

ESSENTIAL ESSAYS VOL. 1

Foundations of Cultural Studies

Edited and with an introduction by **David Morley**

Stuart Hall

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VOLUME 1

Stuart Hall: Selected Writings

A series edited by Catherine Hall and Bill Schwarz

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Foundations of
Cultural Studies

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Stuart Hall

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David Morley

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The essays published here represent a number of Stuart Hall's better-known reflections on intellectual life and politics, which, for many of us, still live in the mind. They derive from a long period, over many years. Each is written with verve and a sense of urgency. They are, properly, essays—conceived for the moment. They have a life of their own, having shaped to varying degrees the intellectual landscape that remains our own. On these terms they should be judged.

They were seldom conceived principally as contributions to academic thought, even while their academic impact proved significant. The overriding imperative was to clarify thought on the matter in hand and to suggest a route through the quandaries that, at the time, prevailed. In such circumstances, in Hall's mind the conventions required of academic writing weren't paramount. These mattered, of course, but they didn't preoccupy him. Many of the essays published here began life as talks which, when it was decided they should appear in print, were only retrospectively supplied with the academic apparatus of bibliographies and citations. As talks, or even as essays to be published, this bibliographic labor was often conducted after the event, on the run. This has led us to the conclusion that the production of a uniform text is not possible. What can be done has been done. But the retrospective reconstruction of complete bibliographic referencing is now beyond our reach.

This explains the variety of bibliographic systems that compose the volume and the variations in presentation. Meanwhile, in the body of the essays small additions and clarifications occur. Certain minor interpolations have been supplied to explain matters which might otherwise escape contemporary readers, and references from the original publication to companion articles, in journals or books, have been deleted. A small handful of obvious errors has been corrected, misprints dispatched, and the occasional refinement in punctuation has been introduced. But otherwise the essays presented here remain as they were when they first entered public life.

Catherine Hall
Bill Schwarz
Series Editors

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Stuart Hall and the End of the Twentieth Century

One of the reviewers of a previous book of Stuart's essays remarked, in a seemingly jocular aside, that anyone writing a novel about the British intellectual Left in the postwar period might well find themselves spontaneously reinventing a figure exactly like Stuart Hall, so much had his "personal narrative and the public history of Britain in the second part of the twentieth century" been "strangely intertwined, at once deeply symbiotic and sharply at odds."¹ There is much truth in this jest. Stuart's voice has been central in shaping many of the cultural and political debates of our time, ever since he first emerged into public view in the late 1950s. To this extent, two works by John Akomfrah—*The Stuart Hall Project* and *The Unfinished Conversation*—could perfectly well be regarded as constituting not only the story of Stuart's life but also a kind of alternative history of late twentieth-century Britain.²

The large-format photographs of members of the *Windrush* generation of migrants from the Caribbean, arriving in London, which greeted any visitor to Stuart's family home in West Hampstead marked his own relation to that critical (and liminal) moment in British history when the ss *Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury in 1948.³ He was a participant observer in one of the crucial demographic developments of his own time, in which, in the context of the postwar boom, citizens of empire were invited to become migrants to the metropolises whence their colonists had set out. This was the moment at

which, as the now well-worn phrase has it, a variety of empires, having invited these migrant populations in (for reasons of shortfall in their homegrown labor forces), gradually felt themselves shudder as their erstwhile imperial subjects “struck back,” not simply by turning up in their midst but by bringing their own cultures with them. Evidently, the difficulties arising from these cultural dynamics have been considerable, and at times there came to be very significant resentment toward migrants from parts of the host population.⁴ Many years later, during a speech on multiculturalism he was giving in London, he was pressed on this issue by a racist heckler. The heckler complained that the British working class had not been consulted before migrants had been invited to their country. Stuart responded by declaring simply, “We are here because you were there.”⁵ In more expansive mode elsewhere Stuart tells the story of how “in the very moment when Britain finally convinced itself it had to decolonize . . . we all came back home. As they hauled down the flag, we got on the banana boat and sailed right into London.”⁶

A Migrant’s Eye: The Marginal Native Recentered

At its simplest, one might say that Stuart was born on the periphery of empire and traveled from that marginal setting to the very heartlands of the imperial center—first to Oxford University and later into the academic and media worlds of what was, in the later stages of his life, already becoming ex-imperial (or, perhaps better, postcolonial) London. In that capacity he was also one of the major analysts of what became known as multicultural Britain—and not only an analyst but an active protagonist in the crucial debates about race, ethnicity, and identity which did so much to transform Britain over the last sixty years.⁷

Stuart himself was always resistant to mere autobiography—although there is a moment at which he remarks that there are points when one has to speak autobiographically, not in order to seize “the authority of authenticity” but in order to properly situate oneself in relation to the circumstances in which one has lived and worked.⁸ Thus, in telling his own family story, as he does in the interview with Kuan-Hsing Chen reprinted in chapter 6 of *Essential Essays, Volume 2*, he implicitly follows the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh’s injunction that the self is only interesting as an illustration, by rendering his experiential account of discovering his own blackness in tandem with its own theorization as part of the diasporic experience of being peripheral, displaced, and marginalized. It is in that same spirit that I venture here but a

few comments to rehearse the formation of Stuart's own family history and subjectivity. Formed as he was both by a UK-oriented middle-class family upbringing and by a classical education at Jamaica College in Kingston, Stuart always was, in many ways, very much a British figure. This was so both personally, in his sensibility and impeccable good manners, and intellectually, in his inclination toward a specifically British tradition of grounded forms of applied intellectual inquiry and his suspicion of all forms of abstract, theoretical system-building.⁹

Nonetheless, Stuart was well aware that he could never be (nor be accepted as) completely British. He was ineluctably marked by his colonial origins and remained, throughout his life, both the familiar stranger and a marginal native within his adopted country. One could argue that it was precisely that doubling of position which provided him with the epistemological privilege that anthropologists have always understood to be the prerogative of the liminal observer of any group. A person in that position enjoys the advantages of being close enough to understand the group's culture intimately, yet is distant enough not to take it for granted—and is thus able to see it more clearly than those who are completely inside it.

Notwithstanding his family's hybridity—as Stuart himself described it, “part Scottish, part African, part Portuguese-Jewish”—they, and most particularly his emotionally powerful mother, identified strongly with the ethos of an imaginary, distant England. Thus, he was schooled for a future as a member of the colonial elite but still lived those early years as a black native of the Caribbean (and indeed, as he sometimes noted, as the blackest member of his own family). On a day-to-day basis, he grew up living in the “pigmentocracy” of Jamaica, which he once described as being “the most exquisitely differentiated caste and class system in the world.”¹⁰ By his teenage years, at night he was listening on the radio to the sounds of modernity—especially modern jazz—and dreaming about how he might get to wherever it was to be found.¹¹ Despite his political sympathies with the independence movement, he also identified with the imaginative world of the colonizers. Well versed in the nuances of English history and literature, he recalled that on arrival in the UK, when he took the train from Bristol to Paddington en route to Oxford, he saw a landscape that felt thoroughly familiar to him from the novels of Thomas Hardy.

The England that he had previously only encountered through its literature now confronted him as a reality, and he developed a “migrant's-eye” view of the center from the margins. Thus the erstwhile colonial subject came to

develop his own anthropology of the culture of the colonizers. He sought to survive the medieval gloom of Oxford by making common cause with the displaced migrant minority—with the rebel enclaves of demobbed young veterans and national servicemen, Ruskin College trade unionists, and scholarship boys and girls from home and abroad.¹² So far as the dominant forms of British culture were concerned, in this context, as he put it, “What I realized, as soon as I got to Oxford, was that I could never be part of it. . . . I could study English literature on the page, but I could never be part of that life.” That ambivalent feeling stuck with him throughout his life, and many years later he would still say, “I don’t belong anywhere anymore. Britain is my home, but I’m not English.”¹³ This, however, was far from being any simple matter of regret. As he put it when speaking at a conference on the question of identity in London in 1987, “My own sense of identity has always depended on the fact of being a migrant. . . . [Now] I find myself centered at last. Now that in the postmodern age you all feel so dispersed. I’ve become centered: what I thought of as dispersed and fragmented comes paradoxically, to be *the* representative modern experience. . . . Welcome to migranhood!”¹⁴

The narrative of Stuart’s intellectual development is sometimes told as one in which his involvement in the British New Left constitutes a formative and foundational moment, and his involvement in matters of globalization and diaspora is only seen to come at a much later stage of his career. Nothing could be further from the truth, not least because it was among a set of ex-colonial intellectuals, many of them from outside Britain, that Stuart was engaged at Oxford in the genesis of the New Left of the 1950s.¹⁵ This is a crucial point in decentering what is sometimes regarded as the essential Britishness both of the New Left and (later) of Cultural Studies itself.

The particularity of his formation in the anticolonial struggles of the 1950s, first in Jamaica and then in a more internationalist form in Oxford, also inflected his lifelong intellectual investment in Marxism, insofar as its unconscious European presumptions inevitably grated against his own experience of empire. For Stuart, the involvement with Marxism (deep-seated as it was) necessarily also involved a contestation of its profound Eurocentrism and its relative neglect of questions of imperialism and colonialism. For him, the missing term was, in a sense, quite particularly his own—the Caribbean, as the “Third . . . New World . . . the empty land where strangers from every other part of the globe collided . . . the primal scene where the fateful/fatal encounter was staged between Africa and the West.”¹⁶

The Long March through the Institutions: Dialogic Collectivity

His own political formation within anticolonialism gave him a necessarily oblique perspective on Marxism's putative moral and political certainties. Nonetheless, in the moment of political opportunity created by the burgeoning Non-Aligned Movement, in the wake of the Bandung Conference of Third World nations in 1955, he was, as he described it, "dragged backwards" into Marxism, against both the Russian tanks in Budapest and the Anglo-French paratroopers in Suez. Pushed through these alliances into the momentous political events of 1956, Stuart helped to found key institutions such as the *Universities and Left Review* and the *New Left Review* and went on, in later life, to play a crucial role in British academic and political life.¹⁷

His ex-colleague Richard Hoggart famously remarked that Stuart used the first-person singular less than anyone else he had ever met in his life—always preferring to speak as part of the collective "we," of whichever group with whom he was working. These collectives included, at different stages of his life, the *Universities and Left Review* and *New Left Review* (1957–1962); the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (1962–1964); the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University in the UK (1964–1980); the Communist University of London (1976–1980); the Open University (1980–1997); *Marxism Today*/New Times (1980–1990); Rivington Place Arts Centre/Association of Black Photographers/International Institute of Visual Arts (2000–2012); and *Soundings* (1994–2014). For Stuart, the opportunities for creative, yet critical, dialogue generated by his participation in those collectives provided the lifeblood of his intellectual work. As he put it in a late interview, "I've always worked with some kind of collectives. . . . Without some sort of grouping I feel kind of lost. The idea of trying to do it all in my study on my own, doesn't feel right."¹⁸

Despite all his other achievements, Stuart thought of himself as, above all, a teacher.¹⁹ Teaching was an activity he loved, and in that capacity, his great skill was (whether in formal or informal settings) to be an enabler of others—fellow members of a political collective, graduate or undergraduate students, participants in a temporary summer school. He was always delighted by the opportunity to engage in critical debate and dialogue. In this process he aspired both to help his interlocutors to better formulate their own

ideas and to recognize the limitations of any given view, and thus, by critique and debate, to search out better ways forward, intellectually and politically.

Speaking and Listening

As his epigraph to his book *Stuart Hall's Voice*, David Scott quotes Frantz Fanon's perceptive remark that the greatness of a man is to be found "not in his acts but in his style." Thus, in the introduction to the book Scott's focus is not so much on the content of Stuart's views but rather on his way of having, expressing, debating, and developing those views. Scott insists on the productivity of focusing on the relationship between Stuart's own "voice" and the "ethos" of his intellectual style—which he characterizes, as his title has it, as a form of "receptive generosity . . . a mode of giving that is, at the same time, a mode of receiving." This involves, Scott explains, a register of voice "which is at the same time a mode of listening," invested fundamentally in the notion of dialogic relations. He thus characterizes Stuart's intellectual style as that of a "listening self" who is also "an agent of attunement and receptivity."²⁰

Stuart was never interested in any easy form of point-scoring critique, with its "overbearing conceits of omniscience" that presumed the capacity to achieve a final resolution of knowledge. Rather, he was always invested in creating the conditions for the most productive form of dialogue available in any given circumstances. This was a crucial part of Stuart's identity as a teacher. Most importantly, it resided in his capacity to act as an enabler of others, by setting a tone that created a context of productive engagement for any discussion. This is not to say that the intellectual standards he set—both for himself and for others, at the CCCS or elsewhere—were ever less than demanding. But he encouraged the many people with whom he worked to seek, syncretically, to make the very best of what everyone could contribute to the dialogue, rather than to allow themselves—or anyone else—to settle for the narrowly egotistical satisfactions of demonstrating mere intellectual superiority. In this context Scott talks of how Stuart characteristically encouraged an attitude of "attuned" and "appreciative" awareness, involving a mode of "attentive receptivity" to the intellectual contributions of others in the "give and take of clarifying dialogue."²¹

To broaden the point, in relation to Stuart's commitment to these more collaborative and less individualistic modes of intellectual work, it is worth noting that Scott also comments on the intellectual productivity—and indeed creativity—of the interview itself (as against the individually authored

piece of work). From this perspective, the sensitive interviewer does not simply extract information from the interviewee, but instead sees their role as seeking to constitute a context for dialogue which enables the other to express themselves more effectively. Here we might think of the parallel with the work of Studs Terkel in the US and in the USSR with Svetlana Alexievich as practitioners who have both raised the interview to the level of an art form.²²

Tough Love and Splendid Rhetoric

Many have commented on the perennial warmth of Stuart's manners, which, in a lived form of the politics of affect, functioned as a complexly articulated complement to his deep intellectual seriousness (as he might perhaps have put it himself).²³ Indeed, for such a rigorous thinker, Hall displayed unusual kindness, tolerance, and generosity of spirit—but this seemingly contradictory combination was in fact central to his character. This combination of personal warmth and intellectual rigor lasted throughout his life and can be seen to telling effect in Isaac Julien's film of the "Choreographing Capital" event.²⁴ In one scene in the film, from his wheelchair, Stuart engages David Harvey in public debate about the deficiencies of what he saw as Harvey's economic determinism, which, so far as Stuart was concerned, lacked any sense of conjunctural mediation of the manner in which economic factors might have their various effects. In the interview Stuart remains as courteous and well-mannered as ever but is nonetheless relentless in his determination to push his critique of Harvey's position through to the ultimate conclusion of its own internal logic. At one point he apologizes to Harvey for the discomfort, saying that he recognizes that "I am perhaps pushing you further than you feel comfortable to go." Yet his sense of intellectual responsibility will not permit him to allow their serious theoretical disagreement (about what role the economic can play in constituting an adequate explanation of events) to be fudged, simply in order to avoid a conflict he regards as intellectually and politically necessary.²⁵

In his public appearances (which, until illness limited his energies in later life, were legion) Stuart was gifted with the capacity to stand up at the end of a grueling conference debate and synthesize its key issues in a condensed and readily graspable form. He was gifted with the power of speech in a very special sense: as a public intellectual, he was also a rhetorician of great splendor, capable of catching the nascent mood in a room and converting it into

something more tangible—clearer and more coherent than anyone there had, till that moment, realized it could be. He also possessed—or, one might even say, at his best moments, was possessed by—formidable powers of communication when, at a public occasion, his speech having gathered rhythm, he would abandon his prepared notes and his words would seemingly become airborne, almost in the style of a preacher speaking in tongues.²⁶

Influence and Interdisciplinarity

Among the tributes to Hall's standing among his fellow intellectuals that were gathered together in the context of his nomination (more on that later) for a "career achievement" award by the International Communications Association in 2013 we find the following encomia: "There is no other theorist whose international standing is higher, or whose work has had a greater influence in defining the studies of history, literature, art and the social sciences"; "One of the most prestigious, productive and creative intellectual figures of our time"; "One of a handful of intellectuals, anywhere in the world, who can claim to have literally transformed the character and practice of the social sciences and humanities in the twentieth century." To take one simple measure, his international stature can be judged by the fact that at his death, Stuart's work had been translated into Italian, Korean, French, Arabic, Finnish, German, Turkish, Spanish, Hebrew, Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese, and Dutch, among other languages, and he was a Fellow or honorary degree holder at thirty-two universities in eight countries.

He displayed a quite breathtaking capacity to span different disciplines and to combine expertise from a wide range of perspectives, in order to develop the interdisciplinary approach that always characterized his work. In this respect we might think of how his early work, with Paddy Whannel and others at the British Film Institute, bridged the humanities and social sciences—bringing the skills of textual analysis, as they had been developed in film theory, into the field of social science studies of the media.²⁷ This approach—in parallel with the work of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams—thus added a capacity for the analysis of cultural meanings which had previously been significantly lacking from the conventional forms of social science. At a later point, at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham, he enthusiastically (if critically, as ever) encouraged the appropriation of the semiological approaches to visual language then being developed by European theorists such as Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco. However, his

ambitions went much further than simply importing humanities perspectives into the social sciences. Thus, in his 1977 essay “The Hinterland of Science” he declared his ambition to “do sociology better than the sociologists” by rescuing the lost tradition of Durkheim and Mauss.²⁸ All of this can also now be seen to have foreshadowed his major influence on what came to be known much later as the cultural turn across the social sciences.

Hall’s work not only rewrote the common sense of the discipline of media and communication with which, in a sense, he began, by establishing the legitimacy of new fields, objects, and methods of study in relation to the media. As the form of Cultural Studies that he spawned grew in strength—and in the overall span of its concerns—it also transformed the assumptions of a variety of cognate disciplines that had previously paid insufficient attention to the cultural dimensions of analytical work—hence the booms in cultural sociology, cultural geography, cultural history, and so forth. There is an important formal homology here. For Stuart, in his early work on the media, it was precisely their role in the construction (and naturalization) of what they presented as only common sense, which was in fact their crucial ideological function.²⁹ His central point in that analysis is that while its (unconscious) taken-for-grantedness renders common sense largely invisible, it nonetheless plays a crucial role in defining the limits of thought.

To shift my argument to a different level of analysis, it may well be that some key aspects of Stuart’s influence on the study of media and communications are today almost invisible, insofar as they concern the transformation of the unspoken premises on which the field rests. Nowadays, it goes without saying that there is more to the media than questions of economics and that issues of culture and representation are equally important; that we must pay attention to questions not only of class but also of race, gender, and sexuality; that low-status, fictional media can play just as important a cultural role as serious news and current affairs; that the field of the political must be extended to include its vernacular forms; and that audiences are evidently not passive dupes or zombies. However, if all that now seems no more than common sense, this is because the kind of Cultural Studies that Stuart initiated has made it so, over the last thirty years, forcing these issues onto the research agenda against a background of the wailing and gnashing of teeth in some quarters.

To return to the question of the contribution of European critical theory to the development of Cultural Studies, it is worth recalling Lévi-Strauss’s argument (drawing on Saussure) that social analysis should be concerned with the “study of the life of signs at the heart of social life.”³⁰ That semiological

tradition, to the potential benefits of which Stuart was so alert, has been an important part of the attempt of Cultural Studies to better understand the role of the media in shaping the limits of public knowledge, reframing those questions of how meaning is made by drawing on literary theory, linguistics, and cultural anthropology.

However, besides these questions centering on media theory, Stuart's work simultaneously traversed many distinct bodies of thought, including Western Marxism, ethnography and cultural anthropology, psychoanalysis, feminism, poststructuralism, and postcolonial theory. If his early work redefined the terms of debate around questions of media, deviancy, youth, subcultures, critical theory, and Marxism and reshaped the field of the social sciences, his later work has now become canonical in the study of postcolonialism and studies of ethnicity, identity, race, multiculturalism, and diaspora.³¹

A Public Intellectual: The Politics of Cultural Studies

Stuart was not simply an outstanding academic but also a public intellectual who, as noted earlier, served on a large number of important public bodies and committees. His concern, ultimately, was with trying to understand how ideas, politics, popular culture, and the movements of history can be understood in relation to each other—and how the theorization of those conjunctions can better shape effective political interventions.

