Elements of Semiology"—together with two additional essays that show how the semiological method may be extended to the analysis of advertising and of cinema. However, although at this nascent state a semiotics of the still image and of the moving image were equally feasible, the subsequent development of these two projects was to be unequal, with film studies taking the lead. The semiological approach to the study of film, originating in France, was first introduced into an English-language context by Peter Wollen in his book of 1969, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. The work was subsequently developed and disseminated mainly through the agency of *Screen* magazine.[6] The British journal *Screen*, published by the Society for Education in Film and Television, was relaunched as a quarterly magazine in 1971—the inaugural year of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*. The earliest issues of the new *Screen* were concerned mainly with questions of cinematic realism. *Screen* began by opposing broadly "constructivist" accounts of realism, such as those of Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and the early Soviet filmmakers, to the "naturalist" assumptions then prevailing in writings about cinema. It was in the line of this initiative that in 1973 a *Screen* special issue on the work of Metz brought semiology to bear on issues of representation. In 1971, five years after his groundbreaking essay in *Communications*, Metz had published a rigorously detailed book-length study of language and cinema. In 1975 Metz contributed two equally influential essays to a special issue of *Communications* on psychoanalysis and cinema. A *Screen* special issue on psychoanalysis followed almost immediately in the summer of 1975, and the autumn issue in that same year carried Laura Mulvey's influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in which Mulvey joined psychoanalytic theory to feminist

politics.[7] The move by *Screen,* from 1975, to bring psychoanalytic theory to bear on questions of politics and representation was the continuation of an initiative begun in the late 1960s in the journal *New Left Review.* A 1968 issue of *New Left Review* contains a translation of Jacques Lacan's famous paper on the "mirror phase," lodged between a selection of texts by Antonio Gramsci on the Italian factory occupations of 1919–1920 and a defiant document by the Bolivian guerrilla fighter Inti Peredo, written following the death of Che Guevara.[8] The turn to psychoanalysis, especially to Lacan, was intended to provide Marxism with its missing account of the production of the subject in language. (As much as we speak language, so language "speaks" us. Social practices are structured like languages, and "growing up" is a growing into a complex of structures that produce, as much as they may be produced by, agents in the political process.) The move was nevertheless controversial. In 1976 four members of the *Screen* editorial board resigned in protest at the journal's newly psychoanalytic direction.[9] *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* maintained a suspiciously noncommittal distance from attempts to reconcile the disparate discourses of Marxism and psychoanalysis. In 1977, *Screen* published a closely argued attack on the humanist and empiricist epistemologies implicitly retained in the category "culture" as deployed in the work of the Birmingham Centre.[10] In retrospect—as I have noted with reference to the Willis and Hall articles juxtaposed in the second issue of the Centre's journal—we may see that the Centre embraced *contradictory* epistemological assumptions from its beginning. This implicit contradiction was to explode into explicit theoretical and cultural-political conflict in the 1980s, a conflict that is not yet resolved and marks the broader field of cultural studies, and of politically conscious art, to this day.

From Two Paradigms to New Ethnicities In 1976 the journal *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* ceased publication and gave way to a series of collectively produced books. The first of these, *Resistance Through Rituals,* was devoted to the description and analysis of working-class youth

subcultures. Subsequent volumes included *Women Take Issue* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. This sequence of titles marks an evolving attention—from class, to gender, to race—reflecting the increasing pluralism entering Left politics in this period. The "new" political constituencies—women, racial minorities, and gays—were emphasizing a new form of political struggle: a politics of *representations*. Louis Althusser's influential definition of ideology as "a system of representations" had undermined the traditional Marxist theory of ideology. No longer seen as "false consciousness" (a dependent epiphenomenon of the political economy), ideology was theorized as a "relatively autonomous" sphere of political struggle. "In truth," Althusser wrote, "ideology has very little to do with 'consciousness.' . . . It is profoundly unconscious."[11] The new emphasis on the agency of representations in political struggle led to a split in the ranks of British cultural studies. In an essay of 1980, Hall characterized the division in terms of "two paradigms": culturalism and structuralism. Most centrally, the "two paradigms" debate was over the nature and status of "experience." As Hall summarized the two positions:

> Whereas, in "culturalism," experience was the ground—the terrain of "the lived"—where consciousness and conditions intersected, structuralism insisted that "experience" could not, by definition, be the ground of anything, since one could only "live" and experience one's conditions *in and through* the categories, classifications and frameworks of culture. These categories, however, did not arise from or in experience: rather, experience was their "effect." The culturalists had defined the forms of consciousness and culture as collective. But they had stopped far short of the radical proposition that, in culture and in language, the subject was "spoken by" the categories of culture in which he/she thought, rather than "speaking them." These categories were, however, not merely collective rather than individual productions: they were for the structuralists, *unconscious* structures.[12]

The debate between "culturalists" and "structuralists" set the agenda for all-subsequent work in British cultural studies. Hall concludes his article on the "two paradigms" with the observation: "In their sustained and mutually reinforcing antagonisms they hold out no promise of an easy synthesis. But, between them, they define where, if at all, is the space, and what are the limits within which such a synthesis might be constituted."[13] Hall's own work represents an exemplary attempt to hold the contradictions of the culturalist and structuralist paradigms in a productive tension. If Hall kept "a foot in both camps," however, he seemed at first to put more weight on the foot he had in culturalism. For example, in 1980, he wrote:

> Culturalism . . . has insisted, correctly, on the affirmative moment of the development of conscious struggle and organization as a necessary element in the analysis of history, ideology and consciousness: against its persistent down-grading in the structuralist paradigm. . . . In this sense, culturalism properly restores the dialectic between the unconsciousness of cultural categories and the moment of conscious organization: even if, in its characteristic movement, it has tended to match structuralism's over-emphasis on "conditions" with an altogether too-inclusive emphasis on "consciousness."[14]

By 1988, however, Hall's balance began to shift. The problematic of Hall's essay of 1988, "New Ethnicities,"[15] is much the same as that of his earlier article on the "two paradigms." In "New Ethnicities" Hall posits two different cultural political positions: one based on a unifying notion of "The Black Experience" (Hall's capitalization), and the other posited on the rejection of any essentialism of experience or identity—as he put it, "the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject." Clearly, the former of these positions may be assigned to the culturalist end of the spectrum, and the latter to the structuralist extremity. Hall now writes:

> What is at issue . . . is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subject positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category "black"; that is, the recognition that "black" is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature.[16]

We may here discern an echo of earlier debates in cultural studies over the category "working class." For example, some ten years previously, Colin MacCabe had argued:

> To talk of a working class or popular memory may all too easily lead to talking of class as a collective subject. A class, however, is not a subject, an identity, but rather the ever-changing configuration produced by the forces and relations of production. A set of economic, political and ideological forces constantly constitute classes in struggle and classes can find no definition outside those struggles.[17]

On the eve of the landslide electoral victories of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, an innocent category of "working class consciousness" that had inspired cultural studies in Britain from its earliest beginnings was now being called into question. Not dissimilarly, in his paper on the "New Ethnicities," Hall concludes that "we are . . . approaching . . . the end of a certain critical innocence in black cultural politics."[18] Black politics is entering a "new phase." But, says Hall:

> We need to be absolutely clear what we mean by a new phase because, as soon as you talk of a new phase, people instantly imagine that what is entailed is the *substitution* of one kind of politics for another. . . . Politics does not necessarily proceed by way of a set of oppositions

and reversals of this kind, though some groups and individuals are anxious to stage the question this way.[19]

In the polarized binary terms of the "two paradigms" debate, Hall might stand accused of wanting to have it both ways. But psychoanalytic theory subverts such "either-orism." In his contribution to a panel discussion held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in the year following the publication of his paper "New Ethnicities," Hall was to explicitly acknowledge the necessity of a psychoanalytic critique of rationalism to the project of cultural studies. He spoke of the phenomenon of Thatcherism, but his remarks might equally well have been applied to Reaganism. He says that his experience of working on the phenomenon of Thatcherism, and on the appeal of Thatcher herself, had definitively pushed him away from the last vestige of any rationalist conception of ideology. If we are to understand the logic of Thatcherism, he says, then it is better to ask "what is the logic of a dream" rather than "what is the logic of a philosophical investigation." What had characterized Thatcherism, Hall remarks, was its ability to displace and condense apparently contradictory symbolizations in the same space. He therefore urges the necessity of not simply allocating a space within politics for sexual, psychic, and personal questions but of understanding the way in which the whole of politics is itself grounded in psychosexual processes. Only in this way, he says, can such questions as those of violence, aggression, and terror be addressed—questions not dealt with in a tradition of rationalist political discourse dominated by contractual notions, in which subjects are interpellated on the basis of, and in terms of, a rational calculus of interests. It is essential, then, to acknowledge that there is a domain of political thought and action which is always drawing on psychosexual processes, and therefore cannot be understood without reference to such processes. However, this is not the same as saying that politics can be

reduced to such processes. Political processes have to be understood in relation to unconscious processes, but this is not the same as saying that political processes are nothing other than the repetition in, and the projection into, the real, of already existing unconscious forms. Hall concludes with the (crucial) point that it is important to theorize the relation between the unconscious and political cultural processes without ever hoping to reconcile the two, to as it were "sum" them, or resolve the equation. It is impossible to simply translate one set of processes into the other. It is in fact precisely the recognition of the unconscious which puts an end to this rationalist ambition.[20]

In recent years, cultural studies in Britain has progressively moved into confluence with the work in psychoanalytic theory already under way in film, photography, and literary studies in general, and in feminist and gay studies in particular (which had first brought issues of sexuality into the political arena). Recollecting this British history now, in California, I am well aware of the argument that, as the United States has its own culture, then *for this reason* cultural studies in the United States is necessarily a different discipline from what it is in Britain. Paul Gilroy answers this argument in his book of 1993, *The Black Atlantic*.[21] Gilroy rejects "the unthinking assumption that cultures will always flow into patterns congruent with the borders of essentially homogeneous nation states," which may produce "a nationalistic focus that is antithetical to the rhizomorphic, fractal structure of the transcultural, international formation [that Gilroy calls] the black Atlantic."[22] My own experience of debates in and about cultural studies in the United States is that they have tended to become polarized in a way familiar to me from the "two paradigms" debate in Britain I have very schematically outlined above. This is not to stake a claim for British intellectual priority in the general field of cultural studies, it is simply to observe that there are fundamental problems for the theory and politics of culture—as difficult to avoid as they are to resolve—which are not confined within national borders. Resisting the breathless call to

interminable novelty, I have (re)turned to the history of the "two paradigms" debate as it evolved in Britain in a spirit of "remembering, repeating, and working-through." I hope that today, against the grain of prevailing binary logics, against the stultifying "either-orism" of hegemonic instrumental rationalism, we may learn to tolerate the unavoidable entanglement of divergent discourses. A way in which such a shift in reasoning might inflect the "working through" of the "two paradigms" debate today may be illustrated with reference to Gilroy's discussion of the work of Patricia Hill Collins.[23] In effect, Gilroy criticizes Hill Collins for the *partial* nature of her application of the "structuralist" paradigm. He writes: "The deconstructive zeal with which Hill Collins urges her readers to take traditional epistemological assumptions apart is exhausted after tackling 'woman' and 'intellectual.' It runs out long before she reaches the key words 'black' and 'Afrocentric,' which appear to be immune to this critical operation."[24] As a consequence:

> Another version of racial essentialism is smuggled in through the back door porch even as Hill Collins loudly banishes it from her front door. . . . an embeddedness in Enlightenment assumptions continues despite the ostentatious gestures of disaffiliation. Experience-centered knowledge claims . . . simply end up substituting the standpoint of black women for its forerunner rooted in the lives of white men. This may have some value as a short-term corrective, but it is less radical and less stimulating than the possibility that we might move beyond the desire to situate our claims about the world in the lives of these whole and stable subjects.[25]

But the value as a "short-term corrective" of an experience-centered knowledge claim might be precisely what justifies it *politically* (albeit such value cannot be specified in advance of a particular conjuncture). And the belief that the criterion of logical consistency in argument is universally

applicable might itself be faulted as embedded in Enlightenment assumptions. I agree with what Gilroy says about Hill Collins's theoretical argument. My point is simply that such criticism might become irrelevant if Hill Collins's rhetoric were to be transposed from the academy to the ground of constituency-building in black feminist politics. From a political standpoint, nothing is more appropriate than the application of radically deconstructive analyses to the imaginary identities of racism. It might be inappropriate, however, to apply a similarly rigorous deconstruction to the emergent subject of a minority "identity." The two cases are asymmetrical. In the latter, the historical momentum desired is from the imposed dis-integration of those who, in Homi Bhabha's words, "have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement"[26] toward increased coherence and agency. Certainly such coherence can only ever be imaginary. The essential subject is only ever a fiction, *but it is a fiction with real political effects*. In real politics, the pertinent question in the face of an "identity" is not "Is it coherent?" but "What does it achieve?"[27] As Slavoj Zizeck notes: "The condition of being active politically is precisely to *be* unilateral: the structure of the political act as such is 'essentialist.'"[28] Politics is as much an art of the imaginary as of the real. History is witness that appeals to an essential identity are successful in creating and mobilizing politically effective constituencies—for good or for ill.

It is irrelevant to criticize identity politics—*as politics*—because it rests on theoretically untenable assumptions about the subject. But nor should we reject theory because it may be ideologically inconvenient or (most devastating charge) "elitist." As an insult, "Elitist!" functions as a performative utterance (in the strictly Austinian sense), its meaning varying widely according to context. Etymologically, however, the meaning of the word is more limited. The feminine noun *élite* is derived from the past participle, *élit,* of the French verb *élire,* "to choose"—which in turn derives from the Latin *eligere,* "elect." Literally, then, in the

Western-style democracies largely coextensive with global capitalism[29] the word *elite* applies to any minority selected to govern a majority. In this literal sense, the members of a national government constitute an elite, as does the officer class of the military or the executive class of a corporation. Literally, "elitism," when used pejoratively, names any practice that serves to support the narrowly patrician interests of a select ruling class at the expense of the majority of those they purport to "represent." Much of the production of the so-called "popular" or "mass" media must therefore be considered "elitist," to the extent that it perpetuates and disseminates hegemonic corporate values and beliefs. The charge of "elitism," therefore, is applicable to much of the "popular culture" that cultural populists find most "accessible." When populists redefine the word *elitism* by *opposing* it to the term *accessible,* the word slips its etymological moorings and drifts across the political spectrum. For example, an article in the literally "elitist" newspaper *Le figaro* proclaims: "It is necessary to overturn the spirit of our teaching which suffers from the illness of elitism."[30] This "illness" (for which Fascist, Stalinist, and Maoist populisms offered their various cures) afflicts *language,* both in the literal and in the more broadly semiotic sense. Much like the cornea, language is considered to be naturally transparent when healthy; if it is not transparent then it must be diseased. Here, a clear-eyed democratic appeal on behalf of intelligibility and common sense implicitly pathologizes, stigmatizes, and discredits those who do not speak in a popular idiolect.

It is significant that the *Le figaro* article indicted *teaching*. Ironically, it is within the academy itself that there has most recently been a resurgence of cultural populism—closely aligned with "identity politics" and associated mainly with the growth of "cultural studies." Here we do well to note a distinction respected in the study of popular culture inaugurated by the Birmingham Centre. As Hall recalls, "The Centre did not say: 'All you have to do is to be a good activist and we will give you a degree for

it.'"[31] This is not to promote political quietism amongst academics. On the contrary, it is to urge a close attention to the specificity of differing forms of political praxis, to the disparate registers in which they operate, and to the mutable and indeterminate relations between them (as Gilroy puts it, in a different context, "negotiating the relationship between vernacular and non-vernacular forms").[32] It is beside the point to criticize essentialist identity politics for its theoretically naive assumptions about identity. It is no less beside the point to reject psychoanalytic theory because what it has to say about identity may be ideologically inconvenient and cannot be reduced to a slogan. Populists throughout modern history, and across the political spectrum, have found such theory offensive, but the only substantial offense of such "elitism" today is against the paternalistic common sense of the corporate-political establishment that *literally* constitutes the "elite"—and the only one worth contesting.