His insistence on the importance of taking popular cultural forms seriously, in the service of this endeavor, has often been badly misunderstood. Critics of the ways in which Cultural Studies developed, in its later, more populist phase, have sometimes assumed that an unthinking cultural relativism was somehow intrinsic to a Cultural Studies approach.³² However, Stuart himself was always at great pains to distance himself from any suspicion of that kind of populism. Thus, as he put it in an interview with Laurie Taylor, which was rebroadcast after his death in early 2014, “If I have to read another cultural studies analysis of *The Sopranos*, I will simply implode. That’s just . . . telling stories—it has to be about politics, not just as a ‘celebration’ of the popular: it needs to be a way of investigating politics through culture.”³³

Perhaps most notably, Stuart took this cultural analysis of politics forward in his collaboration with Martin Jacques and the members of the *Marxism Today* collective in producing his pathbreaking analysis of the emergence of the form of politics which from the late 1970s came to dominate the British

landscape for the next generation. He and his coauthors argued that any model that used the concept of false consciousness to explain away working-class support for these forms of conservative politics was utterly inadequate. What was needed, he claimed, was an understanding of the capacity of political ideologies such as this to articulate an effective appeal to the lived experience of subordinate groups.³⁴ In his closing remarks to a British Sociological Association conference in May 1978, Stuart insists that while racism is certainly an ideology which serves the function of refracting quite other problems onto the question of race, it is not “a set of phoney conspiracies in the heads of the ruling class.” He argues that it is not to be seen (and cannot usefully be opposed) simply as a set of “false . . . or . . . mistaken . . . perceptions” but rather that it has its roots “in real . . . material conditions of existence . . . and arises because of the concrete problems of different classes and groups in the society . . . especially in an economy in recession. . . . [It] has these authentic, material conditions at its roots . . . involv[ing] the real problems of the people.”³⁵

The CCCS’s collectively authored book *Policing the Crisis* (published in 1978; see chapter 12 of this volume) had identified race as a defining feature of the increasingly conservative form of authoritarian populism developed by Margaret Thatcher. Stuart then coined the term “Thatcherism” in a prescient article, “The Great Moving Right Show,” in *Marxism Today* (included in this collection, chapter 13) in January 1979, some months before Thatcher herself was elected.³⁶ Up until then, she had been patronized by many on the Left as an insignificant, shrill-sounding housewifely voice espousing an anachronistic form of old-fashioned domestic moralism. However, Stuart recognized her as a person who, in Hegel’s terms, constituted a historic individual—whose politics instantiated, in personal form, and served to crystalize much wider social and political forces that were already in play. To this extent, he rightly recognized that Thatcherism might be able to redefine the public mood, and appeal to the disaffected, through its appeal on moral and cultural grounds that had previously not been considered as part of the political agenda. Thus he argued for the necessity of a corresponding cultural struggle against Thatcherism, and his great regret, twenty years later, in the run-up to the 1997 general election was that Thatcherite arguments, philosophies, and priorities still defined the agenda on which New Labor founded its own appeal.³⁷ A further decade and a half on, one of his last published works, “After Neoliberalism: Analysing the Present” (jointly written with his longtime *Soundings* coeditors Doreen Massey and Michael

Rustin), once again focused on these same themes, in the attempt to articulate a form of political opposition to the international hegemony of neoliberalism that avoided a return to fundamentalist Leftism.³⁸

Conjunctural Analyses, Provisional Truths: The Form of the Essays

As Kuan-Hsing Chen and I have noted elsewhere, Stuart was never interested in modes of intellectual work that, in absolutist terms, present themselves as definitively superseding all that went before.³⁹ His concerns were always conjunctural in nature, developing in response to emerging social and political questions. His strengths lay not in making definitive statements but in his capacity to take on new political or theoretical issues and his determination to continually try to move beyond his own previous limits. He always worked to encourage an open-ended approach to debate and the politics of discipleship or denunciation were equally anathema to him. He refused the temptation to enhance his own arguments by rubbishing those of others. His tendency was always toward a productive sort of eclecticism that looked for the best (or most useful) points which could be taken from other positions and then worked on them in a selective, syncretic mode of dialogic inclusiveness. He had no interest in the production of any exclusive orthodoxy—not least because such systems of thought, after enjoying a brief (if absolute) intellectual reign, tend then to be dethroned and discarded in favor of another. In his view, the production of a succession of temporarily fashionable theoretical paradigms offered no useful model of intellectual life.⁴⁰

This commitment to necessarily provisional modes of analysis also had consequences for the form in which that work was produced. The essay—dense, allusive, synthetic, opening up some current political issue or intellectual debate in new ways, inevitably unfinished, identifying issues still to be resolved while setting an agenda for future debate—was Stuart's chosen medium, and over his long working life, he produced a vast number of such occasional essays.⁴¹ Consequently, the task I have faced in making a selection from that overpowering range of available work for inclusion here, to represent the most important elements of Stuart's work, has been a daunting one. Moreover, the process of the production of these essays, in different institutional circumstances and in response to changing long- and short-term, cultural, economic, and political dynamics—both in matters of the *longue durée* of

periodizations and the particularities of given and specific conjunctures—was itself an organic one, some part of which I hope to capture here.

It would be perfectly possible to offer a good rationale for a wide variety of hypothetical selections from Stuart's essays, each of which would differ in important ways from the one you have before you here. As this introduction now proceeds, and in the shorter sections that offer commentary on each section of the book, I shall attempt to explain why it is that the particular pieces represented here have been selected. I will also attempt to offer some guidance to the reader, with respect to how each of the essays selected stands in relation to others within Stuart's overall oeuvre. However, I would not attempt to argue that this is necessarily the best selection that could have been made, and certainly not the definitive one. It could have been done differently and doubtless another editor would have made other choices and produced convincing reasons for having done so.

The prehistory of the process of attempting to collect Stuart's work into a set of edited volumes is long and convoluted. In that context, the process of selection of these particular essays was an organic one, made in conversations with Stuart himself that stretched over thirty years. In the mid-1980s, when Stuart and his family had not long since moved to the large house they shared with his mother-in-law in Kilburn, Stuart invited me into his study one day and asked me to try to help him sort out the piles of material he had laid out on the floor, by way of preparation for work on a collection of his essays which, at that stage, was planned for publication by Macmillan. I suspect that my own qualification for the role of informal assistant in this process rested on little more than the fact that I had, by then, acquired a certain amount of editorial experience in the process of running an independent publishing company that I and some colleagues had set up.⁴² Stuart and I did manage to sort the materials on the floor into two different piles—from which the materials for a two-volume collection were to be selected, with one volume focusing on questions of class and another on something provisionally called "questions of identity." Unfortunately, although our discussions of this project continued for a while, other priorities intervened, things were removed from each pile for cannibalization by other, ongoing work, and the rationale for the division between the two piles began to feel unsatisfactory to Stuart. So, like many of the other attempts to collect up his work for publication (which followed at regular intervals over the years, as detailed below), the sands of time gradually disaggregated the project.

A few years later, in the early 1990s, I met the Taiwanese scholar Kuan-Hsing Chen. As a graduate student at the University of Iowa when Stuart was a visiting professor there in 1985, Chen had persuaded him to cooperate in the production of a special issue of the *Journal of Communication Inquiry* (vol. 10, no. 2) published in 1986, which combined both previously unpublished material by Stuart (including “Post-Modernism and Articulation,” “The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees,” and “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity”) and commentary on his work by others. However, that special issue only ever had limited circulation; Chen and I then persuaded Stuart to allow us to put together an expanded version of that collection under the title *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. When it was launched in 1996, simultaneously in London and in Tokyo (with British Council support, that august institution having realized that Cultural Studies was one of the most viable cultural exports the UK could offer), it was the first substantial collection to include a spread of Stuart’s own published work alongside a set of critical commentaries. Naturally, the selection of pieces for the collection was conducted in close collaboration with Stuart, and the publication, building on the editorial work that Chen had performed in putting together that special issue, laid the foundations for the collection you have before you.⁴³

By the late 1990s, after Sage had begun to publish much of the work that Stuart and his colleagues were by then writing at the Open University, he was in negotiation with them to produce an edited collection of his work and then, separately, about their plans for a four-volume collection of critical commentary. Ultimately both of these projects ran into the ground, largely as a result of his unwillingness to prioritize that kind of self-curatorial work over the more pressing demands of his ongoing involvement in questions of public policy and politics in relation to multiculturalism and questions of identity and diaspora, and in contesting the damaging effects of the continuing hegemony of neoliberalism in the United Kingdom. Besides, there was also the matter of his own ambivalence about the retrospective status of his essays—which were, in fact, always produced for a particular occasion, in a specific context, rather than representing any kind of eternal truths. As he once put it to me in correspondence about yet another inconclusive proposal to collect his work for publication, “I just don’t write the kind of academic article which is easily canonisable.”⁴⁴ He always said that, as they were always written in and for a specific context, were he to republish any of his older essays, it would require a great deal of time and work for him to

update them, so as to recontextualize them in relation to the new conjunctures in which they would appear. The corollary, though, was that the longer they were left, the more time (increasingly precious, once his activities were also limited by long-term health issues) he felt he would have had to give to the process of preparing them for republication.

In fact, after the publication of *Critical Dialogues* in 1996, the first collections to appear that were entirely devoted to his own essays did so in Brazil and Finland, following his influential lecture tours in both countries. In both cases, Stuart and I discussed attempting some form of reverse engineering, which would have then made these collections available in English-language editions. Evidently, the circuitousness of that (hypothetical) process would have offered a curious echo of the history of Stuart's own diasporic journey from the imperial margins to the center. However, for all the reasons indicated above, neither of those collections ever quite made it into English.⁴⁵

The Difficulty of Concluding . . .

In 2010, fourteen years after the appearance of *Critical Dialogues*, on returning from a visit to Beijing organized by scholars keen to introduce Cultural Studies into China, I reported to Stuart how very much enthusiasm there was there for a collection of his essays to be translated into Chinese.⁴⁶ On that basis, I showed Stuart the list of his essays that our Chinese colleagues already had in hand and he invited me to help him select which ones from that list he would want them to include or exclude and which others he should add to the list from his own files. At that point, Stuart produced a provisional "long list" of around seventy essays that he had already compiled (with help from Nick Beech) for consideration as the basis of a potential English-language collection. Naturally enough, this was a complex business, as it involved marrying up the candidate essays identified in these different lists and attempting to put together a selection short enough to be viable for a potential publisher but substantial enough to satisfy Stuart that all his most important concerns had been included. Of course, while he found that this process made for an interesting dialogue, which gave him a good opportunity to review older work in the light of new developments and to rediscover some things that had been lost, it was nonetheless never a priority for him.

The production of an essay such as the *Soundings* manifesto on neoliberalism, on which he was still working in his last months, was always more attractive to him than carving out a definitive version of anything older. In

fact, that very same predisposition also came into play in another way in those final months, when as mentioned earlier the International Communications Association (ICA) wanted to nominate him for the lifetime achievement award. Naturally enough, Stuart was honored by the invitation. But when he discovered that the terms of reference required the nominee to demonstrate that they had “definitively solved an identifiable problem in communications research,” he chuckled, declaring that he couldn’t possibly accept the nomination, insofar as solving preestablished problems had never been something that interested him, as opposed to deconstructing their changing nature and/or reformulating the questions we might ask about them. Indeed, he saw the terms of reference of this award as representing almost a direct antithesis to the pattern of his own working career—in which he always felt most comfortable opening up theoretical problems in one field and then moving on, leaving others to pursue, in their own ways, the issues he had raised. Happily, the ICA so much wanted to be able to give him the award that they changed their terms of reference accordingly, although Stuart’s declining health meant that he was unable to travel to receive the award in person.⁴⁷

Stuart was thus always more interested, right to the end, in what he might be able to say that would speak to the changing circumstances of the day, rather than in perfecting a selection of his work for the historical record: a task which, in any case, must inevitably have also involved the unnerving recognition that he was being asked, in effect, to help engrave his own intellectual tombstone. For these reasons, the selection remained unfinished at his death. We continued to discuss the project whenever I visited him and we corresponded about it—exchanging possible lists, adding things here, subtracting them elsewhere—right up until the summer of 2013, beyond which point ill health made it impossible for him to concentrate sufficiently to pursue the project further. However, what this means is that the selection presented here is not simply mine—with whatever intellectual justifications I might adduce for its nature—but is, in fact, one that comes with Stuart’s own imprimatur in its overall shaping, if not in its final detail. That is why I have thought it worthwhile to present this micronarrative of how the book was shaped in our dialogues rather than presenting it in abstract intellectual terms or claiming that these particular choices were somehow inevitable or unarguable.

The Logics of Presentation: Innovations and Continuities

The presentation of the essays here is fairly simple: evidently, many of them cross boundaries and articulate a wide range of complex issues in different ways. To that extent, any principle of division by subject or topic is bound to appear simplistic. My main ambition has been to give a reasonably balanced presentation of Stuart's work in each of the main fields in which, at different points in his career, he was active.

The key editorial task has been to try and square the circle of making the selection comprehensive enough to represent the full range of Stuart's interests and achievements, while restricting it to an overall length that made it manageable as a publishable project. The material in the two volumes combined runs to approximately 300,000 words—which was clearly beyond the manageable contents for a single book. The key decision was then how best to divide the materials between the two volumes. The main organizing principle adopted, for heuristic reasons, has been a chronological one. Volume 1 concentrates, on the whole, on the products of the earlier parts of Stuart's career; volume 2, on the later work.

Thus we begin this volume with a section on "Cultural Studies: Culture, Class, and Theory," featuring some of the foundational essays in which he first laid out the debates concerning the initial paradigms—and later reviewed the legacies—of what came to be known (through the process of its internationalization) as the "Birmingham School" of Cultural Studies. We move on through "Theoretical and Methodological Principles" with its particular focus on questions of class, Marxism, articulation, and determination, including an important early essay on the articulation of questions of race and class, to focusing on the work from the late 1970s and 1980s on questions of "Media, Communications, Ideology, and Representation." We then turn to matters of "Political Formations: Power as Process," featuring essays in which Stuart outlines the elements of his theorization of popular culture, populist politics, and the dynamics of hegemony.

VOLUME 2, *IDENTITY AND DIASPORA*, begins with a prologue in which Stuart's essay on Antonio Gramsci's relevance to the study of race and ethnicity sets the theoretical framework for much of the contents of the volume. The volume presents the work of the period from the late 1980s onward, in which Stuart began to reconceptualize the dynamics of racial and ethnic

politics in the context of debates about multiculturalism. This is followed by attention to “The Postcolonial and the Diasporic” and a collection of interviews and reflections in which he presents succinct conversational summaries of his perspective on these matters. The book is then concluded by an epilogue in which Stuart offers his responses to the various perspectives on his work presented at a conference in his honor held at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica, in 2004.

Within each section, the material is presented in broadly chronological sequence, although the logic of exposition of the arguments precludes a strict adherence to the historical sequence of authorship. More importantly, I have also been at pains to make clear the strong continuities that run throughout the work over the whole period. Thus, important aspects of Stuart’s later work on the “New (Post-Fordist) Times” of the 1980s can be seen to be foreshadowed in some of his early and prescient observations on consumer culture and its effects on the preexisting class structure and on the traditional labor movement. In “A Sense of Classlessness” (1958) Stuart had already recognized that the decline of the old manufacturing industries was associated with a transformed consumer culture, with a new range of domestic interests—in homemaking and interior decoration, for example—and with a whole host of new spending habits, involving cultural shifts in “attitudes to things and people, whereby possessions such as a new car, a new house[,] . . . a TV set” acquire quite new symbolic meanings.⁴⁸

Naturally, this approach was cause for consternation among those of a more conventionally Marxist orientation. Colin Sparks complained that the demotion of class from its position as the “ultimate cause” and source of final determinations was a “crippling incapacity” of the more populist forms of Cultural Studies.⁴⁹ However, far from being unaware of this danger, in a later interview (1996) Stuart explicitly bemoaned the fact that class had subsequently fallen off the agenda of Cultural Studies. As he put it, “In the early days, perhaps we spoke too much about the working class and subcultures. Now, nobody talks about that at all: they talk about myself, my mother, my father, my friends, and that is a very narrow experience in relation to classes.”⁵⁰ Of course, for Stuart, any return to the question of class could not simply go back to the classical Marxist perspective that Sparks invoked; it needed to be handled so as to articulate the analysis of social classes, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, nation and global capital, into a forceful explanatory framework adequate for the analysis of our contemporary situation.

Even in the earliest work on class (and classlessness) we already see Stuart struggling to formulate adequate forms of periodization: “Where does the ‘old’ end, where does the ‘new’—the real, not the superficially new—begin, in this maze of gradual accommodations?” This concern is driven by an attempt to identify the significantly novel aspects of the New Times of the day, while nonetheless recognizing that one or another form of newness is, by definition, a historical constant. Here we already find him asserting the urgent need for a revisionist form of Marxism that would “give a different weight . . . to questions of superstructure than we would imagine simply from a study of *Capital*.”⁵¹ Such an approach would, in particular, reject any “simplistic economic determinist reading of the conventional model of base and superstructure.”⁵² In “The Hippies: An American Moment” (1968) we find him distilling from the alternative lifestyles of that “progressive” culture an important part of the genesis of the individualist consumerist cultures that reemerge in quite different—and politically regressive—forms in the “me-decade” of the 1980s, themes revisited in his later work on the politics of Thatcherism. Thus, to take one emblematic British example, in that later period, Richard Branson transformed himself from his initial status as a cool, schoolboy-hippie entrepreneur into a scion of international capitalism.⁵³ Here Stuart’s prescient analysis chimes with that of Tony Judt, who (several decades later) argued that, in the same process through which the New Left rebelled against both the injustices of capitalism and the constraints of collectivism in the 1960s, simultaneously with the liberatory flowering of a variety of identities, individualism—the assertion of every person’s claim to maximize private freedom and “the unrestrained liberty to express autonomous desires”—became the watchword of the hour. As we have seen in recent years, libertarianism can be articulated just as effectively to a Right as to a Left politics.⁵⁴

If Stuart’s understanding of Gramscian theories of hegemony provides the basis not only for his initial analysis of Thatcherism and its new modes of authoritarian populism but also for his later analysis of the continuities between Thatcherism, New Labor, and the subsequent Conservative/Lib-Dem Coalition government in the UK, Gramsci also provides a crucial theoretical bridge between the politics of class and the politics of race and ethnicity (as demonstrated most vividly in the essay on Gramsci and race that functions as the prologue to volume 2). Further, as John Akomfrah has recently pointed out, the focus on questions of diaspora, migration, and creolization in Stuart’s later work, far from being a sudden disavowal of his Marxism, is

well exemplified in Akomfrah's own *Unfinished Conversation* when Stuart is heard talking on 1960s British radio about the articulation of class with ethnic identities.⁵⁵

The Journey to Rivington Place . . . and Back to *The Popular Arts*

After Stuart's retirement from the Open University, his growing involvement in the Black Arts movement gave him a new lease on intellectual life and he became chair both of the International Institute of Visual Arts (inIVA) and of Autograph ABP—the Association of Black Photographers—and organized their successful joint bid for grant funding. This then provided the possibility to create a secure institutional home for both of them—at the purpose-built Rivington Place Arts Centre in East London, which opened in 2007.⁵⁶

In some quarters, this engagement with aesthetic matters in the Black Arts movement was treated as a new (or even a surprising) development. However, as Stuart explains in the interview in chapter 9 of the succeeding volume, in many ways this simply took him back to his early interest in documentary photography.⁵⁷ Moreover, as made clear in an interview with Colin MacCabe in 2007, so far as he was concerned, he had been involved in arguments about aesthetics for almost fifty years, ever since writing *The Popular Arts* with Paddy Whannel. His aesthetic position was always premised on the notion that deconstructing the claims of high art to monopolize aesthetic value does not in any way involve uncritically celebrating *all* aspects of popular art. For Stuart, the argument about any particular cultural form still has to be evaluative, and the value of any particular manifestation of popular art has to be established by close critical attention. As he scathingly remarks, the kind of “flat populism” that came to prevail in some sections of Cultural Studies (as in the critiques made by Simon Frith and Jon Savage) is no use at all in this endeavor. For him, it remained crucial to be able to make distinctions of value that would enable us to identify (in the example he chooses) precisely why Billie Holiday is far better than other popular singers: because, he explains, her voice can be argued to find a form of expression for a complex range of feelings and experiences toward which others can only gesture. While he is concerned to destabilize the uncritical canonization of the established hierarchies of fine art and to argue for the *potential* value of the popular, the fine-grained process of evaluation of what exactly it is about one piece of art

that makes it better than another remains crucial. As he explains it, what he is interested in is “the decanonization of the (established) categories” alongside the “retention of the critical function.” As always with Stuart, that is a Big Ask. But equally, to return to my earlier comments on his interest in—and commitment to—opening up, rather than closing down, debates, this is also a creative reposing of the questions at stake.⁵⁸

In trying to answer these perennially difficult questions, we shall, of course, badly miss his voice; and perhaps most of all, we shall miss that good-humored chuckle, usually articulated at moments of particularly acute political or intellectual difficulty. Nonetheless, we shall still have the inspiration he provided—and the legacy of the work that he leaves behind—to encourage and stimulate us in our work.

NOTES

- 1 Terry Eagleton, “The Hippest,” *London Review of Books*, March 7, 1996.
- 2 John Akomfrah, *The Stuart Hall Project* and *The Unfinished Conversation*, both produced by Smoking Dogs Films/British Film Institute, 2013. Readers wanting a fuller account of Stuart’s life and work than I can give here could usefully consult any of the following: Geoff Eley, “Obituary of Stuart Hall, 1932 to 2014,” *History Workshop Journal* 79 (2015). Book-length studies are offered by Helen Davies, *Understanding Stuart Hall* (London: Sage, 2004); and James Procter, *Stuart Hall* (London: Routledge, 2004). There is also Chris Rojek, *Stuart Hall* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), although Stuart himself regarded this last as rather ill-considered; see also the review by Bill Schwarz, *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (2006).
- 3 Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: HarperCollins, 1998).
- 4 In an ironic role reversal, in recent years, some members of that generation of Commonwealth migrants have themselves been resentful of the claims on UK resources now made by Eastern European migrants.
- 5 Stuart Hall quoted by Ben Carrington, in his contribution to the discussion of “Thinking It Forward” at the Policing the Crises conference held at Barnard College/Stonybrook University/Columbia University, New York, September 24–26, 2015.
- 6 Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global,” in *Culture Globalisation and the World System*, ed. Anthony King (London: Macmillan, 1991).
- 7 See below and *Essential Essays, Volume 2* on Stuart’s participation in a variety of policy-review processes, including his role in the “Runnymede Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain” in 1997. The commission was set up by the Runnymede Trust under the chairmanship of Professor Bhikhu Parekh in 1997 and its *Official Report* was published by Profile Books in 2000.

- 8 See his comments on these issues in the talk given at the Illinois conference on Cultural Studies: ch. 3, below.
- 9 This predilection is also reflected in the work of some of Stuart's foremost students: thus Dick Hebdige begins his *Hiding in the Light* with a quote from the quintessentially English poet William Blake, to the effect that "To Generalise is to be an Idiot. To Particularise is the Alone distinction of Merit. General Knowledges are the Knowledges that Idiots possess." Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light* (London: Comedia/Routledge, 1986).
- 10 Hall in Akomfrah, *The Stuart Hall Project*.
- 11 Arjun Appadurai's comments on the crucial role of the media in forming what he calls "the migrant imagination": *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
- 12 Here I draw on David Morley and Bill Schwarz, "Obituary of Stuart Hall," *Guardian*, February 11, 2014.
- 13 Hall in Akomfrah, *The Stuart Hall Project*.
- 14 Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves," in *Identity: The Real Me*, ed. Lisa Appignanesi, ICA Documents, no. 6 (London: ICA, 1987), 44.
- 15 In reminiscing about that experience, Stuart once observed that among that group, Perry Anderson was probably the only British person and that, anyway, he was partly Irish.
- 16 Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 234. For further development of these arguments, see Hall, *Essential Essays, Volume 2*, ch. 5, "The West and the Rest."
- 17 For Stuart's own retrospective view of those New Left years, see his "Life and Times of the New Left," *New Left Review* 2, no. 61 (2010). The phrase "Non-Aligned Movement" first came into usage in United Nations debates in the early 1950s as non-aligned nations began to search for a way to escape the bipolar politics of the Cold War. Following the Bandung Conference in Indonesia, the Non-Aligned Movement was formally established under the leadership of politicians including President Sukharno of Indonesia, Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia, President Nehru of India, and President Nasser of Egypt, to create a new, independent political space between the American and Soviet spheres.
- 18 Interview with Laurie Taylor, "Deeply Disillusioned but Not without Hope," *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, March 3, 2006.
- 19 As one of his many ex-students, I can testify that he was, indeed, uniquely gifted in that role.
- 20 David Scott, *Stuart Hall's Voice: Intimations of an Ethics of Receptive Generosity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 21, 5.
- 21 Scott, *Stuart Hall's Voice*, 5, 14, 17.
- 22 Studs Terkel, *American Dreams* (New York: Ballantine, 1985) and his *And They All Sang* (London: Granta, 2006); Svetlana Alexievich, *Second-Hand Time* (London: Fitzcarraldo, 2016). In this context Les Back's interview with Stuart in *Essential*

Essays, Volume 2 should be seen within the frame set by Back's own work in *The Art of Listening* (London: Berg, 2007).

- 23 See the comments in my and Bill Schwarz's obituary of Stuart on his principled willingness to be tough in arguing a difficult case, whenever necessary, against a position he thought to be politically dangerous: Morley and Schwarz, "Obituary of Stuart Hall."
- 24 In summer 2013 Isaac Julien orchestrated (and filmed) an event under that title, at which Stuart and others posed critical questions to the Marxist theorist David Harvey at the Hayward Gallery in London. The filmed version of this event was incorporated into Isaac Julien's two-screen videowork *Kapital* (2014): <https://www.isaacjulien.com/projects/Kapital>.
- 25 In this encounter Stuart vividly embodies Clifford Geertz's injunction about our responsibility as intellectuals to vex each other ever more precisely in search of truth and understanding.
- 26 Although the qualities of his spoken voice cannot, by definition, be captured in print, the epilogue to *Essential Essays, Volume 2*, "Through the Prism of an Intellectual Life," perhaps comes closest to capturing this quality of Stuart extemporizing, on the wing.
- 27 Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (London: Hutchinson, 1964; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).
- 28 See ch. 4 in this volume. On being offered a professorship in sociology at the Open University in 1980 he declared that he was very happy to accept, now that the discipline was less sure of its identity.
- 29 For an economically explicit formulation of these issues, see Stuart Hall's early essay "A World at One with Itself," *New Society* 403 (1970).
- 30 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Scope of Anthropology* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967); Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Fontana, 1976).
- 31 Geoff Eley, private communication, for access to which I am indebted to Bill Schwarz.
- 32 For invidious examples of this kind of misinterpretation of Stuart's work, see Simon Frith, "The Good, the Bad and the Indifferent: Defending Popular Culture from the Populists," *Diacritics* 21, no. 4 (1991); and Simon Frith and Jon Savage, "Pearls and Swine: The Intellectuals and Mass Media," *New Left Review* 1, no. 198 (1993).
- 33 Hall, interview with Laurie Taylor, "Thinking Allowed," BBC Radio 4, rebroadcast in a memorial edition of the program, February 13, 2014.
- 34 In this respect, Stuart's approach was close to that of John Mepham, whose article "The Theory of Ideology in *Capital*," *Radical Philosophy* 2 (1972), provided him with a useful correlative in the development of his own perspective. See Stuart Hall, "A Reading of Marx's '1857 Introduction' to the *Grundrisse*"; and also the discussion of these issues in the introduction to part II below.
- 35 Stuart Hall, "Racism and Reaction," in *Five Views of Multiracial Britain*, ed. D. J. Twitchin (London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1978).

- 36 Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Hall, “The Great Moving Right Show,” chs. 12 and 13 below.
- 37 See the discussion in the introduction to part IV below, and in particular Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, “Tony Blair: The Greatest Tory since Margaret Thatcher,” *Observer*, April 14, 1997.
- 38 Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey, and Michael Rustin, eds., *After Neoliberalism: The Kilburn Manifesto, Soundings* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2015).
- 39 David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, introduction to David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996).
- 40 However, one might say that the academic circumstances of universities in the contemporary West unfortunately now work to encourage young scholars toward exactly this kind of exaggeration of the novelty of their latest intellectual breakthrough, in order to enhance their own profile relative to others and thus generate funding and prestige.
- 41 The full list of these can be found among the entries in Nick Beech’s comprehensive bibliography of Stuart’s published work in print and in audiovisual form, produced in 2015.
- 42 Comedia Publishing, which existed as an independent company from 1979 to 1986 and was then sold to Routledge, with the Comedia series then continuing as a Routledge imprint over the subsequent thirty years.
- 43 Thus, among the essays that now appear here, *Critical Dialogues* included not only all three of Stuart’s papers listed above but also his overview of the relation between the British and American versions of Cultural Studies reprinted here as ch. 3. Furthermore, it included a raft of what was at that time his most recent work on questions of race, ethnicity, and identity, including “New Ethnicities” (included here in a later, expanded version) and “What Is This ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?” (see *Essential Essays, Volume 2*, chs. 2 and 3). The volume also included a slightly longer version of the interview conducted with Stuart by Kuan-Hsing Chen, “The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,” which comprises ch. 6 of *Essential Essays, Volume 2*.
- 44 Private communication, June 1999. Evidently, given that so many of his essays have, in fact, become canonical in different fields, he was wrong about that, at least in one sense. But just how happy he would have been with their variously recontextualized interpretations (my own included) necessarily remains a moot point.
- 45 Following Stuart’s lecture visit to Brazil, Liv Sovik produced a collection in Portuguese titled *Stuart Hall: Pensando a diáspora: Etnia, mídia, cultura* (Belo Horizonte, Brazil: Editoria UFMG, 2001). The contents were “The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual”; “When Was the Postcolonial?”; “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity”; “For Allon White: Metaphors of Transformation”; “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular”; “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies”; “Encoding/Decoding”; “What Is This ‘Black’ in Black

- Popular Culture”; “Thinking the Diaspora”; “Cultural Studies—Two Paradigms”; “Signification, Representation, Ideology”; “The Multicultural Question”; “Reflections on the Encoding/Decoding Model”; and “The Problem of Ideology.” A year later, Mikko Lehtonen and Juha Herkman at the University of Tampere produced a Finnish collection of Stuart’s essays under the title *Stuart Hall: Identiteetti*, published by Vastapaino, Tampere, in 2002. Its contents were “Minimal Selves”; “The Question of Cultural Identity”; “The West and the Rest”; “The Spectacle of the Other”; “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”; “Who Needs Identity?”; “New Cultures for Old”; and “The Multicultural Question.”
- 46 That project, initiated by Professor Zhuoyue Huang and his colleagues at Beijing Language and Culture University, with China Social Sciences Press, has sadly suffered many subsequent delays as a result of the complexities of university publishing in China and remains incomplete as I write in November 2017.
 - 47 The ICA granted the Steven H. Chaffee Career Achievement Award to Stuart posthumously, in 2014.
 - 48 Stuart Hall, “A Sense of Classlessness,” *Universities and Left Review* 5 (1958): 26. For an interesting parallel analysis of the cultural dimensions of postwar consumer culture in another context, see Shunya Yoshimi on the symbolism of the fridge, the car, and the washing machine in postwar Japan in his “Made in Japan,” *Media, Culture and Society* 21, no. 2 (1999).
 - 49 Colin Sparks, “Experience, Ideology and Articulation: Stuart Hall and the Development of Culture,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 85.
 - 50 Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and the Politics of Internationalisation,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996).
 - 51 Hall, “Sense of Classlessness,” 26.
 - 52 See Stuart’s later essays on these themes in the collections from the Communist University of London in the late 1970s—e.g., “Rethinking the ‘Base and Superstructure’ Metaphor” (1977), reprinted here as ch. 5; and his “The Political and the Economic in Marx’s Theory of Classes,” in *Class and Class Structure*, ed. Alan Hunt (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978).
 - 53 Stuart Hall, “The Hippies: An American Moment,” Birmingham University, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Paper, 1968; reprinted in *Student Power*, ed. Julian Nagel (London: Merlin, 1969).
 - 54 Tony Judt, quoted in George Monbiot, “Labor Can Still Survive, but Only If It Abandons Hope of Governing Alone,” *Guardian*, July 6, 2016.
 - 55 And see John Akomfrah, “The Partisan’s Prophecy: *Handsworth Songs* and Its Silent Partners,” in *Stuart Hall: Conversations, Projects and Legacies*, ed. Julian Henriques and David Morley with Vana Goblot (London: Goldsmiths, 2018).
 - 56 The securing of this funding, in which Stuart played a leading role, was an enormously significant achievement, as this was the first publicly funded new-build international arts gallery to open in London since the Hayward Gallery forty years earlier.

- 57 As outlined in his essay on “The Social Eye of *Picture Post*,” *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 2 (1972).
- 58 Colin MacCabe, “Interview with Stuart Hall”; republished as Colin MacCabe, “Stuart Hall—Some Personal Memories,” *Critical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2015).

Culture, Class, and Theory

This part begins with Stuart's retrospective assessment of the profound role played by Richard Hoggart's work (and in particular *The Uses of Literacy*, which appeared in 1957) in opening up the terrain of Cultural Studies and laying the ground for much of what followed. By the time the article was written in 2007 there was much talk of the "cultural turn" in the social sciences, noted earlier. However, little of that was as generous as Stuart is here in recognizing the crucial role played by the early work of Hoggart and Raymond Williams in enabling this development. In acknowledging what Cultural Studies learned from and owed to their work, not least methodologically, Stuart begins, as so often, by locating its emergence within a particular conjuncture. His periodization sets the roots of Cultural Studies in Britain in the wider frame of the post-World War II emergence of relatively affluent social democracies in Europe. Thus, the emergence of Cultural Studies in Britain also marks the moment when the idea of a consumer-driven "affluent society" emerged, to use the phrase popularized by J. K. Galbraith in the US and later taken up by the sociologists John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood in their influential study of the new figure of the "affluent worker" in Britain, who was thought by some to herald the arrival of a (relatively) classless society.¹

Within the broader international perspective, Stuart always located 1956 as a key historical date for him—when the various crises of the old imperial structures were dramatized, as the Russian tanks rolled into Budapest

to quell the rebellion and a Franco-British force invaded Egypt to resist President Nasser's claims on the Suez Canal (the "windpipe of the British Empire," as a contemporary phrase had it). The significance of that internationalist moment for Stuart has been widely remarked—and rightly so, as we shall see, for much of his later concerns with questions of postcolonialism and diaspora can be traced back to the early 1950s. However, in this chapter Stuart is more concerned to recognize, on the domestic front, the significance of the particular transformations in Britain's national culture.²

Stuart demonstrates how much Hoggart's book belonged to the opening of a new conjuncture, which would ultimately lead to the emergence of postindustrial class structures, based on corporate capital, money, celebrity, lifestyle, hedonism, and consumption.³ Here he traces the debate about affluence back to the 1950s, noting that as early as 1959 the Labour Party leader Hugh Gaitskell questioned whether, as a political force, Labour could possibly survive "the coming of the car, the telly, the washing machine and the fridge."⁴ This comment itself shows what very long historical roots Tony Blair's New Labour strategies of the 1990s had in relation to the emerging forms of aspirational consumer culture that Hoggart was already addressing in the 1950s.

In this retrospective assessment of Hoggart's contribution to the field, Stuart notes how very much of Cultural Studies' later critique of simplistic Marxism (especially the dismissal of working-class cultures as being marred by "false consciousness") is rooted in Hoggart's insistence that such cultures, however flawed, have their own internal logics. As he points out, this means that the cultural industries cannot be assumed to have automatic effects—as their audiences bring cultures and values of their own to the moment of consumption. Here we can already glimpse part of the foundations of Hall's later model of "negotiated" decoding in relation to the media (a topic to which we shall return in part III). As he suggests, Hoggart's analysis also recognizes that the newly emerging forms of mass culture can only be consequential insofar as they successfully address themselves to—and find some genuine response among—the popular classes. We can also see here parallels with Hall's analysis not only of the functioning of ideologies in general but of the specific reasons for the success of Thatcherism's authoritarian populism (see part IV). For all these reasons Stuart insists that Hoggart's book constituted a "text of the break," which, despite its conservative narrative of cultural decline, simultaneously offered valuable methodological and theoretical insights into questions of cultural power.

From this retrospect on the emergence of Cultural Studies in Britain in the 1950s, we move in chapter 2 to the later 1980s moment when that initial version of Cultural Studies, with its stress on the experiential dimensions of everyday cultures, itself came under critique. In the interview with David Scott included in volume 2 (chapter 8) we find Stuart at pains to stress how very much his own early work owed not only to Hoggart but also to Raymond Williams; he stresses Williams's crucial role in the formulation of a cultural politics that granted culture a constitutive function, beyond the subordinate and dependent status attributed to it within classical Marxism. For Stuart, this expanded concept of culture and politics, derived in substantial part from Williams, was a critical stage in the development of Cultural Studies, even if it later became necessary to move beyond it.⁵

Thus "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms" begins by making an inventory of the qualities of the Cultural Studies' perspective initially developed by Hoggart and Williams. Stuart offers a careful detailing of the innovations offered in their work (and in parallel, that of the historian E. P. Thompson) in opening up a more serious appreciation of the importance of cultural processes. As he observes, from a methodological point of view this also involves an important innovation in the use of a documentary, descriptive, and anthropological (or ethnographic) perspective on popular cultures and the "structures of feeling" (in Williams's phrase) by which they can be characterized. In an important move, to which we shall return in later sections, he also details the specific contribution made by these early Cultural Studies authors in dislodging the fundamentalist Marxist model of base and superstructure and in developing more complex notions of determination, which allow for ideological superstructures to play more than a residual or reflective role.

However, by the 1980s, the intellectual hegemony of this early form of "culturalism" came under severe challenge with the emergence of structuralist paradigms. These perspectives followed Lévi-Strauss in taking many dimensions of social, cultural, and economic life to be "structured like a language" and, to that extent, they decentered the role of individual agency and experience—to which Hoggart, Williams, and Thompson had given such emphasis, as the source (and guarantor) of authenticity. From the point of view of these new perspectives, the earlier forms of Cultural Studies were now understood to be limited by their individualist "humanism," and emphasis thus shifted (in some cases, to a gloomily deterministic extent, as Stuart argues near the end of the article) toward the underlying structures that were now seen to shape, or indeed "speak," the subject.⁶

Nonetheless, in a characteristic move that foreshadows the intellectual subtlety he displayed in many subsequent intellectual debates, when confronted by what he regarded as unhelpful binary divisions between opposing paradigms, Stuart observes that there can never be any absolute beginnings or unbroken continuities in the development of intellectual work. His fundamental point is that, at each stage, whether in the emergence of the problematic which distinguished early Cultural Studies from that of the Leavisite cultural debate or that which later distinguished the structuralist from the humanist perspectives, the transcendence is always incomplete, never entirely free from the positions it sought to overturn. In this process the best elements of the previous perspective are often preserved, if in new forms, within the newly emergent paradigm. Stuart was no believer in any kind of simple teleology of intellectual progress, in which the transition from one problematic to another is seen as a simple case of the banishment of error in favor of a steadily emerging new regime of Truth and Light. What he does so effectively here is to outline the strengths and the weaknesses of both the culturalist and structuralist paradigms—and to demonstrate the productivity of working one's way through their contradictions. By this means, he avers, the problems that each paradigm poses to the other allow for the eventual formulation of better questions and clearer—if never complete—understandings of cultural dynamics. What is important, for him, is not to defend either paradigm against the other as a self-sufficient source of final truths, but to recognize that in the tensions between them lies the space where more adequate forms of Cultural Studies can gradually be defined. The intellectual politics of his ongoing commitment to searching through critical dialogue for such provisional truths as can be found, without ever offering guarantees, is one that runs throughout his work in relation to a wide range of substantive topics.

The section concludes as we move forward to 1990, when the future of Cultural Studies was debated at a landmark conference held at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.⁷ By this time, the form of Cultural Studies initially developed as a fragile initiative in a marginal part of one provincial British university had become an exportable phenomenon—and was by then known as the “Birmingham School.” It had achieved considerable success throughout the English-speaking world and had taken off particularly rapidly on American university campuses. For Stuart, this rapid process of the internationalization, institutionalization, and professionalization of Cultural Studies was not simply an index of success but was also, as he described

it, a “moment of profound danger.” It seemed to him that what had been both an intellectual and a political project, designed to produce provisional forms of analysis of a particular situation by means of an ongoing dialogic process, was being converted into a decontextualized (and effectively depoliticized) form of abstracted cultural theory.

One key part of his argument, in trying to dislodge the emerging, triumphalist Grand (Theoretical) Narrative of this fast-developing field, was to recognize that, rather than developing along any smooth pathway toward a set of revealed truths, the forms of Cultural Studies developed in Birmingham had always themselves been driven by the “theoretical noise” of intense (and often fractious) debate between multiple contestatory discourses. This, he argued, was essential to the intellectual project, which he understood as being founded in a necessarily “agonistic” process of debate, which is fundamentally inimical to the final establishment of any form of intellectual orthodoxy.⁸ To this end, he offers a brief history of how Cultural Studies in Birmingham developed through its critical engagements with a variety of intellectual positions and traditions. Thus, he traces the long engagement of Birmingham’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies with a variety of forms of Marxism (from the New Left to Gramsci), especially with respect to its economic determinism and Eurocentrism; with the emerging forms of feminism and their critique of patriarchy within CCCS itself; and with the further destabilization of Cultural Studies’ initial premises and by the emergence of questions of race and ethnicity.⁹

In tracing these moments in the CCCS’s history, his key point is to insist on a particular methodology for the pursuit of collective intellectual work. For him, the politics of necessarily continuous argument, in which conflicting principles and perspectives need to be debated acutely, can only work if proper attention is paid to the manners of “dialogic critical engagement” so that the participants can work through their differences without, as he graphically puts it, “eating each other.” This is no small matter, nor is it a merely superficial reflection of Stuart’s own impeccably courteous manners whenever engaging in critical debate.¹⁰ In the previous chapter, he talked of the importance of holding on to the productive tension generated by the critical engagement in between culturalism and structuralism. Here, in a parallel form, his argument is for the necessity of holding on to Cultural Studies’ commitments to both theoretical and political questions. When he confesses his astonishment at the “theoretical fluency” of the form of Cultural Studies that he then saw taking off in the North American academy, his

principal complaint is that this abstracted (and heavily “textualized”) form of cultural theory failed to demonstrate the “necessary modesty” of Cultural Studies as a contested, localized, and conjunctural form of knowledge.¹¹

NOTES

- 1 See Stuart Hall, “A Sense of Classlessness,” *Universities and Left Review* 5 (1958); John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1958); John Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechofer, and Jennifer Platt, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
- 2 “56” was such a resonant mnemonic symbol for Stuart that for a long time it featured as part of his email address.
- 3 See Stuart’s commentary on the long-term significance of “The Hippies,” discussed earlier.
- 4 And note here Yoshimi’s work, referenced earlier, on the symbolism of these technologies in Japanese consumer culture.
- 5 For a brief indication of Stuart’s retrospective views of Williams’s importance, see his comments in “The Life of Raymond Williams,” *New Statesman* 137, no. 4885 (February 25, 2008): 62.
- 6 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Scope of Anthropology* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967). For further elucidation of an important stage in this debate, see the collection of essays edited by David Robey, *Structuralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), especially those by Jonathan Culler, “The Linguistic Basis of Structuralism,” and Umberto Eco, “Social Life as a Sign System.”
- 7 The conference was titled “Cultural Studies: Now and in the Future” and was organized by the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in April 1990. The proceedings of the conference were subsequently published in the influential volume edited by Larry Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
- 8 Chantal Mouffe argues for the necessarily “agonistic” form of any truly democratic process in her “Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?” *Social Research* 66, no. 3 (1999) and also *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000). The agonistic perspective seeks to recognize the potentially positive functions of disagreement and debate. It does not assume that the achievement of a static or finalized consensus is the necessary ambition of argument. Rather, it involves a fundamental respect for the contributions of one’s opponents or adversaries and for the productive and generative capacities of the democratic capacities of the democratic process of debate itself.
- 9 For a vivid picture of one contentious moment in this process, see Charlotte Brunsdon, “A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCs,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996).