It has been argued that psychoanalytic theory cannot contest patriarchy because it is a product of patriarchy. In the Soviet Union, shortly after the October Revolution, there were those who argued that the existing railway system was bourgeois, that it should be torn up and new "proletarian" railways built. Early in the history of Russian Formalism it had been recognized that, as Tzvétan Todorov put it, "The form of a work is not its only formal element: its content may equally well be formal."[33] This insight entailed its own transformation as the idea that the form of a work has (ideological) content. The Russian railway theorists (to whom Stalin gave the name "troglodytes") made no concessions in their application of this undeniable wisdom, but it may be put to more nuanced use. When drawing on European intellectual traditions we must constantly examine, as Gilroy puts it, "the place which these cultural perspectives provide for the images of their racialised others as objects of knowledge, power, and cultural criticism."[34] But if it were invariably true that one "cannot dismantle the master's house with the master's tools" then we would have to reinvent *language itself*.[35] In the first chapter of

The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, Freud describes the part played in his thought processes by an anecdote told to him by a colleague. The anecdote concerns "the customs of the Turks living in Bosnia and Herzegovina," who "place a higher value on sexual enjoyment than on anything else." Does Freud, here, unreflectingly and insensitively perpetuate extant Western Orientalist attitudes? Yes, certainly he does. Does this have any consequence for his theory of the role of unconscious processes in forgetting? No, none whatsoever.

It is no longer plausible to separate culture into such distinct realms as "mass culture," "popular art," and "high art." At the levels of production and distribution, all cultural workers today actually or potentially rely on much the same technologies and institutions, and all cultural products are equally subject to commodification (albeit the specific forms of their relations to the market vary). At the level of reception, the meanings of all products of contemporary culture tend to be cut from much the same cloth: woven from intertextually interrelated but institutionally heterogeneous strands of sense, originating in disparate times and spaces. As there are no longer any definitively separate realms of cultural production, it follows that there can be no islands of counterhegemonic purity. Notwithstanding the claims of cultural populists or cultural conservatives, "mass" visual culture is to be neither celebrated nor condemned. It serves neither to simply express nor to repress popular aspirations and desires; it is rather complexly involved in their production and articulation. In addressing such complexity in his essay on *Picture Post,* and in a subsequent article on "The Determinations of Newsphotographs," Hall established an early direction for work in cultural studies which took as its object the general environment of mass-media imagery, and which would incorporate the new methods of visual analysis originating in France. Hall himself did not develop his own early work on images *as such,* and neither did the work of the Birmingham Centre as a whole. As Hall has more recently stated, the overall project of the Centre was "to

address the problems of what Gramsci called 'the national popular': how it was constructed; how it was being transformed; why it mattered in the play and negotiation of hegemonic practices."[36] Most broadly defined, the project calls for no *particular* attention to the agency of image production as a "hegemonic practice." Much like the "drive," in psychoanalytic theory, cultural studies is to be defined not in terms of its object but in terms of its *aim*. Hall stresses, "cultural studies is not one thing; it has never been one thing."[37] Cultural studies cannot be one discipline, it cannot have one object, it cannot have one mode of analysis. Only the aim of cultural studies allows it to be named: *"cultural studies" studies the relationship between culture and politics* (between culture, which is not one thing, and politics, which is not one thing). The early Cultural Studies movement in Britain treated the image in a desultory fashion. It was left almost exclusively to film and photography theory to develop the systematic study of contemporary visual culture, but within the separate confines of the supposed "specificity" of their objects. Metz said he began by loving the cinema but that his desire to analyze the object of his love ended by damaging or even destroying it. In Kleinian terms, we might see the preoccupation of film theory in the 1970s with the *specificity* of cinema as an act of "reparation," a product of the paradoxical desire that the same analytical gesture that rends the object should, in the same movement, guarantee its integrity. Academic "Film Studies," a loving discipline, may continue to constitute its object as it sees fit. The study of "contemporary visual culture" today must take its objects as it finds them, and it finds them in pieces.

No iconoclasm has befallen images; their shattering has left them stronger than when they were whole. Images are now as much a material force in and between societies as are economic and political forces. Contemporary visual culture—the combined product of "the media" and a variety of other spheres of image production—can no longer be seen as simply "reflecting" or "communicating" the world in which we live:

it contributes to the making of this world. Individuals and nations act in accordance with beliefs, values, and desires that increasingly are formed and informed, inflected and refracted, through images: from television, advertising, cinema, newspapers, magazines, videotapes, CD-ROM, the Internet, and so on. The impact of information technology on both "mass media" and more traditional media has considerably expanded the cultural and political importance of images. Most notably, the global proliferation of media networks brought about by the space-contracting technology of satellite television now gives images an unprecedented power to affect national and international opinion, not least through their impact on the mutual perceptions of differing national, ethnic, and racial groups. This is the field of *representations*, coextensive with politics, which first came under scrutiny in the semiotics of film and photography and in early cultural studies. The objects of visual culture first examined were such things as narrative films, advertisements, documentary photographs, and so on. Television, however, presented a special problem for existing modes of analysis, as it was more difficult to treat the products of television as discrete and bounded objects. This is one of the points where the following chapters intervene. Nevertheless, I hardly speak of television in the institutional sense. The particular object of my attention is not television, or cinema, or photography, or any other singular form of visual representation. It is rather, in an expression coined by Paul Virilio, the "teletopological puzzle" that is all of these *together*—"together" not as a totality but as a constantly shifting constellation of fragments.