- 10 See my earlier comments on the particular manner of Stuart's critique of David Harvey's fundamentalist Marxism in "Choreographing Capital."
- 11 It is crucial to note here the serious import of Stuart's claim that, despite his caveats about the limitations of theory, his is not "an anti-theoretical discourse": see ch. 3 below. Rather, as Bill Schwarz argues in an unpublished essay, this is a "philosophical argument about the limits of philosophy." For more on these issues, and on the close parallels between Stuart's position and that of the French philosopher Michel Serres in relation to the question of "theoretical elegance," see David Morley, "The Politics of Theory and Method in Cultural Studies," in *Stuart Hall: Conversations, Projects and Legacies*, ed. Julian Henriques and David Morley with Vana Goblot (London: Goldsmiths, 2018).

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Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, and the Cultural Turn

It is widely recognized that, without Richard Hoggart, there would have been no Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. It isn't always so widely acknowledged that, without *The Uses of Literacy*, there would have been no Cultural Studies. In an early text, I called it one of Cultural Studies' three "founding texts" (Hall 1980), and this is an opportunity to expand further on that judgment. The article therefore offers some reflections on the "moment" of *The Uses of Literacy*—what early Cultural Studies learned from and owed, methodologically, to the book; its connections with wider debates at the time and its formative role in what came to be known as "the cultural turn." The latter phrase is the kind of clumsy abstraction Richard Hoggart would not be caught dead using, and there is no point elaborating on it conceptually here. It simply registers an inescapable fact about what I called the growing "centrality of culture"—the astonishing global expansion and sophistication of the cultural industries; culture's growing significance for all aspects of social and economic life; its reordering effects on a variety of critical and intellectual discourses and disciplines; its emergence as a primary and constitutive category of analysis; and "the way in which culture creeps into every nook and crevice of contemporary social life, creating a proliferation of secondary environments, *mediating everything*" (Hall 1997: 215). This discussion is premised on the assumption that something like a "cultural turn" did indeed occur across Western societies and their fields of knowledge just before and, in the UK, with gathering momentum, immediately

after the Second World War; and that, in its own particular way, *The Uses of Literacy* belongs to that moment, is indeed an early example of it as well as playing a seminal role in producing it.

The project of *The Uses of Literacy*, as we know, was many years in gestation. Originally planned as an analysis of the new forms of mass publishing, the radical innovation represented by Part I—the attempt to contextualize this in a deeper “reading” of the culture of their readers and audiences—was only subsequently put in place. However, by its publication in 1957, its general intention was unmistakable. It attempted to provide a complex answer to the questions: What were the relations between attitudes in the popular papers and magazines and the working-class readers to whom they were typically addressed? More urgently, how were the newer, more commercially driven forms of mass communications changing older working-class attitudes and values? What, in short, were the “uses” to which this new kind of “literacy” was being put?

Note that, in Part I, the term “working-class culture” seems to apply interchangeably to both the typical attitudes, values, and ways of life of working people in the prewar decades and the forms of publication, entertainment, and popular culture that circulated among them. As critics have pointed out, these had very different sources—the latter being produced, not *by* working-class people themselves but by the commercial classes *for* the working classes; and, as Raymond Williams noted in a very early review of *The Uses of Literacy*, “the equation of ‘working-class culture’ with the mass commercial culture which has increasingly dominated our century” produces damaging results (Williams 1957: 30). Nevertheless, Richard Hoggart does assume that a sufficiently close relationship had come to exist between publications and their readers to allow him to represent them as constituting something like “An ‘Older’ Order.” Such a mutually reinforcing relationship could no longer be assumed between the working classes and the new forms of mass culture; and this is the nub of the general judgment on cultural change that the book as a whole finally offers. This disjuncture, compounded by the lack in Part II of a sustained attempt “to describe the quality of ordinary working-class life, so that the closer analysis of publications might be set into a landscape of solid earth and rock and water” (Hoggart 1958: 324), helped to produce the unresolved tension between two very different registers. Hoggart, of course, was fully conscious of this at the time (“two kinds of writing are to be found in the following pages”) and has frequently subsequently acknowledged it (Hoggart 1992), but it nevertheless had its determinate effects.

In comparison with the many simplistic, reductive, nostalgic, or empiricist accounts on offer, there is a complex and richly nuanced conception of cultural change at work here. The argument is not driven by simple oppositions between old/new, organic/inorganic, elite/mass, good/bad. He was aware of the unsystematic nature of the “evidence,” sensitive to the temptations to nostalgia: “I am from the working classes . . . this very emotional involvement presents considerable dangers” (Hoggart 1958: 17). He does not underplay the impact of growing affluence nor exaggerate the pace and degree of change. The language is carefully modulated in relation to the thesis of cultural decline: “The persistence in so strong a measure of older forms of speech does not indicate a powerful and vibrant continuance of an older tradition, but the tradition is not altogether dead. It is harked back to, leaned upon as a fixed and still largely trustworthy reference in a world now difficult to understand” (Hoggart 1958: 28). And: “Attitudes alter more slowly than we always realize” (Hoggart 1958: 13). Nevertheless, the overall drift of the diagnosis cannot be doubted:

My argument is not that there was in England one generation ago, an urban culture still very much “of the people” and that now there is only a mass urban culture. It is rather that the appeals made by mass publicists are for a number of reasons made more insistently, effectively, and in a more comprehensive and centralised form than they were earlier; that we are moving towards the creation of a mass culture . . . and that the new mass culture is in some important ways less healthy than the often crude culture it is replacing. (Hoggart 1958: 24)

Diagnosis is a useful term here—the word “healthy” is telling—since it reminds us of what this conclusion owed to, and how much it was influenced by, the cultural critique offered by the Leavises and *Scrutiny*: the embattled position adopted in F. R. Leavis’s own cultural writing; the narrative of decline at the heart of Q. D. Leavis’s influential *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932); the strenuous program of cultural resistance that informed *Scrutiny*’s educational project and manifestos like *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (Leavis 1930); and the critique of the debased language of advertising offered by Denys Thompson and others. The book also shared much common ground with the pessimistic critique of mass culture offered by conservative critics and writers, many of them American (quotations from Tocqueville, Arnold, Benda, Lawrence, Eliot, Yeats, etc. lend authority to the narrative of cultural decline). Mulhern, in his sustained assault on Cultural Studies in all

its manifestations, is at pains to show that, however much anyone—apart from Raymond Williams—struggled to break free from what he calls this metacultural discourse of “Kulturkritik,” they were doomed to repeat it: while acknowledging that Hoggart made serious efforts to counter this tendency, Mulhern insists that his “discursive affiliation” with this tradition remains intact (Mulhern 2000).

However, as Mulhern himself acknowledges, “Genealogy is not destiny” (Mulhern 2000: 174). Leaving aside the assumption that governs Mulhern’s discourse—namely, that an alternative cultural theory was already available, in a complex Marxism already wise to its own tendency to reductionism—what seems more interesting is to note the ways *The Uses of Literacy*, in trying to break from this master discourse of cultural decline, was precisely “a text of the break” (as Mulhern recognizes Raymond Williams’s *The Long Revolution* also was): and for that very reason opened possibilities that Cultural Studies and “the cultural turn” were subsequently to build on.

The dominant *Scrutiny* narrative was constructed on the back of an unspoken assumption about the limited cultural resources and restricted moral universe of working-class readers and audiences. Only *Scrutiny*’s “saving remnant,” whose sensibilities had been refined by a long cohabitation with the authority that the literary tradition offered, and whose moral backbone had been stiffened by strenuous and sustained critical engagement with lit. crit. (“This is so, is it not?”), offered a site of resistance to the mass appeals and blandishments of the new, debased culture. Hoggart’s account is aware of the limitations of that starting point. “I am inclined to think that books on popular culture often lose some of their force by not making sufficiently clear what is meant by ‘the people,’ by inadequately relating their examination of particular aspects of ‘the people’s’ life to the wider life they live, and to the attitudes they bring to their entertainments.” Even George Orwell, whose studies on popular culture were in some ways paradigmatic, “never quite lost the habit of seeing the working class through the cosy fug of an Edwardian music hall” (Hoggart 1958: 9, 15).

On the contrary, the implied argument here runs, working-class audiences are not empty vessels, on which the middle classes and the mass media can project, *tabula rasa*, whatever they want. They are not simply the products of “false consciousness” or “cultural dopes” (Hall 1981). They have a “culture” of their own which, though it may lack the authority afforded by the literary tradition, and is certainly not unified, is in its own way just as dense, complex, and richly articulated, morally, as that of the educated classes. It follows that

the effects of cultural products cannot be “read off” or inferred from the contents of what is produced for them to consume because, to have “effects” of any depth, they must enter into and be in active negotiation with an already fully elaborated cultural world. Reading, in this sense, is always a cultural practice. If the “older” popular culture, however commercially organized and crude in its appeals, seemed less of an “assault from the outside,” this was not because it was an authentic product of that culture, but because it was closer to—mirrored more faithfully or, better, worked more “authentically” along the groove of—the habits, attitudes, and unspoken assumptions of its working-class audience, and had more fully “indigenized” itself, by long cohabitation, as it were, within the complex history of the formations of an urban-industrial corporate class. If the new forms of mass culture were effecting change, it could only be because they too addressed themselves to the lived textures and complex attitudes of the culture in which they sought to embed themselves, working along its grooves, while at the same time inflecting and disconnecting them, dislodging them from within and attaching them to new modes of feeling, habits, and judgments—“unbending the springs of action.”

It is pertinent to ask, then, not only how much it owed to and derived from the discourse of “Kulturkritik” but how far and in what significant ways did it *break with* that discourse? What were the methodological and conceptual innovations implicit in its practice of writing and thinking on which new directions could be built? One can list them without elaboration. A very different conception of “culture” is at work here from that which animates the tradition of Kulturkritik. By “culture,” Hoggart meant how working-class people spoke and thought, what language and common assumptions about life they shared, in speech and action, what social attitudes informed their daily practice, what moral categories they deployed, even if only aphoristically, to make judgments about their own behavior and that of others—including, of course, how they brought all this to bear on what they read, saw, and sang. This view of culture as the practices of “making sense” was very far removed indeed from “culture” as the ideal court of judgment, whose touchstone was “the best that has been thought and said,” which animated the tradition from Arnold to Eliot and Leavis. The aim to make culture in the former sense a central and necessary part of the object of study, however fitfully achieved, was as defining a break as Williams’s third definition in *The Long Revolution*—culture as “ways of life”—and, moreover, despite significant differences, a break *moving in a parallel direction*. This was a formative moment for Cultural Studies.

Second, there was the insistence that “ways of life” had to be studied in and for themselves, as a necessary contextualizing of any attempt to understand cultural change, and not inferred from textual analysis alone. We may call this the social imperative at the heart of Hoggart’s method; and from such origins the *interdisciplinary* character of Cultural Studies (which has since been somewhat obscured by the humanities deluge) derived. Third, there was the emphasis on culture as primarily a matter of *meaning*: not meanings as free-floating ideas or as ideals embodied in texts but as part of lived experience, shaping social practice: analysis as “the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life” (Williams 1965: 57). Fourth, there was the methodological innovation evidenced in Hoggart’s adaptation of the literary-critical method of “close reading” to the sociological task of interpreting the lived meanings of a culture. One says “sociological,” but clearly something more innovative than standard empirical sociological methods was required—nothing less than a kind of “social hermeneutics” is implied in these interpretive procedures: “we have to try to see beyond the habits to what the habits stand for, to see through the statements to what the statements really mean (which may be the opposite of the statements themselves) to detect the differing pressures of emotion behind idiomatic phrases and ritualistic observances” (Hoggart 1958: 17). Of course, “reading the culture from inside” was possible for Hoggart as a member of the working class, with rich childhood memories and experiences to draw on. Students trying to follow the book’s methodological imperatives and staff attempting to teach students how to apply them to a piece of work—things that the establishment of “a center” required—were not so fortunate and required more stringent protocols. In its earliest days, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies had two working groups: in one, the reading ranged far and wide over “other disciplines”; in the second, Richard Hoggart took students through a close reading of such texts as Blake’s *Tyger*, *Tyger*, the opening of Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers*, Orwell’s *Shooting an Elephant*, Sylvia Plath’s *Daddy*, “reading for tone”—i.e., for implied attitudes to the audience. But these were early days . . .

Much that followed in the evolution of Cultural Studies in the 1970s and 1980s were developments of the mixed and incomplete openings offered by *The Uses of Literacy* as a “text of the break”: resisting its cultural narrative while deepening the epistemological breaks that its methodology exemplified. Many of these leads were not conceptually developed, even in the “Schools of English and Contemporary Society” lecture, which mapped out the Cen-

tre's initial program (Hoggart 1970). When the complaint about "the turn to theory" in Cultural Studies is made, it is difficult to see where else the Centre could have begun other than by deepening these breaks by way of sustained conceptual interrogation and methodological self-reflection—as it were, "working on the work."

Thus, to take some examples: the move to Cultural Studies as a fully interdisciplinary enterprise and the break with "the literary" as its governing discourse was implicit in the injunction to study the society and the culture as "lived" equally with its texts, and was extensively taken up in various ways in the work of the Centre in the 1970s: although nothing took us quite as far as Williams's "the theory of culture as a study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life" (Williams 1965: 63) or, as we tried to translate that in the 1970s, the study of "the cultural" and its relation to other practices in a social formation. The trace of the "literary" remained in Hoggart's close and sensitive attention to language and his insistence (in his inaugural lecture) that popular and mass cultural texts must be understood as functioning "as art—even as *bad* art": a comment which, while not quite bypassing the traditional high/low good/bad categories of the mass culture debate, reinforced attention to language as a cultural model and the symbolic modality in which culture operates. This connects with the persistent return, subsequently, via the dialogue with semiotics, poststructuralism, and theories of discourse, to the necessary "delay through the symbolic" without which all Cultural Studies threatens to become reductionist (Hall 2006). The notion that audiences actively bring something to, rather than simply being spoken by, texts, and that "reading" is an active exchange, was taken up in the critique of the dominant "effects" tradition in mass communications research that organized much of the Centre's early research projects, certainly underpins my own work on the "encoding/decoding model" (Hall 1980), and was revived in the influence of Bakhtin's idea of the dialogic and the "active audience," reader-response, and even the elements of overkill in the so-called "populist" emphases of later work on audiences. The legacy of culture as the interpretive study of meanings embedded in "ways of life" is to be found in the many studies that deployed ethnographic, participant observation and other anthropological techniques of what Geertz called "thick description," and beyond that, to the language of "signifying practices." The view that textual materials have real social effectivity only when they "work along the groove" of existing attitudes and inflect them in new directions contains a model of how social ideologies really achieve their effects much in advance

of existing models of influence, ideological domination, and false consciousness; anticipating much that was to follow in theories of multi-accentuality and transcoding, and the impact on Cultural Studies of the more fully developed Gramscian model of “hegemony” and cultural power as dependent on “the wining of consent”: a very different conception of the popular (see Hall 1981). And so on . . .

The publication of *The Uses of Literacy* had an enormous impact: in part for the intrinsic interest, quality, and originality of its argument, in part because of its bearing on wider discussions about the pace and direction of postwar social change. The growing commercialization of mass culture, the birth of television, youth culture, and the rise of mass consumption were part and parcel of what came to be known as “the affluence debate.” The impact of these forces on the working class had particular resonance for the Labour Party, its electoral prospects, and what Anthony Crosland, in his prophetic book, called *The Future of Socialism*. Was the class basis of Labour’s support being eroded by sociocultural change? True, culture had played a somewhat residual role in Labour thinking. The roots of “Labourism” in the dense, defensive, subaltern, corporate structures of working-class culture had not been the subject of much serious reflection until exposed by the newer class attitudes and values emerging with the onset of commercialization. Hoggart’s book played directly into these anxieties. These fueled the Labour Party’s revisionist debates of the late 1950s, underpinned Mark Abrams’s *Must Labour Lose?*, with its negative assessment of Labour’s prospects in the wake of social change among its heartland class supporters, and was summed up in Gaitskell’s famous 1959 Labour Party Conference speech where he vividly inquired whether Labour as a political force could survive the coming of “the car, the telly, the washing machine and the fridge.” Tony Blair’s “New Labour” and the aspirational culture has long historical antecedents . . .

Richard Hoggart did not directly address these questions and working-class politics did not figure largely in the book. As is well known, Hoggart chose to concentrate on the majority to whom the appeals of the mass publicists were primarily addressed and deliberately downplayed the role of what he called “the purposive, the political, the pious and the self-improving minorities” (Hoggart 1958: 22): contrary to, say, Raymond Williams, who regarded politics as part of the “high working class tradition” and the building of political institutions as among their most outstanding cultural achievements (“an extension of primary values into the social fields” [Williams 1957: 31]). Yet the opening paragraphs show that Hoggart’s argument took its bearings from

the broader debate about postwar affluence and what came to be known as working-class “embourgeoisement”:

It is often said that there are no working classes in England now, that a “bloodless revolution” has taken place which has so reduced social differences that already most of us inhabit an almost flat plain, the plain of the lower middle- to middle-classes. . . . We are likely to be struck by the extent to which working-class people have improved their lot, acquired more power and more possessions . . . no longer feel themselves members of “the lower orders.” (Hoggart 1958: 14)

The conclusion is, of course, measured and complex but unmistakable in its thrust: “We may now see that in at least one sense we are indeed becoming classless. . . . We are becoming culturally classless” (Hoggart 1958: 142). This became a focus of debate in early New Left circles, although what I called “a sense of classlessness” had acquired a wider and more critical meaning (see Hall [1959] and the shocked responses by Samuel [1959] and Thompson [1959]).

The broader connections between Cultural Studies and the “first” New Left have been widely noted (Hall 1989). In particular, the book also had a major impact on the milieu which I inhabited in the period of its publication, principally because, for fortuitous reasons, these concerns—the changing nature of contemporary capitalism, the politics of postwar social change, and the constitutive nature of culture—together formed critical contested ground in the heady debates of the time. A nascent “New Left” had emerged in Oxford as a distinct, informal student formation in the mid-1950s. Its subsequent coalescence with others into a movement was triggered by the events of 1956—the invasion of the Suez Canal by Britain, France, and Israel and the brutal Soviet response to the Hungarian Revolution and their effects in loosening the grip of the Cold War on political debate (Hall 1989).

The publication of *The Uses of Literacy* had a huge impact in these circles. There was a vigorous discussion in progress, among students from a variety of left tendencies in Oxford, about the nature of postwar capitalism, the character of the historic compromise represented by the welfare state, the changing nature of class, the impact of the Cold War, the revival of imperialism, the value of Marxism, and the prospects for the Left in the new historic conditions. Many were also literary critics and familiar with the Leavis/*Scrutiny* argument about mass culture, although the majority had largely rejected both its assumptions about cultural decline and the elitist and the conservative character of its program of cultural resistance. Some people

were already in conversation with Raymond Williams and had read early chapters of *Culture and Society* in draft form. In this milieu, culture came to be seen not as an absolute value but as a constitutive dimension of all social practices and thus an active force in politics and social change: offering what (in the issue of the Labour Club journal, *Clarion*, which I edited [1957] and which was dominated by responses to *The Uses of Literacy*) I called “quite different kinds of evidence” (Hall 1957: 3). All this provided fertile ground for the reception of Hoggart’s book, stimulating fierce debate. The second issue of *Universities and Left Review* (1957), one of the two founding New Left journals that followed, contained a major symposium on *The Uses of Literacy*, including Raymond Williams’s influential review. Hoggart and Williams both contributed essays to subsequent issues and Williams became a leading figure in the New Left.