Phenomenologically, the field of visual images in everyday contemporary "Western" cultures (and others, such as that of Japan) is heterogeneous and hybrid. The consumer of images "flips" through endless magazines, "channel surfs" on waves of TV shows. The integrity of the semantic object is rarely, if ever, respected. Moreover, the boundaries of the "object" itself are expanded, made permeable or otherwise transformed. For example, a "film" may be encountered through posters,

"blurbs," and other advertisements, such as trailers and television clips; it may be encountered through newspaper reviews, reference work synopses, and theoretical articles (with their "filmstrip" assemblages of still images); through production photographs, frame enlargements, memorabilia, and so on. Collecting such metonymic fragments in memory, we may come to feel familiar with a film we have not actually seen. Clearly this "film"—a heterogeneous psychical object, constructed from image scraps scattered in space and time, arbitrarily anchored in a contingent reality (a newspaper interview, a review)—is a very different object from that encountered in the context of "film studies." This "film" is a representative example of what I think of (albeit perversely) as "television." Such hybrid virtual objects take provisional form in a teletopological space-time largely indifferent to the physical bounds of TV screens and program times. The peculiarity of this space-time of visual representations, the shifting coordinates in which imaginary identities are "fixed," is the object of this book.

PART 2: FANTASIES OF POSTMODERN GEOGRAPHY

> Today everything that derives from history and from historical time must undergo a test. Neither "cultures" nor the "consciousness" of peoples, groups or even individuals can escape the loss of identity that is now added to all other besetting terrors. . . . nothing and no one can avoid trial by space.
>
> **Henri Lefebvre**[38]

In his book of 1989, *Postmodern Geographies*, Edward Soja recalled: "In 1984, [Frederic] Jameson, [Henri] Lefebvre, and I took a spiraling tour around the centre of Los Angeles, starting at the Bonaventure Hotel."[39] Soja describes their itinerary in his final chapter, "Taking Los Angeles Apart: Towards a Postmodern Geography." What Soja encounters on

the tour is a theme park of world space: Los Angeles is, as he puts it, "*une ville devenue monde.*"[40] In his penultimate chapter, "It All Comes Together in Los Angeles," he writes: "There is a Boston in Los Angeles, a Lower Manhattan and a South Bronx, a São Paulo and a Singapore." Consequently, "What better place can there be to illustrate and synthesize the dynamics of capitalist spatialization?"[41] In his own social history of Los Angeles, Mike Davis praises Soja for brilliantly encapsulating the "image of Los Angeles as prism of different spatialities."[42] But he rejects what he sees as Soja's ungrounded assumption that these spatial formations represent the universal shape of things to come, "the paradigm of the future." Davis is similarly critical of Jameson for promoting the same idea, as in, for example, his "famous evocation (in his 'Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism') of Bunker Hill as a 'concrete totalization' of postmodernity."[43] Both Soja and Jameson, Davis complains, "in the very eloquence of their different 'postmodern mappings' of Los Angeles, become celebrants of the myth."[44] Davis's hostility to the idea that the future of the world may be traced in the lines of Los Angeles's freeways may appear self-contradictory, given that the subtitle of his own book about Los Angeles, *City of Quartz*, is *Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. But more importantly, in dwelling on what Soja and Jameson may have in common, we risk losing sight of the substantive *difference* between what they say, and between what each made of his "spiraling tour" from the Bonaventure.

Speaking of the Bonaventure, in the widely discussed essay of 1984 to which Davis refers, Jameson comments:

> 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. . . . this alarming disjunction point between the body and its

> built environment . . . can itself stand as the symbol and analogue of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects.[45]

The great spatial network of late twentieth-century capitalism is the ultimate object of concern for both Soja and Jameson. But whereas Soja collapses the world into Los Angeles, Jameson collapses both into the Bonaventure. Both Soja and Jameson use the term *hyperspace* to speak of the object of their concern, but they are really speaking of quite different things. Soja refers to "the hyperspace of the city of Los Angeles,"[46] whereas Jameson uses the term to name the space of the Bonaventure Hotel—a building that, he finds, "does not wish to be part of the city, but rather its equivalent and its replacement or substitute."[47] Unlike the form of the city, the form of the hotel is (even allowing for the prism of external constraints that refract any architect's intention) the work of an auteur.[48] It is further significant that Soja speaks in terms of "illustration and synthesis," whereas Jameson speaks of "symbol and analogue." Los Angeles serves Soja as a field of empirically observable data, within which he discerns, as Davis puts it, "the outlines of a paradigmatic postfordism, an emergent twenty-first century urbanism." For Jameson, the Bonaventure offers not empirical data but allegorical form, which does not directly "illustrate" the shape of *future* urban life, but which indirectly "figures" *present* power as lived by those submitted to it. This distinction emerges most clearly in Jameson's book of 1992, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*. He writes:

> Bergson's warning about the temptations of spatializing thought remain current in . . . an era of urban dissolution and re-ghettoization, in which we might be tempted to think that the social can be mapped

> that way, by following across a map insurance red lines and the electrified borders of private police and surveillance forces. Both images are, however, only caricatures of the mode of production itself (most often called late capitalism) whose mechanisms and dynamics are not visible in that sense, cannot be detected on the surfaces scanned by satellites, and therefore stand as a fundamental representational problem—indeed a problem of a historically new and original type.[49]

This passage implies sharp criticism of the approach to the urban environment taken by both Soja and Davis, writers who concern themselves with precisely such "caricatures." But we might more usefully accept that the types of spatial descriptions offered by Soja and Davis are simply incommensurable with those provided by Jameson. They are not really in conflict as they occupy different grounds, different registers of description: provisionally (in Derrida's expression, "under erasure") the "empirical" and the "psychological." The means to a more detailed understanding of the terms of the differences between Davis, Soja, and Jameson are provided by the work of the third member of the party on their "spiraling tour" around Los Angeles from the Bonaventure: Lefebvre.

Soja describes Lefebvre as "the incunabulum of post-modern critical human geography, the primary source for the assault against historicism and the reassertion of space in critical social theory."[50] Lefebvre's book *The Production of Space* first appeared, in French, in 1974, at which time it represented the culmination of an engagement with questions of space he had begun in 1968. The English translation was published in 1991, the year Lefebvre died. The most fundamental project of Lefebvre's book is to reject the conception of space as "a container without content," an abstract mathematical/geometrical continuum, independent of human

subjectivity and agency. As his homage to Lefebvre implies, Soja's work continues Lefebvre's project of theorizing space not as a Kantian a priori but as a product of human *practice*. Lefebvre defines what he calls "spatial practice" as "a projection 'onto the ground' [*sur le terrain*] of all aspects, elements and moments of social practice."[51] For Lefebvre, spatial practice is "observed, described and analysed on a wide range of levels: in architecture, in city planning . . . in the actual design of routes and localities . . . in the organization of everyday life, and, naturally, in urban reality."[52] Soja's project, as well as that of Davis, clearly accords with this concept of space as formed when social relations "hit the ground." For Lefebvre, however, spatial practice—that which is "empirically observable"—is only one of "the three moments of social space," which he names "the perceived, the conceived, and the lived." Lefebvre uses the expression "spatial practice" to refer to the register of "the perceived"; he uses "representations of space" to refer to "the conceived," and "representational space" to refer to "the lived." Summarized in bare outline: *spatial practice,* as already observed, is the material expression of social relations in space: a marketplace, a bedroom, a lecture theater, a ghetto. *Representations of space* are those conceptual abstractions that may inform the actual configuration of such spatial practices, for example, Cartesian geometry, linear perspective, Le Corbusier's "modular" or the Quattrocento painter's *braccio*. *Representational space* is space as appropriated by the imagination; Lefebvre writes that it "overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects"[53] and is predominantly nonverbal in nature. For all the difficulties in sustaining any absolute distinctions between Lefebvre's three categories, they nevertheless help us to see the projects of Soja and Jameson as addressing different aspects of an overall, complex problematic of space. In Lefebvre's terms, then, Soja's work may be seen as privileging "spatial practice": the empirical, the perceivable; whereas Jameson's attention is rather to "representations of space": the "symbolic use" of the empirical world. It should be

emphasized however that, for Lefebvre, there can be no question of choosing one form of attention to the exclusion of the other. It is precisely in his attempt to account for the simultaneous imbrication of the physical and the psychological that the ambition, and difficulty, of Lefebvre's work lies. Soja's book, replete with graphs and tables, is constrained by a social science framework. His basic thesis, "spatiality is . . . a social product," is in agreement with Lefebvre. Unlike Lefebvre, however, Soja shows little interest in the problem of the imbrication of social space and mental space. More precisely, he sees mental space as a dangerously threatening supplement to his statical-statistical space. He complains: "Social space folds into mental space, into diaphanous concepts of spatiality which all too often take us away from materialized social realities."[54] However, for all that bar graphs and pie charts keep quiet about it, mental space and social realities are *in reality* inseparable.

In a misrecognition that is the mirror reversal of the one made by Soja, the sociologist author of a book about "images of the city in the detective story," writes that his analysis takes as its object "not some supposed real city, situated somewhere in the world and which the crime novel shows in the manner of a touristic or geographic description, but rather the city of paper which the novel drafts: written, unreal, symbolic, *coded.*"[55] But what this author calls the "real city" can never be perceived as totally distinct from the "paper city." The city in our actual experience is *at the same time* an actually existing physical environment, *and* a city in a novel, a film, a photograph, a city seen on television, a city in a comic strip, a city in a pie chart, and so on. For example, a photograph on the cover of a special issue of the French weekly newsmagazine *Le nouvel observateur*[56] shows a graffiti painting rendered on a bleak concrete city wall. Figures with guns and clubs appear in the foreground of the painting. Behind them rises a painted silhouette skyline of high-rise buildings—evoking *at the same time* the HLM (low-rent housing projects) of French cities *and* the iconical downtown skyscraper skyline familiar from the

Hollywood film noir. The magazine's cover story is about violent (mixed race) youth uprisings in the French "projects." Interviewed about her adolescent students, a young schoolteacher from the troubled Paris suburb of Bobigny observes: "They make no distinction between the world of the street, of television and the school." Soja has no access to this hybrid space, at once material and psychical, in which these young people (together with the rest of us) *actually live and act.* He resists, as he puts it, "an ideational process in which the 'image' of reality takes epistemological precedence over the tangible substance and appearance of the real world."[57]

Soja argues from basic common sense. There is a fundamental objection in common sense to considering fantasy in the context of the social and the political. In *Roget's Thesaurus* the word "fantasy" is flanked by "poetry" on one side and "visual fallacy" on the other. The distribution of these terms is in agreement with the broad everyday use of the word. On the one hand, the term *poetry* invokes a more or less intentional act of imagination; on the other hand, *visual fallacy* signals the unintentional, the hallucinatory. Whatever the case, whether the particular sense of "fantasy" in question is nuanced toward the voluntary caprice or the involuntary delusion, in popular understanding "fantasy" is always opposed to "reality." In this definition fantasy is the *negative* of reality. Here "reality" is conceived as that which is "external" to our "inner" lives. In this commonsense view we simultaneously inhabit two distinct and separate worlds. One is mental, private, "internal." The other is physical, public, "external." Political and social considerations are seen as belonging to the latter arena of common empirical realities. The British philosopher Gilbert Ryle noted a lacuna in this widespread notion: "The transactions between the episodes of the private history and the public history remain mysterious, since by definition they can only belong to neither series."[58] It is to this "mysterious" area of transaction that psychoanalysis allows us access through the theory of the *unconscious.*