This debate has been read by its critics as evidence of culture subsuming politics (Mulhern 2000); but this seems a rather perverse finding. It was part of the effort—then no doubt still at a primitive stage—to expand the definition of culture and politics, which came to be distinctive of both the New Left and Cultural Studies: to see culture as one of the constitutive grounds of *all* social practices—including politics—in so far as they are “signifying” (i.e., as they have “relevance for meaning,” as Max Weber once put it). Unless social groups and classes are always already inscribed in political place by “the economic in the last instance” and “wear their political number plates on their backs,” as Nicos Poulantzas once graphically put it, how could the recruitment of social forces to political positions and programs and their mobilization in the contest over power *not* be a political issue? And how could that process occur without “working,” in part, on the constitutive ground of the meanings by which people make sense of their lives? This, Mulhern argues, makes “‘culture’ everything—too excessive, without fixed composition or tendency . . . a heterogeneous mass of possibilities.” Not everything; but *a dimension* of all signifying practices (which of course also have material conditions of existence); and not without “tendencies,” but never finally determined, and thus always open to more than one possibility—and so always with a degree of contingency. The proposition that the “constitutive function” of politics is to “determine the order of social relations as a whole” (Mulhern 2000: 173) only muddies the water.

Richard Hoggart used the term “Americanisation” to connote the wider set of changes that framed his argument. When the New Left came to de-

bate these issues more directly, the US also provided a privileged point of reference—for very good reasons. The commercialization of culture, the new dynamic forms of mass culture—television, pop music, advertising, youth culture—the incorporation of the masses more fully into the market, and the phenomenon of mass consumerism were all to be found there, emerging, in the postwar period, in their strongest contemporary forms. This marked the shift in the index of “leading instance” of advanced industrial capitalist society from Britain to the US. Already, in the 1950s, this looked like setting free explosive new cultural forces, although it is only clear retrospectively how much the book belonged to the opening of a new *conjuncture*.

We cannot discuss this in detail here but we can see the broad contours of this shift much more clearly in retrospect. There was a postwar boom, with rising living standards. The long-term redistributive shift was much more limited than the prophets estimated (though Immanuel Wallerstein is right to argue that it was quite enough to scare capital out of its wits and provoked the great counter-surge of globalization, market forces, the neoliberal revolution, and the “new world order”). In fact, affluence did not represent “classlessness” as such: rather, it marked the early stages of that long transition (not yet completed) from the older, tiered, socially embedded class structures and Protestant ethic typical of Western European bourgeois societies to the more truncated, “post-industrial” class structures, based on corporate capital, money, celebrity lifestyle, hedonism, and consumption. Underlying this was the prolonged shift from nineteenth-century entrepreneurial capitalism, via the apotheosis of the “high noon” of imperialism, the First World War, the failure of the proletarian “moment,” and the interwar Depression, to the great surge of power represented by the concentrations of corporate capitalism, the managerial revolution, and Fordist economies of scale of the late twentieth century. Mass society, mass culture, mass consumerism, and mass markets were integral aspects of this historic shift: precisely how to understand their real interdependencies remains one of Cultural Studies’ unfulfilled tasks—probably lost forever in the hyper-theoretical and post-political climate that came to prevail. Of course, in the immediate decades after *The Uses of Literacy*, the shape of things was to be dominated by the historic compromise of the welfare state and the social-democratic consensus. But by the end of the 1970s—and massively reorganized on a global scale—the forces we were trying to understand began to return to the stage with unstoppable force and did, indeed, change the world.

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Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms

In serious, critical intellectual work, there are no “absolute beginnings” and few unbroken continuities. Neither the endless unwinding of “tradition,” so beloved in the History of Ideas, nor the absolutism of the “epistemological rupture,” punctuating Thought into its “false” and “correct” parts, once favored by the Althusserians, will do. What we find, instead, is an untidy but characteristic unevenness of development. What is important are the significant *breaks*—where old lines of thought are disrupted, older constellations displaced, and elements, old and new, are regrouped around a different set of premises and themes. Changes in a problematic do significantly transform the nature of the questions asked, the forms in which they are proposed, and the manner in which they can be adequately answered. Such shifts in perspective reflect, not only the results of an internal intellectual labor, but the manner in which real historical developments and transformations are appropriated in thought and provide Thought, not with its guarantee of “correctness” but with its fundamental orientations, its conditions of existence. It is because of this complex articulation between thinking and historical reality, reflected in the social categories of thought and the continuous dialectic between “knowledge” and “power,” that the breaks are worth recording.

Cultural Studies, as a distinctive problematic, emerges from one such moment, in the mid-1950s. It was certainly not the first time that its characteristic questions had been put on the table. Quite the contrary. The two books which helped to stake out the new terrain—Hoggart’s *Uses of Literacy* and

Williams's *Culture and Society*—were both, in different ways, works (in part) of recovery. Hoggart's book took its reference from the "cultural debate," long sustained in the arguments around "mass society" and in the tradition of work identified with Leavis and *Scrutiny*. *Culture and Society* reconstructed a long tradition which Williams defined as consisting, in sum, of "a record of a number of important and continuing reactions to . . . changes in our social, economic and political life" and offering "a special kind of map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored."¹ The books looked, at first, simply like updatings of these earlier concerns, with reference to the post-war world. Retrospectively, their "breaks" with the traditions of thinking in which they were situated seem as important, if not more so, than their continuity with them. *The Uses of Literacy* did set out—much in the spirit of "practical criticism"—to "read" working-class culture for the values and meanings embodied in its patterns and arrangements: as if they were certain kinds of "texts."² But the application of this method to a living culture, and the rejection of the terms of the "cultural debate" (polarized around the high/low culture distinction) was a thoroughgoing departure. *Culture and Society*—in one and the same movement—constituted a tradition (the "culture-and-society" tradition), defined its "unity" (not in terms of common positions but in its characteristic concerns and the idiom of its inquiry), itself made a distinctive modern contribution to it, and wrote its epitaph. The Williams book which succeeded it—*The Long Revolution*—clearly indicated that the "culture-and-society" mode of reflection could only be completed and developed by moving somewhere else—to a significantly different kind of analysis. The very difficulty of some of the writing in *The Long Revolution*—with its attempt to "theorize" on the back of a tradition resolutely empirical and particularist in its idiom of thought, the experiential "thickness" of its concepts, and the generalizing movement of argument in it—stems, in part, from this determination to *move on* (Williams's work, right through to the most recent *Politics and Letters*, is exemplary precisely in its sustained developmentalism).³ The "good" and the "bad" parts of *The Long Revolution* both arise from its status as a work "of the break." The same could be said of E. P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*, which belongs decisively to this "moment," even though chronologically it appeared somewhat later.⁴ It, too, had been "thought" within certain distinctive historical traditions: English Marxist historiography, economic and "labour" history. But in its foregrounding of the questions of culture, consciousness, and experience, and its accent on agency, it also made a decisive break: with a certain kind of

technological evolutionism, with a reductive economism, and with an organizational determinism. Between them, these three books constituted the *caesura* out of which—among other things—“Cultural Studies” emerged.

They were, of course, seminal and formative texts. They were not, in any sense, “textbooks” for the founding of a new academic subdiscipline: nothing could have been farther from their intrinsic impulse. Whether historical or contemporary in focus, they were, themselves, focused *by*, organized through, and constituted responses to the immediate pressures of the time and society in which they were written. They not only took “culture” seriously—as a dimension without which historical transformations, past and present, simply could not adequately be thought. They were, themselves, “cultural” in the *Culture and Society* sense. They forced on their readers’ attention the proposition that “concentrated in the word *culture* are questions directly raised by the great historical changes which the changes in industry, democracy and class, in their own way, represent, and to which the changes in art are a closely related response.”⁵ This was a question for the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the 1860s and 1870s. And this is perhaps the point to note that this line of thinking was roughly coterminous with what has been called the “agenda” of the early New Left, to which these writers, in one sense or another, belonged, and whose texts these were. This connection placed the “politics of intellectual work” squarely at the center of Cultural Studies from the beginning—a concern from which, fortunately, it has never been, and can never be, freed. In a deep sense, the “settling of accounts” in *Culture and Society*, the first part of *The Long Revolution*, Hoggart’s densely particular, concrete study of some aspects of working-class culture, and Thompson’s historical reconstruction of the formation of a class culture and popular traditions in the 1790–1830 period formed, between them, the break, and defined the space from which a new area of study and practice opened. In terms of intellectual bearings and emphases, this was—if ever such a thing can be found—Cultural Studies’ moment of “re-founding.” The institutionalization of Cultural Studies, first in the Centre at Birmingham, and then in courses and publications from a variety of sources and places, with its characteristic gains and losses, belongs to the 1960s and later.

“Culture” was the site of the convergence. But what definitions of this core concept emerged from this body of work? And, since this line of thinking has decisively shaped Cultural Studies, and represents the most formative *indigenous* or “native” tradition, around what space were its concerns and concepts unified? The fact is that no single, unproblematic definition of “culture” is to

be found here. The concept remains a complex one—a site of convergent interests, rather than a logically or conceptually clarified idea. This “richness” is an area of continuing tension and difficulty in the field. It might be useful, therefore, briefly to resume the characteristic stresses and emphases through which the concept has arrived at its present state of (in)determinacy. (The characterizations which follow are necessarily crude and oversimplified, synthesizing rather than carefully analytic.) Two main problematics only are discussed.

Two rather different ways of conceptualizing “culture” can be drawn out of the many suggestive formulations in Raymond Williams’s *Long Revolution*. The first relates “culture” to the sum of the available descriptions through which societies make sense of and reflect their common experiences. This definition takes up the earlier stress on “ideas,” but subjects it to a thorough reworking. The conception of “culture” is itself democratized and socialized. It no longer consists of the sum of the “best that has been thought and said,” regarded as the summits of an achieved civilization—that ideal of perfection to which, in earlier usage, all aspired. Even “art”—assigned in the earlier framework a privileged position, as touchstone of the highest values of civilization—is now redefined as only one, special, form of a general social process: the giving and taking of meanings, and the slow development of “common” meanings—a common culture: “culture,” in this special sense, “is ordinary” (to borrow the title of one of Williams’s earliest attempts to make his general position more widely accessible). If even the highest, most refined of descriptions offered in works of literature are also “part of the general process which creates conventions and institutions, through which the meanings that are valued by the community are shared and made active,”⁶ then there is no way in which this process can be hived off or distinguished or set apart from the other practices of the historical process: “Since our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings, and thence common activities and purposes; the offering, reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to tensions and achievements of growth and change.”⁷ Accordingly, there is no way in which the communication of descriptions, understood in this way, can be set aside and compared externally with other things. “If the art is part of society, there is no solid whole, outside it, to which, by the form of our question, we concede priority. The art is there, as an activity, with the production, the trading, the politics, the raising of families. To study the relations adequately we must study them

actively, seeing all activities as particular and contemporary forms of human energy.”⁸

If this first emphasis takes up and reworks the connotation of the term “culture” with the domain of “ideas,” the second emphasis is more deliberately anthropological, and emphasizes that aspect of “culture” which refers to social *practices*. It is from this second emphasis that the somewhat simplified definition—“culture is a whole way of life”—has been rather too neatly abstracted. Williams did relate this aspect of the concept to the more “documentary”—that is, descriptive, even ethnographic—usage of the term. But the earlier definition seems to me the more central one, into which “way of life” is integrated. The important point in the argument rests on the active and indissoluble relationships between elements or social practices normally separated out. It is in *this* context that the “theory of culture” is defined as “the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life.” “Culture” is not *a* practice; nor is it simply the descriptive sum of the “mores and folkways” of societies—as it tended to become in certain kinds of anthropology. It is threaded through *all* social practices, and is the sum of their interrelationship. The question of what, then, is studied, and how, resolves itself. The “culture” is those patterns of organization, those characteristic forms of human energy which can be discovered as revealing themselves—in “unexpected identities and correspondences” as well as in “discontinuities of an unexpected kind”—within or underlying *all* social practices.⁹ The analysis of culture is, then, “the attempt to discover the nature of the organisation which is the complex of these relationships.” It begins with “the discovery of patterns of a characteristic kind.” One will discover them, not in the art, production, trading, politics, the raising of families, treated as separate activities, but through “studying a general organization in a particular example.”¹⁰ Analytically, one must study “the relationships between these patterns.” The purpose of the analysis is to grasp how the interactions between all these practices and patterns are lived and experienced as a whole, in any particular period. This is its “structure of feeling.”

It is easier to see what Williams was getting at, and why he was pushed along this path, if we understand what were the problems he addressed and what pitfalls he was trying to avoid. This is particularly necessary because *The Long Revolution* (like many of Williams’s works) carries on a submerged, almost “silent” dialogue with alternative positions, which are not always as clearly identified as one would wish. There is a clear engagement with the “idealist” and “civilizing” definitions of culture—both the equation of “culture”

with *ideas*, in the idealist tradition; and the assimilation of culture to an *ideal*, prevalent in the elitist terms of the “cultural debate.” But there is also a more extended engagement with certain kinds of Marxism, against which Williams’s definitions are consciously pitched. He is arguing against the literal operations of the base/superstructure metaphor, which in classical Marxism ascribed the domain of ideas and of meanings to the “superstructures,” themselves conceived as merely reflective of and determined in some simple fashion by “the base,” without a social effectivity of their own. That is to say, his argument is constructed against a vulgar materialism and an economic determinism. He offers, instead, a radical interactionism: in effect, the interaction of all practices in and with one another, skirting the problem of determinacy. The distinctions between practices is overcome by seeing them all as variant forms of *praxis*—of a general human activity and energy. The underlying patterns which distinguish the complex of practices in any specific society at any specific time are the characteristic “forms of its organization” which underlie them all, and which can therefore be traced in each.

There have been several, radical revisions of this early position: and each has contributed much to the redefinition of what Cultural Studies is and should be. We have acknowledged already the exemplary nature of Williams’s project, in constantly rethinking and revising older arguments—in going on thinking. Nevertheless, one is struck by a marked line of continuity through these seminal revisions. One such moment is the occasion of his recognition of Lucien Goldmann’s work, and through him, of the array of Marxist thinkers who had given particular attention to superstructural forms and whose work began, for the first time, to appear in English translation in the mid-1960s. The contrast between the alternative Marxist traditions which sustained writers like Goldmann and Georg Lukács, as compared with Williams’s isolated position and the impoverished Marxist tradition he had to draw on, is sharply delineated. But the points of convergence—both what they are against and what they are about—are identified in ways which are not altogether out of line with his earlier arguments. Here is the negative, which he sees as linking his work to Goldmann’s: “I came to believe that I had to give up, or at least to leave aside, what I knew as the Marxist tradition: to attempt to develop a theory of social totality; to see the study of culture as the study of relations between elements in a whole way of life; to find ways of studying structure . . . which could stay in touch with and illuminate particular art works and forms, but also forms and relations of more general social life; to replace the formula of base and superstructure with the more active idea

of a field of mutually if also unevenly determining forces.”¹¹ And here is the positive—the point where the convergence is marked between Williams’s “structure of feeling” and Goldmann’s “genetic structuralism”: “I found in my own work that I had to develop the idea of a structure of feeling. . . . But then I found Goldmann beginning . . . from a concept of structure which contained, in itself, a relation between social and literary facts. This relation, he insisted, was not a matter of content, but of mental structures: ‘categories which simultaneously organize the empirical consciousness of a particular social group, and the imaginative world created by the writer.’ By definition, these structures are not individually but collectively created.” The stress there on the interactivity of practices and on the underlying totalities, and the homologies between them, is characteristic and significant. “A correspondence of content between a writer and his world is less significant than this correspondence of organization, of structure.”¹²

A second such “moment” is the point where Williams really takes on board E. P. Thompson’s critique of *The Long Revolution*—that no “whole way of life” is without its dimension of struggle and confrontation between opposed ways of life—and attempts to rethink the key issues of determination and domination via Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony.”¹³ This essay is a seminal one, especially in its elaboration of dominant, residual, and emergent cultural practices, and its return to the problematic of determinacy as “limits and pressures.” Nonetheless, the earlier emphases recur, with force: “we cannot separate literature and art from other kinds of social practice, in such a way as to make them subject to quite special and distinct laws.” And, “no mode of production, and therefore no dominant society or order of society, and therefore no dominant culture, in reality exhausts human practice, human energy, human intention.”¹⁴ And this note is carried forward—indeed, it is radically accented—in Williams’s most sustained and succinct recent statement of his position: the masterly condensations of *Marxism and Literature*. Against the structuralist emphasis on the specificity and “autonomy” of practices, and their analytic separation of societies into their discrete instances, Williams’s stress is on “constitutive activity” in general, on “sensuous human activity, as practice,” from Marx’s first “thesis” on Feuerbach; on different practices conceived as a “whole indissoluble practice”; on totality. “Thus, contrary to one development in Marxism, it is not ‘the base’ and ‘the superstructure’ that need to be studied, but specific and indissoluble real processes, within which the decisive relationship, from a Marxist point of view, is that expressed by the complex idea of ‘determination.’”¹⁵

At one level, Williams's and Thompson's work can only be said to converge around the terms of the same problematic through the operation of a violent and schematically dichotomous theorization. The organizing terrain of Thompson's work—classes as relations, popular struggle, and historical forms of consciousness, class cultures in their historical particularity—is foreign to the more reflective and “generalizing” mode in which Williams typically works. And the dialogue between them begins with a very sharp encounter. The review of *The Long Revolution*, which Thompson undertook, took Williams sharply to task for the evolutionary way in which culture as a “whole way of life” had been conceptualized; for his tendency to absorb conflicts between class cultures into the terms of an extended “conversation”; for his impersonal tone—above the contending classes, as it were; and for the imperializing sweep of his concept of “culture” (which, heterogeneously, swept everything into its orbit because it was the study of the interrelationships between the forms of energy and organization underlying *all* practices. But wasn't this—Thompson asked—where History came in?). Progressively, we can see how Williams has persistently rethought the terms of his original paradigm to take these criticisms into account—though this is accomplished (as it so frequently is in Williams) obliquely: via a particular appropriation of Gramsci, rather than in a more direct modification.

Thompson also operates with a more “classical” distinction than Williams, between “social being” and “social consciousness” (the terms he infinitely prefers, from Marx, to the more fashionable “base and superstructure”). Thus, where Williams insists on the absorption of all practices into the totality of “real, indissoluble practice,” Thompson does deploy an older distinction between what is “culture” and what is “not culture.” “Any theory of culture must include the concept of the dialectical interaction between culture and something that is *not* culture.” Yet the definition of culture is not, after all, so far removed from Williams's: “We must suppose the raw material of life experience to be at one pole, and all the infinitely complex human disciplines and systems, articulate and inarticulate, formalised in institutions or dispersed in the least formal ways, which ‘handle,’ transmit or distort this raw material to be at the other.” Similarly, with respect to the commonality of “practice” which underlies all the distinct practices: “It is the active process—which is at the same time the process through which men make their history—that I am insisting upon.”¹⁶ And the two positions come close together around—again—certain distinctive negatives and positives. Negatively, against the “base/superstructure” metaphor and a reductionist or

“economistic” definition of determinacy. On the first: “The dialectical inter-course between social being and social consciousness—or between ‘culture’ and ‘not culture’—is at the heart of any comprehension of the historical process within the Marxist tradition. . . . The tradition inherits a dialectic that is right, but the particular mechanical metaphor through which it is expressed is wrong. This metaphor from constructional engineering . . . must in any case be inadequate to describe the flux of conflict, the dialectic of a changing social process. . . . All the metaphors which are commonly offered have a tendency to lead the mind into schematic modes and away from the interaction of being-consciousness.” And on “reductionism”: “Reductionism is a lapse in historical logic by which political or cultural events are ‘explained’ in terms of the class affiliations of the actors. . . . But the mediation between ‘interest’ and ‘belief’ was not through Nairn’s ‘complex of superstructures’ but through the people themselves.”¹⁷ And, more positively—a simple statement which may be taken as defining virtually the whole of Thompson’s historical work, from *The Making to Whigs and Hunters*, *The Poverty of Theory* and beyond¹⁸—“capitalist society was founded upon forms of exploitation which are simultaneously economic, moral and cultural. Take up the essential defining productive relationship . . . and turn it round, and it reveals itself now in one aspect (wage-labour), now in another (an acquisitive ethos), and now in another (the alienation of such intellectual faculties as are not required by the worker in his productive role).”¹⁹