This theory posits, precisely, "the idea of another locality, another space, another scene, *the between perception and consciousness*."[59] Psychoanalysis is founded on the recognition that what Soja calls "materialized social realities" are not all that are real for us: conscious and unconscious fantasies are as immutable a force in our lives as any material circumstances. The agency of the unconscious has no place in Soja's commonsense worldview, and the word *unconscious* is not to be found in his writing. The same is true of Davis's work. Jameson uses the term quite frequently, but in an idiosyncratic sense that has little to do with the psychoanalytic sense of the word. (I discuss this in my final chapter, "Brecciated Time.") In seeking a way out of the "spiraling orbit," become a vicious circle around a city reductively conceived as nothing other than a literally *concrete* entity, in seeking access to that *other space* of the concrete reality of dreams, to which psychoanalysis is attentive, we may again turn to the work of Lefebvre.

Lefebvre was a veteran Marxist theoretician and militant who at times criticized psychoanalysis for privileging subjective interiority at the expense of lived social relations. Nevertheless, there are key moments in *The Production of Space* when he opens doors onto the objects and methods of psychoanalysis. Lefebvre sees the "problematic" of space as "composed of questions about mental and social space, about their interconnections."[60] Most simply put, he sets out to demonstrate the unity of these "two" realms. In a passage that strikingly evokes Lacan's formulation of the "mirror stage," Lefebvre writes:

> [Space] is first of all *my* body, and then it is my body counterpart or "other," its mirror-image or shadow: it is the shifting intersection between that which touches, penetrates, threatens or benefits my body on the one hand, and all other bodies on the other.[61]

In a psychoanalytic perspective, Lefebvre's insistence on the centrality of the body subverts the distinction he makes between "representations of

space" and "representational space." If, as he insists, and as psychoanalysis would agree, "The whole of (social) space proceeds from the body,"[62] then how is he able to see such "representations of space" as geometry as exempt from the same bodily determinations as "representational space"? (see Chapter 1, "Geometry and Abjection"). The answer to this question probably lies in Lefebvre's division of the laboring body from the perceiving body, in which perceptual processes are seen as essentially passive. For example, he speaks of "the passive body (the senses) and the active body (labour)."[63] That Lefebvre may nevertheless be unconsciously aware of a contradiction is intimated in a passing tribute, in *The Production of Space,* to the surrealists—those who celebrated the triumph of imagination over brute perception. During the immediate postwar period, Lefebvre had attacked surrealism's "substitution of poetry for politics." In his book of 1947, *Critique of Everyday Life,* the book in which he is most critical of surrealism, Lefebvre remarks: "Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all." By conscious irony, or unconscious homage (most likely both) the aphoristic form of his sentence echoes the closing line of André Breton's novel of 1928, *Nadja:* "La beauté sera CONVULSIVE ou ne sera pas."[64] According to Lefebvre's biographer, Rémi Hess, Lefebvre was first introduced to Marxism by Breton, and had associated with the surrealists during the 1930s. In 1974, in *The Production of Space,* Lefebvre concedes:

> The leading surrealists sought to decode inner space and illuminate the nature of the transition from this subjective space to the material realm of the body and the outside world, and thence to social life. Consequently, surrealism has a theoretical import which was not originally recognized.[65]

This "theoretical import" of surrealism, as the surrealists themselves acknowledged, is best worked out in psychoanalytic terms. Lefebvre and Lacan were born in the same year, 1901. Both lived through much the

same continuum of French history.[66] Like Lefebvre, Lacan also had early relations with the surrealists. It was within the historical matrix of the moment of surrealism (see Chapter 4, "Chance Encounters," and Chapter 5, "Seiburealism") that he formed the ideas that would lead to his now famous (and often reductively understood) notion of the "mirror stage" in the formation of identity (see Chapter 6, "Paranoiac Space").

Lefebvre is a *discriminating* thinker. *The Production of Space* contains criticism of semiotics and poststructuralism, of Derrida and Foucault. Yet, as the *afterword* to the English translation notes, "Lefebvre never rejects such formulations outright. He always engages with them in order to appropriate and transform the insights to be gained from them in new and creative ways."[67] Lefebvre's dense and complex arguments do not develop in an orderly linear succession. The book appropriately invites a "spatial," rather than a "temporal," reading—analogous to the way in which the Situationist International (also no strangers to Lefebvre) recommended that urban space be navigated, "*à la dérive*." In his article of 1958, "Theory of the Dérive," Guy Debord writes:

> The lessons drawn from the dérive permit the drawing up of the first surveys of the psychogeographical articulations of a modern city. Beyond the discovery of unities of ambiance, of their main components and their spatial localization, one comes to perceive their principal axes of passage, their exits and their defenses. One arrives at the central hypothesis of the existence of psychogeographical pivotal points.[68]

The modern city provides the common site of the observations in the chapters that follow ("follow," as I have already observed, more *à la dérive* than in the manner of a thesis). The "city" here, however, is not to be understood in the established terms of urbanists and city planners, nor in the sociometric terms of the new geographers. It is rather to be

considered as a neuralgic node in what Jameson calls "the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects,"[69] and as a hybrid and heterogeneous site of (self/other) representations (see Chapter 4, "Chance Encounters," and Chapter 7, "The City in Pieces").

In 1984, Jameson discussed the capacity of certain "postmodernist texts" to evoke, "a whole new postmodern space in emergence around us." He concluded: "Architecture . . . remains in this sense the privileged aesthetic language."[70] Almost a decade later, however, in the book in which he seems most closely to return to the questions of global space he first addressed in 1984, Jameson chose to write about cinema. Such a sliding of attention from architecture to cinema was prefigured by Benjamin. In his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin writes:

> Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. . . . Today . . . [r]eception in a state of distraction, which . . . is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise.[71]

It is precisely "profound changes in apperception" that preoccupy Jameson. More precisely, as already noted, it is the failure of apperception which concerns him—what he sees as our physical and intellectual incapacity to comprehend the "new hyperspace" of postmodernism, the vehicle and form of the new global capitalism. In *The Geopolitical Aesthetic,* in a passage that may recall his concluding remarks about the Bonaventure, Jameson writes:

> In our time the referent—the world system—is a being of such enormous complexity that it can only be mapped and modeled

> indirectly, by way of a simpler object that stands as its allegorical interpretant, that object being most often in postmodernism a media phenomenon.[72]

The "media phenomenon" he chooses to talk about is cinema. Unavoidably, however, we can today only position this cinema in relation to that of which he does not speak, the "structuring absence" of his book: television. On the one hand, in everyday language, *cinema* means "narrative cinema." Phenomenologically, the film is localized in space and time: in the finite unreeling of a narrative in a particular theater, at a particular time, and on a particular day. The word *television*, on the other hand, means television programs of all kinds: news, current affairs, and documentaries; sports events, rock concerts, opera, and ballet; serialized soap operas, "quality" dramatic productions, and episodic situation comedies; police, Western, and science fiction adventures; science, cooking, gardening, and other educational and "special interest" programs; "telefilms" and, of course, the broadcasting of films originally made for the cinema. Television presents itself as if it "covers" life itself. The urban dweller who turns away from the image on her or his television screen, to look out of the window, may see the same program playing on other screens, behind other windows, or, more likely, will be aware of a simultaneity of different programs. Returning from this casual act of voyeurism they may "zap" through channels, or "flip" through magazines. Just as Benjamin refers to architecture as appreciated "in a state of distraction," so television and photography are received in much the same way. The cinematic experience is temporally linear. For all that narrative codes may shuffle the pack of events, the spatial modulations that occur in the diagesis are nevertheless *successively* ordered and experienced as a *passage* through space and time. The global space-time of television, however, is fractured and kaleidoscopic. In this, it is closer to the ubiq-

uitous environment of photography than to cinema. On the first page of his book of 1980, *La chambre claire*, Barthes writes: "I declared that I liked Photography against the cinema—from which, however, I never managed to separate it."[73] In his essay of 1971, "For a Metahistory of Film," Hollis Frampton observes:

> Cinema is a Greek word that means "movie." . . . There is nothing in the structural logic of the filmstrip that can justify such an assumption. Therefore we reject it. From now on we will call our art simply: film.
>
> The infinite film contains an infinity of endless passages wherein no frame resembles any other in the slightest degree, and a further infinity of passages wherein successive frames are as nearly identical as intelligence can make them.[74]

Barthes's difficulty in definitively separating the still from the moving image is given a pragmatic grounding in Frampton's observation that there is no intrinsic reason why "cinema" should show movement—as the individual frames of a film need not *necessarily* differ from each other. Such observations help deconstruct the strict binarism of the conventional opposition between moving and still image, and prepare the ground for a consideration of the mediatic environment as a whole—which demands a revised understanding of the space and time of the general field of representations. Here again, psychoanalytic theory is indispensable. Shoshana Felman has remarked that psychoanalysis is "a unique and original mode of learning," with:

> a very different temporality from the conventional linear—cumulative and progressive—temporality of learning, as it has traditionally been conceived by pedagogical theory and practice. Proceeding not through linear progression but through breakthroughs, leaps,

> discontinuities, regressions, and deferred action, the analytic learning process puts in question the traditional pedagogical belief in intellectual perfectibility, the progressist view of learning as a simple one-way road from ignorance to knowledge.[75]

"Leaps, discontinuities, regressions, and deferred action"—I can think of no more appropriate description of the way we receive the contemporary image environment. The meanings that govern us are not arrived at by "a simple one-way road." The metaphor is familiar: the road of history, the road of life. Entering the shadow of the declining phase of the twentieth century, Lefebvre identified the "trial by space" to which "everything that derives from history" would submit. Lefebvre was a Marxist who joined others, notably Michel Foucault, in rejecting all historicist teleologies—all one-way roads—as woodenly implausible. The problem of history nevertheless remained, albeit in pieces, its fragments now swept to the margins of the newly spatial critical paradigms. Lefebvre was perhaps the first to identify "loss of identity" as a "besetting terror" of the trial by space. In our present fin-de-siècle increasing displacements of populations between nations, changing distributions of racial and ethnic populations *within* nations, and the mutating geographies of post–cold war global politics are redrawing old maps of identity—national, cultural, and individual. An identity implies not only a location but a duration, a history. A lost identity is lost not only in space, but in time. We might better say, in "space-time." Lefebvre, and the postmodern geographers who followed him, sought to emphasize the time of lived social space over timelessly abstract "mental" space. The chapters that follow were written with no respect for this distinction between the social and the psychical, as the distinction is itself an abstraction, a fantasy. I begin, "degro zero," with the supposedly subjectless abstract space of geometry.