Here, then, despite the many significant differences, is the outline of one significant line of thinking in Cultural Studies—some would say, *the* dominant paradigm. It stands opposed to the residual and merely reflective role assigned to “the cultural.” In its different ways, it conceptualizes culture as interwoven with all social practices; and those practices, in turn, as a common form of human activity: sensuous human praxis, the activity through which men and women make history. It is opposed to the base-superstructure way of formulating the relationship between ideal and material forces, especially where the “base” is defined as the determination by “the economic” in any simple sense. It prefers the wider formulation—the dialectic between social being and social consciousness: neither separable into its distinct poles (in some alternative formulations, the dialectic between “culture” and “non-culture”). It defines “culture” as *both* the meanings and values which arise among distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships, through which they “handle” and respond to the conditions of existence; *and* as the lived traditions and practices

through which those “understandings” are expressed and in which they are embodied. Williams brings together these two aspects—definitions and ways of life—around the concept of “culture” itself. Thompson brings the two elements—consciousness and conditions—around the concept of “experience.” Both positions entail certain difficult fluctuations around these key terms, Williams so totally absorbs “definitions of experience” into our “ways of living,” and both into an indissoluble real material practice-in-general, as to obviate any distinction between “culture” and “not-culture.” Thompson sometimes uses “experience” in the more usual sense of consciousness, as the collective ways in which men “handle, transmit or distort” their given conditions, the raw materials of life; sometimes as the domain of the “lived,” the midterm *between* “conditions” and “culture”; and sometimes as the objective conditions themselves—against which particular modes of consciousness are counterposed. But, whatever the terms, both positions tend to read structures of relations in terms of how they are “lived” and “experienced.” Williams’s “structure of feeling”—with its deliberate condensation of apparently incompatible elements—is characteristic. But the same is true of Thompson, despite his far fuller historical grasp of the “given-ness” or structuredness of the relations and conditions into which men and women necessarily and involuntarily enter, and his clearer attention to the determinacy of productive and exploitative relations under capitalism. This is a consequence of giving culture-consciousness and experience so pivotal a place in the analysis. The *experiential pull* in this paradigm, and the emphasis on the creative and on historical agency, constitutes the two key elements in the *humanism* of the position outlined. Each consequently accords “experience” an authenticating position in any cultural analysis. It is, ultimately, where and how people experience their conditions of life, define them, and respond to them, which for Thompson defines why every mode of production is also a culture, and every struggle between classes is always also a struggle between cultural modalities; and which, for Williams, is what a “cultural analysis,” in the final instance, should deliver. In “experience,” all the different practices intersect; within “culture” the different practices interact—even if on an uneven and mutually determining basis. This sense of cultural totality—of the *whole* historical process—overrides any effort to keep the instances and elements distinct. Their real interconnection, under given historical conditions, must be matched by a totalizing movement “in thought,” in the analysis. It establishes for both the strongest protocols against any form of analytic abstraction which distinguishes practices, or which sets out to test the “actual

historical movement” in all its intertwined complexity and particularity by any more sustained logical or analytical operation. These positions, especially in their more concrete historical rendering, are the very opposite of a Hegelian search for underlying Essences.²⁰ Yet, in their tendency to reduce practices to *praxis* and to find common and homologous “forms” underlying the most apparently differentiated areas, their movement is “essentializing.” They have a particular way of understanding the totality—though it is with a small “t,” concrete and historically determinate, uneven in its correspondences. They understand it “expressively.” And since they constantly inflect the more traditional analysis toward the experiential level, or read the other structures and relations downward from the vantage point of how they are “lived,” they are properly (even if not adequately or fully) characterized as “culturalist” in their emphasis: even when all the caveats and qualifications against a too rapid “dichotomous theorizing” have been entered.²¹

The “culturalist” strand in Cultural Studies was interrupted by the arrival on the intellectual scene of the “structuralisms.” These, possibly more varied than the “culturalisms,” nevertheless shared certain positions and orientations in common which makes their designation under a single title not altogether misleading. It has been remarked that whereas the “culturalist” paradigm can be defined without requiring a conceptual reference to the term “ideology” (the *word*, of course, does appear: but it is not a key concept), the “structuralist” interventions have been largely articulated around the concept of “ideology”: in keeping with its more impeccably Marxist lineage, “culture” does not figure so prominently. While this may be true of the Marxist structuralists, it is at best less than half the truth about the structuralist enterprise as such. But it is now a common error to condense the latter exclusively around the impact of Althusser and all that has followed in the wake of his interventions—where “ideology” has played a seminal, but modulated role; and to omit the significance of Lévi-Strauss. Yet, in strict historical terms, it was Lévi-Strauss, and early semiotics, which made the first break. And though the Marxist structuralisms have superseded the latter, they owed, and continue to owe, an immense theoretical debt (often fended off or downgraded into footnotes, in the search for a retrospective orthodoxy) to his work. It was Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism which, in its appropriation of the linguistic paradigm, after Saussure, offered the promise to the “human sciences of culture” of a paradigm capable of rendering them scientific and rigorous in a thoroughly new way. And when, in Althusser’s work, the more classical Marxist themes were recovered, it remained the case that Marx was

“read”—and reconstituted—through the terms of the linguistic paradigm. In *Reading Capital*, for example, the case is made that the mode of production—to coin a phrase—could best be understood as if “structured like a language” (through the selective combination of invariant elements).²² The ahistorical and synchronic stress, against the historical emphases of “culturalism,” derived from a similar source. So did a preoccupation with “the social, *sui generis*”—used not adjectivally but substantively: a usage Lévi-Strauss derived, not from Marx, but from Durkheim (the Durkheim who analyzed the social categories of thought—e.g., in *Primitive Classification*—rather than the Durkheim of *The Division of Labour*, who became the founding father of American structural functionalism).²³

Lévi-Strauss did, on occasion, toy with certain Marxist formulations. Thus, “Marxism, if not Marx himself, has too commonly reasoned as though practices followed directly from praxis. Without questioning the undoubted primacy of infrastructures, I believe that there is always a mediator between praxis and practices, namely, the conceptual scheme by the operation of which matter and form, neither with any independent existence, are realized as structures, that is as entities which are both empirical and intelligible.”²⁴ But this—to coin another phrase—was largely “gestural.” This structuralism shared with culturalism a radical break with the terms of the base/superstructure metaphor, as derived from the simpler parts of *The German Ideology*. And, though “it is to this theory of the superstructures, scarcely touched on by Marx” to which Lévi-Strauss aspired to contribute, his contribution was such as to break in a radical way with its whole terms of reference, as finally and irrevocably as the “culturalists” did.²⁵ Here—and we must include Althusser in this characterization—culturalists and structuralists alike ascribed to the domains hitherto defined as “superstructural” a specificity and effectivity, a constitutive primacy, which pushed them beyond the terms of reference of “base” and “superstructure.” Lévi-Strauss and Althusser, too, were anti-reductionist and anti-economist in their very cast of thought, and critically attacked that transitive causality which, for so long, had passed itself off as “classical Marxism.”

Lévi-Strauss worked consistently with the term “culture.” He regarded “ideologies” as of much lesser importance: mere “secondary rationalizations.” Like Williams and Goldmann, he worked, not at the level of correspondences between the *content* of a practice, but at the level of their forms and structures. But the manner in which these were conceptualized were altogether at variance with either the “culturalism” of Williams or Goldmann’s

“genetic structuralism.” This divergence can be identified in three distinct ways. First, he conceptualized “culture” as the categories and frameworks in thought and language through which different societies classified out their conditions of existence—above all (since Lévi-Strauss was an anthropologist), the relations between the human and the natural worlds. Second, he thought of the manner and practice through which these categories and mental frameworks were produced and transformed, largely on an analogy with the ways in which language itself—the principal medium of “culture”—operated. He identified what was specific to them and their operation as the “production of meaning”: they were, above all, *signifying* practices. Third, after some early flirtations with Durkheim and Mauss’s social categories of thought, he largely gave up the question of the relation *between* signifying and non-signifying practices—between “culture” and “not-culture,” to use other terms—for the sake of concentrating on the *internal* relations within signifying practices by means of which the categories of meaning were produced. This left the question of determinacy, of totality, largely in abeyance. The causal logic of determinacy was abandoned in favor of a structuralist causality—a logic of *arrangement*, of internal relations, of articulation of parts within a structure. Each of these aspects is also positively present in Althusser’s work and that of the Marxist structuralists, even when the terms of reference had been regrounded in Marx’s “immense theoretical revolution.” In one of Althusser’s seminal formulations about ideology—defined as the themes, concepts, and representations through which men and women “live,” in an imaginary relation, their relation to their real conditions of existence—we can see the skeleton outline of Lévi-Strauss’s “conceptual schemes between praxis and practices.” “Ideologies” are here being conceptualized, not as the contents and surface forms of ideas, but as the unconscious categories through which conditions are represented and lived. We have already commented on the active presence in Althusser’s thinking of the linguistic paradigm—the second element identified above. And though, in the concept of “overdetermination”—one of his most seminal and fruitful contributions—Althusser did return to the problems of the relations *between* practices and the question of determinacy (proposing, incidentally, a thoroughly novel and highly suggestive reformulation, which has received far too little subsequent attention), he did tend to reinforce the “relative autonomy” of different practices and their internal specificities, conditions, and effects at the expense of an “expressive” conception of the totality, with its typical homologies and correspondences.

Aside from the wholly distinct intellectual and conceptual universes within which these alternative paradigms developed, there were certain points where, despite their apparent overlaps, culturalism and structuralism were starkly counterposed. We can identify this counterposition at one of its sharpest points precisely around the concept of “experience” and the role the term played in each perspective. 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 the 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 unconscious structures. That is why, though Lévi-Strauss spoke only of “culture,” his concept provided the basis for an easy translation, by Althusser, into the conceptual framework of ideology: “Ideology is indeed a system of ‘representations,’ but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with ‘consciousness’: . . . it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their ‘consciousness.’ . . . It is within this ideological unconsciousness that men succeed in altering the ‘lived’ relation between them and the world and acquiring that new form of specific unconsciousness called ‘consciousness.’”²⁶ It was, in this sense, that “experience” was conceived, not as an authenticating source but as an effect: not as a reflection of the real but as an “imaginary relation.” It was only a short step—the one which separates *For Marx* from Althusser’s “Ideological State Apparatuses”—to the development of an account of how this “imaginary relation” served, not simply the dominance of a ruling class over a dominated one, but (through the reproduction of the relations of production, and the constitution of labor-power in a form fit for capitalist exploitation) the expanded reproduction of the mode of production itself.²⁷ Many of the other lines of divergence between the two paradigms flow from this point: the conception of “men” as bearers of the structures that speak and place them, rather than as active agents in the making of their own history; the emphasis on a structural rather than a historical “logic”; the preoccupation with the constitution—in “theory”—of

a non-ideological, scientific discourse; and hence the privileging of conceptual work and of Theory as guaranteed; the recasting of history as a march of the structures: the emergence of the structuralist “machine.”²⁸

There is no space in which to follow through the many ramifications which have followed from the development of one or other of these “master paradigms” in Cultural Studies. Though they by no means account for all, or even nearly all, of the many strategies adopted, it is fair to say that, between them, they have defined the principal lines of development in the field. The seminal debates have been polarized around their thematics; some of the best concrete work has flowed from the efforts to set one or other of these paradigms to work on particular problems and materials. Characteristically—the sectarian and self-righteous climate of critical intellectual work in England being what it is, and its dependency being so marked—the arguments and debates have most frequently been over-polarized into their extremes. At these extremities, they frequently appear only as mirror-reflections or inversions of one another. Here, the broad typologies we have been working with—for the sake of convenient exposition—become the prison-house of thought.

Without suggesting that there can be any easy synthesis between them, it might usefully be said at this point that neither “culturalism” nor “structuralism” is, in its present manifestation, adequate to the task of constructing the study of culture as a conceptually clarified and theoretically informed domain of study. Nevertheless, something fundamental to it emerges from a rough comparison of their respective strengths and limitations.

The great strength of the structuralisms is their stress on “determinate conditions.” They remind us that, unless the dialectic really can be held, in any particular analysis, between both halves of the proposition—that “men make history . . . on the basis of conditions which are not of their making”—the result will inevitably be a naive humanism, with its necessary consequence: a voluntarist and populist political practice. The fact that “men” can become conscious of their conditions, organize to struggle against them, and in fact transform them—without which no active politics can even be conceived, let alone practiced—must not be allowed to override the awareness of the fact that, in capitalist relations, men and women are placed and positioned in relations which constitute them as agents. “Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will” is a better starting point than a simple heroic affirmation. Structuralism does enable us to begin to think—as Marx insisted—of the *relations* of a structure on the basis of something other than

their reduction to relationships between “people.” This was Marx’s privileged level of abstraction: that which enabled him to break with the obvious but incorrect starting point of “political economy”—that of bare individuals.

But this connects with a second strength: the recognition by structuralism not only of the necessity of abstraction as the instrument of thought through which “real relations” are appropriated, but also of the presence, in Marx’s work, of a continuous and complex movement *between different levels of abstraction*. It is, of course, the case—as “culturalism” argues—that, in historical reality, practices do not appear neatly distinguished out into their respective instances. However, to think about or to analyze the complexity of the real, the act of practice of thinking is required; and this necessitates the use of the power of abstraction and analysis, the formation of concepts with which to cut into the complexity of the real, in order precisely to reveal and bring to light relationships and structures which cannot be visible to the naive naked eye, and which can neither present nor authenticate themselves: “In the analysis of economic forms, neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of assistance. The power of abstraction must replace both.” Of course, structuralism has frequently taken this proposition to its extreme. Because thought is impossible without “the power of abstraction,” it has confused this with giving an absolute primacy to the level of the formation of concepts—and at the highest, most abstract level of abstraction only: Theory with a capital “T” then becomes judge and jury. But this is precisely to lose the insight just won from Marx’s own practice. For it is clear in, for example, *Capital*, that the *method*—while, of course, taking place “in thought” (as Marx asked in the “1857 Introduction”: where else?)—rests not on the simple exercise of abstraction but on the movement and relations which the argument is constantly establishing between *different levels* of abstraction: at each, the premises in play must be distinguished from those which—for the sake of the argument—have to be held constant.²⁹ The movement to another level of magnification (to deploy the microscope metaphor) requires the specifying of further conditions of existence not supplied at a previous, more abstract level: in this way, by successive abstractions of different magnitudes, to *move toward* the constitution, the *reproduction*, of “the concrete in thought” as an effect of a certain kind of thinking. This method is adequately represented in *neither* the absolutism of Theoretical Practice, in structuralism, nor in the anti-abstraction “Poverty of Theory” position into which, in reaction, culturalism appears to have been driven or driven itself. Nevertheless it is intrinsically *theoretical*, and must be. Here, structuralism’s

insistence that thought does not reflect reality, but is articulated on and appropriates it, is a necessary starting point. An adequate *working through* of the consequences of this argument might begin to produce a method which takes us outside the permanent oscillations between abstraction/anti-abstraction and the false dichotomies of Theoreticism vs. Empiricism which have both marked and disfigured the structuralism/culturalism encounter to date.

Structuralism has another strength, in its conception of “the whole.” There is a sense in which, though culturalism constantly insists on the radical particularity of its practices, its mode of conceptualizing the “totality” has something of the complex simplicity of an expressive totality behind it. Its complexity is constituted by the fluidity with which practices move into and out of one another: but this complexity is reducible, conceptually, to the “simplicity” of praxis—human activity, as such—in which the same contradictions constantly appear, homologously reflected in each. Structuralism goes too far in erecting the machine of a “Structure,” with its self-generating propensities (a “Spinozean eternity,” whose function is only the sum of its effects: a truly *structuralist* deviation), equipped with its distinctive instances. Yet it represents an advance over culturalism in the conception it has of the necessary *complexity* of the unity of a structure (overdetermination being a more successful way of thinking this complexity than the combinatorial invariance of structuralist causality). Moreover, it has the conceptual ability to think of a unity which is constructed through the *differences* between, rather than the homology of, practices. Here, again, it has won a critical insight about Marx’s method: one thinks of the complex passages of the “1857 Introduction” to the *Grundrisse* where Marx demonstrates how it is possible to think of the “unity” of a social formation as constructed not out of identity but out of difference. Of course, the stress on difference can—and has—led the structuralisms into a fundamental conceptual heterogeneity, in which all sense of structure and totality is lost. Foucault and other post-Althusserians have taken this devious path into the absolute, not the relative, autonomy of practices, via their necessary heterogeneity and “necessary non-correspondence.” But the emphasis on unity-in-difference, on complex unity—Marx’s concrete as the “unity of many determinations”—can be worked in another, and ultimately more fruitful, direction: toward the problematic of relative autonomy and “overdetermination,” and the study of *articulation*. Again, articulation contains the danger of a high formalism. But it also has the considerable advantage of enabling us to think of

how specific practices (articulated around contradictions which do not all arise in the same way, at the same point, in the same moment) can nevertheless be thought *together*. The structuralist paradigm thus does—if properly developed—enable us to begin really to *conceptualize* the specificity of different practices (analytically distinguished, abstracted out), without losing its grip on the ensemble which they constitute. Culturalism constantly affirms the specificity of different practices—“culture” must not be absorbed into “the economic”; but it lacks an adequate way of establishing this specificity theoretically.

The third strength which structuralism exhibits lies in its decentering of “experience” and its seminal work in elaborating the neglected category of “ideology.” It is difficult to conceive of a Cultural Studies thought within a Marxist paradigm which is innocent of the category of “ideology.” Of course, culturalism constantly makes reference to this concept: but it does not in fact lie at the center of its conceptual universe. The authenticating power and reference of “experience” imposes a barrier between culturalism and a proper conception of “ideology.” Yet, without it, the effectivity of “culture” for the reproduction of a particular mode of production cannot be grasped. It is true that there is a marked tendency in the more recent structuralist conceptualizations of “ideology” to give it a functionalist reading—as the necessary cement of the social formation. From this position, it is indeed impossible—as culturalism would correctly argue—to conceive either of ideologies which are not, by definition, “dominant” or of the concept of struggle (the latter’s appearance in Althusser’s famous “Ideological State Apparatus” article being largely gestural). Nevertheless, work is already being done which suggests ways in which the field of ideology may be adequately conceptualized as a terrain of struggle (through the work of Gramsci and, more recently, of Ernesto Laclau), and these have structuralist rather than culturalist bearings.

Culturalism’s strengths can almost be derived from the weaknesses of the structuralist position already noted, and from the latter’s strategic absences and silences. It 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 downgrading in the structuralist paradigm. Here, again, it is largely Gramsci who has provided us with a set of more refined terms through which to link the largely “unconscious” and given cultural categories of “common sense” with the formation of more active and organic ideologies, which have the

capacity to intervene in the ground of common sense and popular traditions and, through such interventions, to organize masses of men and women. 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 overemphasis on "conditions" with an altogether too-inclusive emphasis on "consciousness." It therefore not only recovers—as the necessary moment of any analysis—the process by means of which classes-in-themselves, defined primarily by the way in which economic relations position "men" as agents, become active historical and political forces—for themselves: it also—against its own anti-theoretical good sense—*requires* that, when properly developed, each moment must be understood in terms of the level of abstraction at which the analysis is operating. Again, Gramsci has begun to point a way through this false polarization in his discussion of "the passage between the structure and the sphere of the complex superstructures," and its distinct forms and moments.³⁰

We have concentrated in this argument largely on a characterization of what seem to us to be the two seminal paradigms at work in Cultural Studies. Of course, they are by no means the only active ones. New developments and lines of thinking are by no means adequately netted with reference to them. Nevertheless, these paradigms can, in a sense, be deployed to measure what appear to us to be the radical weaknesses or inadequacies of these which offer themselves as alternative rallying points. Here, briefly, we identify three.

The first is that which follows on from Lévi-Strauss, early semiotics and the terms of the linguistic paradigm, and the centering on "signifying practices," moving by way of psychoanalytic concepts and Jacques Lacan to a radical re-centering of virtually the whole terrain of Cultural Studies around the terms "discourse" and "the subject." One way of understanding this line of thinking is to see it as an attempt to fill that empty space in early structuralism (of both the Marxist and non-Marxist varieties) where, in earlier discourses, "the subject" and subjectivity might have been expected to appear but did not. This is, of course, precisely one of the key points where culturalism brings its pointed criticisms to bear on structuralism's "process without a subject." The difference is that, whereas culturalism would correct the hyper-structuralism of earlier models by restoring the unified subject (collective or individual) of consciousness at the center of "the Structure," discourse theory, by way of the Freudian concepts of the unconscious and the Lacanian

concepts of how subjects are constituted in language (through the entry into the Symbolic and the Law of Culture), restores the *decentered* subject, the contradictory subject, as a set of positions in language and knowledge, from which culture can appear to be enunciated. This approach clearly identifies a gap, not only in structuralism but in Marxism itself. The problem is that the manner in which this “subject” of culture is conceptualized is of a transhistorical and “universal” character: it addresses the subject-in-general, not historically determinate social subjects or socially determinate particular languages. Thus it is incapable, so far, of moving its in-general propositions to the level of concrete historical analysis. The second difficulty is that the processes of contradiction and struggle—lodged by early structuralism wholly at the level of “the structure”—are now, by one of those persistent mirror-inversions, lodged exclusively at the level of the unconscious processes of the subject. It may be, as culturalism often argues, that the “subjective” is a necessary moment of any such analysis. But this is a very different proposition from dismantling the whole of the social processes of particular modes of production and social formations, and reconstituting them exclusively at the level of unconscious psychoanalytic processes. Though important work has been done, both within this paradigm and to define and develop it, its claims to have replaced *all* the terms of the earlier paradigms with a more adequate set of concepts seems wildly overambitious. Its claims to have integrated Marxism into a more adequate materialism is, largely, a semantic rather than a conceptual claim.

A second development is the attempt to return to the terms of a more classical “political economy” of culture. This position argues that the concentration on the cultural and ideological aspects has been wildly overdone. It would restore the older terms of “base/superstructure,” finding, in the last-instance determination of the cultural-ideological by the economic, that hierarchy of determinations which both alternatives appear to lack. This position insists that the economic processes and structures of cultural production are more significant than their cultural-ideological aspect: and that these are quite adequately caught in the more classical terminology of profit, exploitation, surplus value, and the analysis of culture as commodity. It retains a notion of ideology as “false consciousness.”

There is, of course, some strength to the claim that both structuralism and culturalism, in their different ways, have neglected the economic analysis of cultural and ideological production. All the same, with the return to this more “classical” terrain, many of the problems which originally beset it also

reappear. The specificity of the effect of the cultural and ideological dimension once more tends to disappear. It tends to conceive the economic level as not only a “necessary” but a “sufficient” explanation of cultural and ideological effects. Its focus on the analysis of the commodity-form, similarly, blurs all the carefully established distinctions between different practices, since it is the most *generic* aspects of the commodity-form which attract attention. Its deductions are therefore, largely, confined to an epochal level of abstraction: the generalizations about the commodity-form hold true throughout the capitalist epoch as a whole. Very little by way of concrete and conjuncture analysis can be derived at this high-level “logic of capital” form of abstraction. It also tends to its own kind of functionalism—a functionalism of “logic” rather than of “structure” or history. This approach, too, has insights which are well worth following through. But it sacrifices too much of what has been painfully secured, without a compensating gain in explanatory power.

The third position is closely related to the structuralist enterprise but has followed the path of “difference” through into a radical heterogeneity. Foucault’s work—currently enjoying another of those uncritical periods of discipleship through which British intellectuals reproduce today their dependency on yesterday’s French ideas—has had an exceedingly positive effect: above all because, in suspending the nearly insoluble problems of determination, Foucault has made possible a welcome return to the concrete analysis of particular ideological and discursive formations, and the sites of their elaboration. Foucault and Gramsci between them account for much of the most productive work on *concrete analysis* now being undertaken in the field: thereby reinforcing and—paradoxically—supporting the sense of the concrete historical instance which has always been one of culturalism’s principal strengths. But, again, Foucault’s example is positive only if his general epistemological position is not swallowed whole. For in fact Foucault so resolutely suspends judgment, and adopts so thoroughgoing a skepticism about any determinacy or relationship between practices, other than the largely contingent, that we are entitled to see him, not as an agnostic on these questions, but as deeply committed to the necessary non-correspondence of all practices to one another. From such a position neither a social formation, nor the state, can be adequately thought. And indeed Foucault is constantly falling into the pit which he has dug for himself. For when—against his well-defended epistemological positions—he stumbles across certain “correspondences” (for example, the simple fact that all the

major moments of transition he has traced in each of his studies—on the prison, sexuality, medicine, the asylum, language, and political economy—all appear to converge around exactly that point where industrial capitalism and the bourgeoisie make their fateful, historical rendezvous), he lapses into a vulgar reductionism, which thoroughly belies the sophisticated positions he has elsewhere advanced.³¹

I have said enough to indicate that, in my view, the line in Cultural Studies which has attempted to *think forward* from the best elements in the structuralist and culturalist enterprises, by way of some of the concepts elaborated in Gramsci's work, comes closest to meeting the requirements of the field of study. And the reason for that should by now also be obvious. Though neither structuralism nor culturalism will do, as self-sufficient paradigms of study, they have a centrality to the field which all the other contenders lack because, between them (in their divergences as well as their convergences), they address what must be the *core problem* of Cultural Studies. They constantly return us to the terrain marked out by those strongly coupled but not mutually exclusive concepts culture/ideology. They pose, together, the problems consequent on trying to think of *both* the specificity of different practices and the forms of the articulated unity they constitute. They make a constant, if flawed, return to the base/superstructure metaphor. They are correct in insisting that this question—which resumes all the problems of a non-reductive determinacy—is the heart of the matter: and that on the solution of this problem will turn the capacity of Cultural Studies to supersede the endless oscillations between idealism and reductionist. They confront—even if in radically opposed ways—the dialectic between conditions and consciousness. At another level, they pose the question of the relation between the logic of thinking and the “logic” of historical process. They continue to hold out the promise of a properly materialist theory of culture. 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. In Cultural Studies, theirs are the “names of the game.”

NOTES

- 1 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1961), 16.
- 2 Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1958).

- 3 Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979).
- 4 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1968).
- 5 Williams, *Culture and Society*, 16.
- 6 Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1965), 55.
- 7 Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 55.
- 8 Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 61.
- 9 Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 63.
- 10 Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 61.
- 11 Raymond Williams, "Literature and Sociology: In Memory of Lucien Goldmann," *New Left Review* I/67 (1971).
- 12 Williams, "Literature and Sociology."
- 13 E. P. Thompson, "The Long Revolution," *New Left Review* I/9 and I/10 (1961).
- 14 Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure," *New Left Review* I/82 (1973).
- 15 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 30–31 and 82.
- 16 Thompson, "The Long Revolution," I/9: 33.
- 17 E. P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English," *Socialist Register*, 1965: 351–352.
- 18 E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters. The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Allen Lane, 1975); and E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Merlin, 1978).
- 19 Thompson, "Peculiarities of the English," 356.
- 20 See particularly Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*; and Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (St. Albans, UK: Paladin, 1973).
- 21 For "culturalism" see Richard Johnson, "Histories of Culture/Theories of Ideology," in *Ideology and Cultural Production*, ed. Michele Barrett, Philip Corrigan, Annette Kuhn, and Janet Woolf (London: Croom Helm, 1979); and his "Three Problematics," in *Working Class Culture*, ed. John Clarke, Chas Critcher, and Richard Johnson (London: Hutchinson/Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1979). And for the dangers of "dichotomous theorizing," Barrett, Corrigan, Kuhn, and Woolf, "Introduction," in *Ideology and Cultural Production*.
- 22 Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970).
- 23 Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970); Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964).
- 24 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 130.
- 25 Lévi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, 130.
- 26 Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1969), 233.
- 27 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971).

- 28 See Thompson, *Poverty of Theory*.
- 29 Karl Marx, "Introduction (1857)," in *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin/*New Left Review*, 1973).
- 30 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 181.
- 31 He is quite capable of wheeling in through the back door the classes he recently expelled from the front.

Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies

This conference [“Cultural Studies: Now and in the Future,” organized by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in April 1990] provides us with an opportunity for a moment of self-reflection on Cultural Studies as a practice, on its institutional positioning, and on what Lidia Curti so effectively reminds us is both the marginality and the centrality of its practitioners as critical intellectuals. Inevitably, this involves reflecting on, and intervening in, the project of Cultural Studies itself.

My title, “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies,” suggests a look back to the past, to consult and think about the Now and the Future of Cultural Studies by way of a retrospective glance. It does seem necessary to do some genealogical and archaeological work on the archive. Now the question of the archives is extremely difficult for me because, where Cultural Studies is concerned, I sometimes feel like a *tableau vivant*, a spirit of the past resurrected, laying claim to the authority of an origin. After all, didn’t Cultural Studies emerge somewhere at that moment when I first met Raymond Williams, or in the glance I exchanged with Richard Hoggart? In that moment, Cultural Studies was born; it emerged full grown from the head! I do want to talk about the past, but definitely not in that way. I don’t want to talk about British Cultural Studies (which is in any case a pretty awkward signifier for me) in a patriarchal way, as the keeper of the conscience of Cultural Studies, hoping to police you back into line with what it really was if only you knew. That is to say, I want to absolve myself of the many burdens of representation which

people carry around. I carry around at least three: I'm expected to speak for the entire black race on all questions theoretical, critical, etc.; sometimes for British politics; as well as for Cultural Studies. This is what is known as the black person's burden, and I would like to absolve myself of it at this moment.

That means, paradoxically, speaking autobiographically. Autobiography is usually thought of as seizing the authority of authenticity. But in order not to be authoritative, I've got to speak autobiographically. I'm going to tell you about my own take on certain theoretical legacies and moments in Cultural Studies, not because it is the truth or the only way of telling the history. I myself have told it many other ways before; and I intend to tell it in a different way later. But just at this moment, for this conjuncture, I want to take a position in relation to the "grand narrative" of Cultural Studies for the purposes of opening up some reflections on Cultural Studies as a practice, on our institutional position, and on its project. I want to do that by referring to some theoretical legacies or theoretical moments, but in a very particular way. This is not a commentary on the success or effectiveness of different theoretical positions in Cultural Studies (that is for some other occasion). It is an attempt to say something about what certain theoretical moments in Cultural Studies have been like for me and, from that position, to take some bearings about the general question of the politics of theory.

Cultural Studies is a discursive formation, in Foucault's sense. It has no simple origins, though some of us were present at some point when it first named itself in that way. Much of the work out of which it grew, in my own experience, was already present in the work of other people. Raymond Williams has made the same point, charting the roots of Cultural Studies in the early adult education movement in his essay on "The Future of Cultural Studies" (1989). "The relation between a project and a formation is always decisive," he says, because they are "different ways of materializing . . . then of describing a common disposition of energy and direction." Cultural Studies has multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. It is a whole set of formations; it has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past. It included many different kinds of work. I want to insist on that! It always was a set of unstable formations. It was "centered" only in quotation marks, in a particular kind of way which I want to define in a moment. It had many trajectories; many people had and have different trajectories through it; it was constructed by a number of different methodologies and theoretical positions, all of them in contention. Theoretical work in the Centre for

Contemporary Cultural Studies was more appropriately called theoretical noise. It was accompanied by a great deal of bad feeling, argument, unstable anxieties, and angry silences.

Now, does it follow that Cultural Studies is not a policed disciplinary area? That it is whatever people do, if they choose to call or locate themselves within the project and practice of Cultural Studies? I am not happy with that formulation either. Although Cultural Studies as a project is open-ended, it can't be simply pluralist in that way. Yes, it refuses to be a master discourse or a meta-discourse of any kind. Yes, it is a project that is always open to that which it doesn't yet know, to that which it can't yet name. But it does have some will to connect; it does have some stake in the choices it makes. It does matter whether Cultural Studies is this or that. It can't be just any old thing which chooses to march under a particular banner. It is a serious enterprise, or project, and that is inscribed in what is sometimes called the "political" aspect of Cultural Studies. Not that there's one politics already inscribed in it. But there is something *at stake* in Cultural Studies, in a way that I think, and hope, is not exactly true of many other very important intellectual and critical practices. Here one registers the tension between a refusal to close the field, to police it, and, at the same time, a determination to stake out some positions within it and argue for them. That is the tension—the dialogic approach to theory—that I want to try to speak to in a number of different ways in the course of this paper. I don't believe knowledge is closed, but I do believe that politics is impossible without what I have called "the arbitrary closure"; without what Homi Bhabha called social agency as an arbitrary closure. That is to say, I don't understand a practice which aims to make a difference in the world, which doesn't have some points of difference or distinction which it has to stake out, which really matter. It is a question of positionalities. Now, it is true that those positionalities are never final, they're never absolute. They can't be translated intact from one conjuncture to another; they cannot be depended on to remain in the same place. I want to go back to that moment of "staking out a wager" in Cultural Studies, to those moments in which the positions began to matter.

This is a way of opening the question of the "worldliness" of Cultural Studies, to borrow a term from Edward Said. I am not dwelling on the secular connotations of the metaphor of worldliness here, but on the worldliness of Cultural Studies. I'm dwelling on the "dirtiness" of it: the dirtiness of the semiotic game, if I can put it that way. I'm trying to return the project of Cultural Studies from the clean air of meaning and textuality and theory to

the something nasty down below. This involves the difficult exercise of examining some of the key theoretical turns or moments in Cultural Studies.

The first trace that I want to deconstruct has to do with a view of British Cultural Studies which often distinguishes it by the fact that, at a certain moment, it became a Marxist critical practice. What exactly does that assignation of Cultural Studies as a Marxist critical theory mean? How can we think Cultural Studies at that moment? What moment is it we are speaking of? What does that mean for the theoretical legacies, traces, and aftereffects which Marxism continues to have in Cultural Studies? There are a number of ways of telling that history, and let me remind you that I'm not proposing this as the only story. But I do want to set it up in what I think may be a slightly surprising way to you.

I entered Cultural Studies from the New Left, and the New Left always regarded Marxism as a problem, as trouble, as danger, not as a solution. Why? It had nothing to do with theoretical questions as such or in isolation. It had to do with the fact that my own (and its own) political formation occurred in a moment historically very much like the one we are in now—which I am astonished that so few people have addressed—the moment of the disintegration of a certain kind of Marxism. In fact, the first British New Left emerged in 1956 at the moment of the disintegration of an entire historical/political project. In that sense I came into Marxism backward: against the Soviet tanks in Budapest, as it were. What I mean by that is certainly not that I wasn't profoundly, and that Cultural Studies then wasn't from the beginning profoundly, influenced by the questions that Marxism as a theoretical project put on the agenda: the power, the global reach and history-making capacities of capital; the question of class; the complex relationships between power, which is an easier term to establish in the discourses of culture than exploitation, and exploitation; the question of a general theory which could, in a critical way, connect together in a critical reflection different domains of life, politics and theory, theory and practice, economic, political, ideological questions, and so on; the notion of critical knowledge itself and the production of critical knowledge as a practice. These important, central questions are what one meant by working within shouting distance of Marxism, working on Marxism, working against Marxism, working with it, working to try to develop Marxism.

There never was a prior moment when Cultural Studies and Marxism represented a perfect theoretical fit. From the beginning (to use this way of

speaking for a moment) there was always already the question of the great inadequacies, theoretically and politically, the resounding silences, the great evasions of Marxism—the things that Marx did not talk about or seem to understand which were our privileged object of study: culture, ideology, language, the symbolic. These were always already, instead, the things which had imprisoned Marxism as a mode of thought, as an activity of critical practice—its orthodoxy, its doctrinal character, its determinism, its reductionism, its immutable law of history, its status as a metanarrative. That is to say, the encounter between British Cultural Studies and Marxism has first to be understood as the engagement with a problem—not a theory, not even a problematic. It begins and develops through the critique of a certain reductionism and economism, which I think is not extrinsic but intrinsic to Marxism; a contestation with the model of base and superstructure, through which sophisticated and vulgar Marxism alike had tried to think the relationships between society, economy, and culture. It was located and sited in a necessary and prolonged and as yet unending contestation with the question of false consciousness. In my own case, it required a not-yet-completed contestation with the profound Eurocentrism of Marxist theory. I want to make this very precise. It is not just a matter of where Marx happened to be born, and of what he talked about, but of the model at the center of the most developed parts of Marxist theory, which suggested that capitalism evolved organically torn within its own transformations. Whereas I came from a society where the profound integument of capitalist society, economy, and culture had been imposed by conquest and colonization. This is a theoretical, not a vulgar critique. I don't blame Marx because of where he was born; I'm questioning the theory for the model around which it is articulated: its Eurocentrism.

I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle, of wrestling with the angels. The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency. I mean to say something later about the astonishing theoretical fluency of Cultural Studies now. But my own experience of theory—and Marxism is certainly a case in point—is of wrestling with the angels, a metaphor you can take as literally as you like. I remember wrestling with Althusser. I remember looking at the idea of “theoretical practice” in *Reading Capital* and thinking, “I’ve gone as far in this book as it is proper to go.” I felt, I will not give an inch to this profound misreading, this superstructuralist

mistranslation, of classical Marxism, unless he beats me down, unless he defeats me in the spirit. He'll have to march over me to convince me. I warred with him, to the death. A long, rambling piece I wrote (Hall 1974) on Marx's "1857 Introduction" to the *Grundrisse*, in which I tried to stake out the difference between structuralism in Marx's epistemology and Althusser's, was only the tip of the iceberg of this long engagement. And that is not simply a personal question. In the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, for five or six years, long after the anti-theoreticism or resistance to theory of Cultural Studies had been overcome, and we decided, in a very un-British way, we had to take the plunge into theory, we walked right around the entire circumference of European thought, in order not to be, in any simple capitulation to the *Zeitgeist*, Marxists. We read German idealism, we read Weber upside down, we read Hegelian idealism, we read idealistic art criticism. (I've written about this in the article called "The Hinterland of Science: Sociology of Knowledge" [1980b] as well as in "Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems" [1980a].)

So the notion that Marxism and Cultural Studies slipped into place, recognized an immediate affinity, joined hands in some ideological or Hegelian moment of synthesis, and there was the founding moment of Cultural Studies is entirely mistaken. It couldn't have been more different from that. And when, eventually, in the seventies, British Cultural Studies did advance—in many different ways, it must be said—within the problematic of Marxism, you should hear the term problematic in a genuine way, not just in a formalist-theoretical way: as a problem; as much about struggling against the constraints and limits of that model as about the necessary questions it required us to address. And when, in the end, in my own work, I tried to learn from and work with the theoretical gains of Gramsci, it was only because certain strategies of evasion had forced Gramsci's work, in a number of different ways, to respond to what I can only call (here's another metaphor for theoretical work) the conundrums of theory, the things which Marxist theory couldn't answer, the things about the modern world which Gramsci discovered remained unresolved within the theoretical framework of grand theory—Marxism—in which he continued to work. At a certain point, the questions I still wanted to address in short were inaccessible to me except via a detour through Gramsci. Not because Gramsci resolved them but because he at least addressed many of them. I don't want to go through what it is I personally think Cultural Studies in the British context, in a certain period, learned from Gramsci: immense amounts about the nature of culture itself,

about the discipline of the conjunctural, about the importance of historical specificity, about the enormously productive metaphor of hegemony, about the way in which one can think questions of class relations only by using the displaced notion of ensemble and blocs. These are the particular gains of the “detour” via Gramsci, but I’m not trying to talk about that. I want to say, in this context, about Gramsci, that while Gramsci belonged and belongs to the problematic of Marxism, his importance for this moment of British Cultural Studies is precisely the degree to which he radically *displaced* some of the inheritances of Marxism in Cultural Studies. The radical character of Gramsci’s “displacement” of Marxism has not yet been understood and probably won’t ever be reckoned with, now we are entering the era of post-Marxism. Such is the nature of the movement of history and of intellectual fashion. But Gramsci also did something else for Cultural Studies, and I want to say a little bit about that because it refers to what I call the need to reflect on our institutional position, and our intellectual practice.

I tried on many occasions, and other people in British Cultural Studies and at the Centre especially have tried, to describe what it is we thought we were doing with the kind of intellectual work we set in place in the Centre. I have to confess that, though I’ve read many, more elaborated and sophisticated, accounts, Gramsci’s account still seems to me to come closest to expressing what it is I think we were trying to do. Admittedly, there’s a problem about his phrase “the production of organic intellectuals.” But there is no doubt in my mind that we were trying to find an institutional practice in Cultural Studies that might produce an organic intellectual. We didn’t know previously what that would mean, in the context of Britain in the 1970s, and we weren’t sure we would recognize him or her if we managed to produce it. The problem about the concept of an organic intellectual is that it appears to align intellectuals with an emerging historic movement and we couldn’t tell then, and can hardly tell now, where that emerging historical movement was to be found. We were organic intellectuals without any organic point of reference; organic intellectuals with a nostalgia or will or hope (to use Gramsci’s phrase from another context) that at some point we would be prepared in intellectual work for that kind of relationship, if such a conjuncture ever appeared. More truthfully, we were prepared to imagine or model or simulate such a relationship in its absence: “pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.”

But I think it is very important that Gramsci’s thinking around these questions certainly captures part of what we were about. Because a second aspect of Gramsci’s definition of intellectual work, which I think has always been

lodged somewhere close to the notion of Cultural Studies as a project, has been his requirement that the “organic intellectual” must work on two fronts at one and the same time. On the one hand, we had to be at the very forefront of intellectual theoretical work because, as Gramsci says, it is the job of the organic intellectual to know more than the traditional intellectuals do: really know, not just pretend to know, not just to have the facility of knowledge, but to know deeply and profoundly. So often knowledge for Marxism is pure recognition—the production again of what we have always known! If you are in the game of hegemony you have to be smarter than “them.” Hence, there are no theoretical limits from which Cultural Studies can turn back. But the second aspect is just as crucial: that the organic intellectual cannot absolve himself or herself from the responsibility of transmitting those ideas, that knowledge, through the intellectual function, to those who do not belong, professionally, in the intellectual class. And unless those two fronts are operating at the same time, or at least unless those two ambitions are part of the project of Cultural Studies, you can get enormous theoretical advance without any engagement at the level of the political project.

I’m extremely anxious that you should not decode what I’m saying as an anti-theoretical discourse. It is not anti-theory, but it does have something to do with the conditions and problems of developing intellectual and theoretical work as a political practice. It is an extremely difficult road, not resolving the tensions between those two requirements, but living with them. Gramsci never asked us to resolve them, but he gave us a practical example of how to live with them. We never produced organic intellectuals (would that we had) at the Centre. We never connected with that rising historic movement; it was a metaphoric exercise. Nevertheless, metaphors are serious things. They affect one’s practice. I’m trying to redescribe Cultural Studies as theoretical work which must go on and on living with that tension.

I want to look at two other theoretical moments in Cultural Studies which interrupted the already interrupted history of its formation. Some of these developments came as it were from outer space: they were not at all generated from the inside, they were not part of an inner-unfolding general theory of culture. Again and again, the so-called unfolding of Cultural Studies was interrupted by a break, by real ruptures, by exterior forces; the interruption, as it were, of new ideas, which decentered what looked like the accumulating practice of the work. There’s another metaphor for theoretical work: theoretical work as interruption.

There were at least two interruptions in the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: the first around feminism, and the second around questions of race. This is not an attempt to sum up the theoretical and political advances and consequences for British Cultural Studies of the feminist intervention; that is for another time, another place. But I don't want, either, to invoke that moment in an open-ended and casual way. For Cultural Studies (in addition to many other theoretical projects), the intervention of feminism was specific and decisive. It was ruptural. It reorganized the field in quite concrete ways. First, the opening of the question of the personal as political, and its consequences for changing the object of study in Cultural Studies, was completely revolutionary in a theoretical and practical way. Second, the radical expansion of the notion of power, which had hitherto been very much developed within the framework of the notion of the public, the public domain, with the effect that we could not use the term power—so key to the earlier problematic of hegemony—in the same way. Third, the centrality of questions of gender and sexuality to the understanding of power itself. Fourth, the opening of many of the questions that we thought we had abolished around the dangerous area of the subjective and the subject, which lodged those questions at the center of Cultural Studies as a theoretical practice. Fifth, the “re-opening” of the closed frontier between social theory and the theory of the unconscious—psychoanalysis. It's hard to describe the import of the opening of that new continent in Cultural Studies, marked out by the relationship—or rather, what Jacqueline Rose has called the as yet “unsettled relations”—between feminism, psychoanalysis, and Cultural Studies, or indeed how it was accomplished.

We know it was, but it's not known generally how and where feminism first broke in. I use the metaphor deliberately: As the thief in the night, it broke in; interrupted, made an unseemly noise, seized the time, crapped on the table of Cultural Studies. The title of the volume in which this dawn-raid was first accomplished—*Women Take Issue*—is instructive: for they “took issue” in both senses—took over that year's book and initiated a quarrel. But I want to tell you something else about it. Because of the growing importance of feminist work and the early beginnings of the feminist movement outside in the very early 1970s, many of us in the Centre—mainly, of course, men—thought it was time there was good feminist work in Cultural Studies. And we indeed tried to buy it in, to import it, to attract good feminist scholars. As you might expect, many of the women in Cultural Studies

weren't terribly interested in this benign project. We were opening the door to feminist studies, being good, transformed men. And yet, when it broke in through the window, every single unsuspected resistance rose to the surface—fully installed patriarchal power, which believed it had disavowed itself. There are no leaders here, we used to say; we are all graduate students and members of staff together, learning how to practice Cultural Studies. You can decide whatever you want to decide, etc. And yet, when it came to the question of the reading list . . . Now that's where I really discovered about the gendered nature of power. Long, long after I was able to pronounce the words, I encountered the reality of Foucault's profound insight into the individual reciprocity of knowledge and power. Talking about giving up power is a radically different experience from being silenced. That is another way of thinking, and another metaphor for theory: the way feminism broke, and broke into, Cultural Studies.

Then there is the question of race in Cultural Studies. I've talked about the important "extrinsic" sources of the formation of Cultural Studies—for example, in what I called the moment of the New Left, and its original quarrel with Marxism—out of which Cultural Studies grew. And yet, of course, that was a profoundly English or British moment. Actually getting Cultural Studies to put on its own agenda the critical questions of race, the politics of race, the resistance to racism, the critical questions of cultural politics, was itself a profound theoretical struggle, a struggle of which *Policing the Crisis*, was, curiously, the first and very late example. It represented a decisive turn in my own theoretical and intellectual work, as well as in that of the Centre. Again, it was only accomplished as the result of a long, and sometimes bitter—certainly bitterly contested—internal struggle against a resounding but unconscious silence. A struggle which continued in what has since come to be known, but only in the rewritten history, as one of the great seminal books of the Centre for Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back*. In actuality, Paul Gilroy and the group of people who produced the book found it extremely difficult to create the necessary theoretical and political space in the Centre in which to work on the project.

I want to hold to the notion, implicit in both these examples, that movements provoke theoretical moments. And historical conjunctures insist on theories: they are real moments in the evolution of theory. But here I have to stop and retrace my steps. Because I think you could hear, once again, in what I'm saying a kind of invocation of a simple-minded anti-theoretical

populism, which does not respect and acknowledge the crucial importance, at each point in the moves I'm trying to renarrativize, of what I would call the necessary delay or detour through theory. I want to talk about that "necessary detour" for a moment. What decentered and dislocated the settled path of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies certainly, and British Cultural Studies to some extent in general, is what is sometimes called "the linguistic turn": the discovery of discursivity, of textuality. There are casualties in the Centre around those names as well. They were wrestled with, in exactly the same way I've tried to describe earlier. But the gains which were made through an engagement with them are crucially important in understanding how theory came to be advanced in that work. And yet, in my view, such theoretical "gains" can never be a self-sufficient moment.

Again, there is no space here to do more than begin to list the theoretical advances which were made by the encounters with structuralist, semiotic, and poststructuralist work: the crucial importance of language and of the linguistic metaphor to *any* study of culture; the expansion of the notion of text and textuality, both as a source of meaning and as that which escapes and postpones meaning; the recognition of the heterogeneity, or the multiplicity, of meanings, of the struggle to close arbitrarily the infinite semiosis beyond meaning; the acknowledgment of textuality and cultural power, of representation itself, as a site of power and regulation; of the symbolic as a source of identity. These are enormous theoretical advances, though of course, it had always attended to questions of language. (Raymond Williams's work, long before the semiotic revolution, is central there.) Nevertheless, the refiguring of theory, made as a result of having to think questions of culture through the metaphors of language and textuality, represents a point beyond which Cultural Studies must now always necessarily locate itself. The metaphor of the discursive, of textuality, instantiates a necessary delay, a displacement, which I think is always implied in the concept of culture. If you work on culture, or if you've tried to work on some other really important things and you find yourself driven back to culture, if culture happens to be what seizes hold of your soul, you have to recognize that you will always be working in an area of displacement. There's always something decentered about the medium of culture, about language, textuality, and signification, which always escapes and evades the attempt to link it, directly and immediately, with other structures. And yet, at the same time, the shadow, the imprint, the trace, of those other formations, of the intertextuality of texts in their

institutional positions, of texts as sources of power, of textuality as a site of representation and resistance, all of those questions can never be erased from Cultural Studies.

The question is what happens when a field, which I've been trying to describe in a very punctuated, dispersed, and interrupted way, as constantly changing directions, and which is embraced as a political project, tries to develop itself as some kind of coherent theoretical intervention? Or, to put the same question in reverse, what happens when an academic and theoretical enterprise tries to engage in pedagogies which enlist the active engagement of individuals and groups, tries to make a difference in the institutional world in which it is located? These are extremely difficult issues to resolve, because what is asked of us is to say "yes" and "no" at one and the same time. It asks us to assume that culture will always work through its textualities—and at the same time that textuality is never enough. But never enough of what? Never enough for what? That is an extremely difficult question to answer because, philosophically, it has always been impossible in the theoretical field of Cultural Studies—whether it is conceived either in terms of texts and contexts, of intertextuality, or of the historical formations in which cultural practices are lodged—to get anything like an adequate theoretical account of culture's relations and its effects. Nevertheless I want to insist that until and unless Cultural Studies learns to live with this tension, a tension that all textual practices must assume—a tension which Said describes as the study of the text in its affiliations with "institutions, offices, agencies, classes, academies, corporations, groups, ideologically defined parties and professions, nations, races, and genders"—it will have renounced its "worldly" vocation. That is to say, unless and until one respects the necessary displacement of culture, and yet is always irritated by its failure to reconcile itself with other questions that matter, with other questions that cannot and can never be fully covered by critical textuality in its elaborations, Cultural Studies as a project, an intervention, remains incomplete. If you lose hold of the tension, you can do extremely fine intellectual work, but you will have lost intellectual practice as a politics. I offer this to you, not because that's what Cultural Studies ought to be, or because that's what the Centre managed to do well, but simply because I think that, overall, is what defines Cultural Studies as a project. Both in the British and the American context, Cultural Studies has drawn the attention itself, not just because of its sometimes dazzling internal theoretical development, but because it holds theoretical and political questions in an

ever irresolvable but permanent tension. It constantly allows the one to irritate, bother, and disturb the other, without insisting on some final theoretical closure.

I've been talking very much in terms of a previous history. But I have been reminded of this tension very forcefully in the discussions on AIDS. AIDS is one of the questions which urgently brings before us our marginality as critical intellectuals in making real effects in the world. And yet it has often been represented for us in contradictory ways. Against the urgency of people dying in the streets, what in God's name is the point of Cultural Studies? What is the point of the study of representations, if there is no response to the question of what you say to someone who wants to know if they should take a drug and if that means they'll die two days later or a few months earlier? At that point, I think anybody who is into Cultural Studies seriously as an intellectual practice must feel, on their pulse, its ephemerality, its insubstantiality, how little it registers, how little we've been able to change anything or get anybody to do anything. If you don't feel that as one tension in the work that you are doing, theory has let you off the hook. On the other hand, in the end, I don't agree with the way in which this dilemma is often posed for us, for it is indeed a more complex and displaced question than just people dying out there. The question of AIDS is an extremely important terrain of struggle and contestation. In addition to the people we know who are dying, or have died, or will, there are the many people dying who are never spoken of. How could we say that the question of AIDS is not also a question of who gets represented and who does not? AIDS is the site at which the advance of sexual politics is being rolled back. It's a site at which not only will people die, but desire and pleasure will also die if certain metaphors do not survive, or survive in the wrong way. Unless we operate in this tension, we don't know what Cultural Studies can do, can't, can never do; but also, what it has to do, what it alone has a privileged capacity to do. It has to analyze certain things about the constitutive and political nature of representation itself, about its complexities, about the effects of language, about textuality as a site of life and death. Those are the things Cultural Studies can address.

I've used that example, not because it's a perfect example, but because it's a specific example, because it has a concrete meaning, because it challenges us in its complexity, and in so doing has things to teach us about the future of serious theoretical work. It preserves the essential nature of intellectual work and critical reflection, the irreducibility of the insights which

theory can bring to political practice, insights which cannot be arrived at in any other way. And at the same time, it rivets us to the necessary modesty of theory, the necessary modesty of Cultural Studies as an intellectual project.

I want to end in two ways. First I want to address the problem of the institutionalization of these two constructions: British Cultural Studies and American Cultural Studies. And then, drawing on the metaphors about theoretical work which I tried to launch (not I hope by claiming authority or authenticity but in what inevitably has to be a polemical, positional, political way), to say something about how the field of Cultural Studies has to be defined.

I don't know what to say about American Cultural Studies. I am completely dumbfounded by it. I think of the struggles to get Cultural Studies into the institution in the British context, to squeeze three or four jobs for anybody under some heavy disguise, compared with the rapid institutionalization which is going on in the US. The comparison is not only valid for Cultural Studies. If you think of the important work which has been done in feminist history or theory in Britain and ask how many of those women have ever had full-time academic jobs in their lives or are likely to, you get a sense of what marginality is really about. So the enormous explosion of Cultural Studies in the US, its rapid professionalization and institutionalization, is not a moment which any of us who tried to set up a marginalized Centre in a university like Birmingham could, in any simple way, regret. And yet I have to say, in the strongest sense, that it reminds me of the ways in which, in Britain, we are always aware of institutionalization as a moment of profound danger. Now, I've been saying that dangers are not places you run away from but places that you go toward. So I simply want you to know that my own feeling is that the explosion of Cultural Studies along with other forms of critical theory in the academy represents a moment of extraordinarily profound danger. Why? Well, it would be excessively vulgar to talk about such things as how many jobs there are, how much money there is around, and how much pressure that puts on people to do what they think of as critical political work and intellectual work of a critical kind, while also looking over their shoulders at the promotions stakes and the publication stakes, and so on. Let me instead return to the point that I made before: my astonishment at what I called the theoretical fluency of Cultural Studies in the United States.

Now, the question of theoretical fluency is a difficult and provoking metaphor, and I want only to say one word about it. Some time ago, looking at

what one can only call the deconstructive deluge (as opposed to deconstructive turn) which had overtaken American literary studies, in its formalist mode, I tried to distinguish the extremely important theoretical and intellectual work which it had made possible in Cultural Studies from a mere repetition, a sort of mimicry or deconstructive ventriloquism which sometimes passes as a serious intellectual exercise. My fear at that moment was that if Cultural Studies gained an equivalent institutionalization in the American context, it would, in rather the same way, formalize out of existence the critical questions of power, history, and politics. Paradoxically, what I mean by theoretical fluency is exactly the reverse. There is no moment now, in American Cultural Studies, where we are *not* able, extensively and without end, to theorize power—politics, race, class, and gender, subjugation, domination, exclusion, marginality, Otherness, etc. There is hardly anything in Cultural Studies which isn't so theorized. And yet, there is the nagging doubt that this overwhelming textualization of Cultural Studies' own discourses somehow constitutes power and politics as exclusively matters of language and textuality itself. Now, this is not to say that I don't think that questions of power and the political have to be and are always lodged within representations, that they are always discursive questions. Nevertheless, there are ways of constituting power as an easy floating signifier which just leaves the crude exercise and connections of power and culture altogether emptied of any signification. That is what I take to be the moment of danger in the institutionalization of Cultural Studies in this highly rarified and enormously elaborated and well-funded professional world of American academic life. It has nothing whatever to do with Cultural Studies making itself more like British Cultural Studies, which is, I think, an entirely false and empty cause to try to propound. I have specifically tried not to speak of the past in an attempt to police the present and the future. But I do want to extract, finally, from the narrative I have constructed of the past some guidelines for my own work and perhaps for some of yours.

I come back to the deadly seriousness of intellectual work. It is a deadly serious matter. I come back to the critical distinction between intellectual work and academic work: they overlap, they abut with one another, they feed off one another, the one provides you with the means to do the other. But they are not the same thing. I come back to the difficulty of instituting a genuine cultural and critical practice, which is intended to produce some kind of organic intellectual political work, which does not try to inscribe itself in the overarching metanarrative of achieved knowledges, within the

institutions. I come back to theory and politics, the politics of theory. Not theory as the will to truth, but theory as a set of contested, localized, conjunctural knowledges, which have to be debated in a dialogical way. But also as a practice which always thinks about its intervention in a world in which it would make some difference, in which it would have some effect. Finally, a practice which understands the need for intellectual modesty. I do think there is all the difference in the world between understanding the politics of intellectual work and substituting intellectual work for politics.

Discussion

TOM PRASCH: I wonder if you could talk a bit about *New Times* as an ongoing struggle within and around English Marxism and Cultural Studies?

HALL: *New Times* is the name of an intervention which a number of people made in the journal *Marxism Today* in a series of essays, partly on economic questions, partly on cultural questions. It could be read as an intersection between a radical political project and a selective number of themes in postmodernism. It takes on certain debates about the nature of the advanced capitalist economy, and about the nature and effect of globalization on that. More than that, it metaphorically renders the enormous breaks and caesuras going on around us in the political life of the world. It registers a series of “New Times” as the conjuncture in which we are living, and in which many of the guides and metaphors of the past, many of the theoretical paradigms that have come to be held in a rather doctrinal way, many of the political programs and strategies of reform, are thrown open to inspection. Not tossed away, necessarily, but thrown open to inspection in a kind of critical reflection which, as it were, confesses that most of the time most of the people don’t quite know where they are or where they are going.

In this context, there are many different arguments, which I won’t go into, around whether “New Times” is only a sort of hint of the future, an attempt to read off from certain leading developments in some advanced societies what might be important underlying historical trends. I say that only because the book and the interventions around it and the subsequent debates have often been read as if they were staking out a new position, but it is trying to open new debates. Though it’s

perfectly clear from the book—*New Times*, which I edited with Martin Jacques in 1989—that people don’t agree with one another, from one page to another, such are the habits of critical and theoretical orthodoxy. It’s assumed that if you write a book you must know what you are talking about; you must already have a position which you are trying to impose on someone else. So we keep saying, “What I’ve just said may not be true. I would like to discuss with other people whether this might be true because we are in ‘New Times.’” Now, it has a bearing, obviously, on Cultural Studies. Although it doesn’t call itself “Cultural Studies,” many of the people who are contributing to it are people who have been formed within Cultural Studies in Britain, which by now is a house of many mansions, but a lot of people who are in it don’t know one end of Cultural Studies from another. It is, obviously, in some ways an attempt to translate some of the modes of work and insights of Cultural Studies into a wider terrain. Nevertheless, it figures as part of my ongoing responsibility for a debate which is wider, which cannot be contained simply in an academic debate. That’s not to say it doesn’t draw on academic research: there’s a whole literature around flexible specialization and global integration on which the “New Times” debate is drawing. But it is drawing on it in a way which suggests that these are questions that need to be debated in a political as well as an intellectual and cultural-critical-theoretical arena. Those different overlapping arenas of debate do exist; they can be found. And intellectuals who believe in intellectual work as a serious project must try to address those questions to those audiences as part of *what they do*, as part of a responsibility that is laid on them in trying to be critical intellectuals and to do critical intellectual work.

ROSALIND BRUNT: I’d like you to say a bit more about Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual. I think there’s another point that Gramsci makes which relates to another moment in the Centre which you didn’t raise. This involves my favorite metaphor for the organic intellectual: the whalebone in the corset. This is not only a rather feminized metaphor, but it has that notion that you were suggesting about real rigorous seriousness. I liked that sort of iron discipline of the corset. Also, of course, as a metaphor, it is about being supportive. But where Gramsci used it, what he actually meant it for was talking about contact with the people. I think the point that you didn’t mention in

defining the organic intellectual is the way in which you not only transmit to the people but you learn from them in Gramsci's sense. I can understand why you didn't mention it because of all the sentimental populism that it can lead to. But it connects to a very important moment in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies around ethnography. I wondered if you'd care to comment on that.

HALL: I think you not only sussed out my silence, if I might put it that way, but sussed out the reason for my silence as well. I've heard all of the metaphors of the organic intellectual used in ways which simplify the notion and which aren't critical of their vanguardist implications, or which suggest that it is perfectly easy to find those outside voices and take responsibility for them. The question is how to do it without vulgar popularization, which is not at all what Gramsci means by the mutually educative relationship. I can't respond in a very adequate way to the question about how one takes that responsibility, partly because it is conjunctural to specific cultures. Indeed, I think that part of the way in which new forms of Cultural Studies rid themselves of the possible shadow of earlier forms is precisely to go through that argument: how on earth can we make those connections without absolving ourselves of the need for reflection and theoretical work? I think that discussion, difficult as it is, has to be engaged. And certainly the Centre, as you know, did not find it easy. And there isn't some movement out there waiting for it to be done. So I am very anxious not to suggest that this is an easy evangelical call to arms, as if you could just go out and do it. What I want to say is something more like what I meant by the notion of modesty. You have to work under the pressure to find that moment, that connection. And with the sense that when you don't, even though it may not have been possible, something is missing, some voices which ought to be in your head are not in your head. You have to recognize that the theory is going to run away with you. You're going to end up at some point with the illusion that you can cover, in the textuality of the critical debate, the whole of the world, not recognizing the worldliness of the object you are trying to analyze and place theoretically.

But let me also say that I think it can be made more often than we think it can. While certain institutional conditions block its being made, being institutionalized also means struggling against the insti-

tutional constraints which make it impossible to make those kinds of links, and to write in that kind of way. And the language with which we communicate with one another and do our intellectual work is also part of that struggle to be overheard, if not today, then sometime. That's what I mean by living with the possibility that there *could* be, sometime, a movement which would be larger than the movement of petit bourgeois intellectuals, if you will forgive my using a vulgar phrase. That's what I mean by our modesty. Who would imagine that from within those circles alone the world can be changed, or the power that we talk about in such a wonderfully articulate way could be shifted? It cannot be. I'm not trying to deny the difficulties posed by the political disconnections and fragmentations as the political context in which this work is done. Nevertheless, I think we have to work in the "as if" of the organic possibility.

I know there are lots of objections to the metaphor of the organic intellectual, I have lots of them myself. We have to take seriously Foucault's suggestion that perhaps the moment of the organic intellectual is over; now we are in another historical moment, that of the specific intellectual. I understand exactly what he means by that because, of course, I don't propose the organic intellectual as the source of another grand metanarrative or as producing the theory for the movement from outside. Nevertheless, I hold on to the notion of the organic intellectual because I think it puts a shadow across intellectual work. If it's done with the realization of that worldliness of our object and of our own situation—of the location and constraints of our own institutional position—it comes out differently. I think it is different when you genuinely feel the pressure on our language, to show its workings, to open itself to accessibility, to open a window, not to disable, not to close out, etc. But this cannot be done at the expense of serious thinking, because the last thing that we want is a rousing populist work that doesn't tell us anything. My main problem with a great deal of work in Cultural Studies is that it didn't tell us anything new. It was a circular exercise and the wonderful thing was that you could arrive back at the beginning by a very long and intellectually rewarding route: The bourgeoisie produces bourgeois culture which exercises bourgeois hegemony. Hooray! That is the last thing that anybody out there needs: to be told what they already know. They need the production of new

knowledges. We won't always be able to control the ways in which that's appropriated or the political conditions in which it's appropriated, but we need to work as if our work would be better if we could; we need to work with the pressure of that behind us. And that is what I think constitutes what I called our modesty.

ANDREW ROSS: I have a query about a term which you invoked throughout your history of Cultural Studies—"theoretical gains." Exactly how does one recognize what theoretical gains are? The term seems to appeal to a narrative of progress which was almost completely problematized by those moments which you described in vivid detail, when gender and race came crashing in through that window.

HALL: I think your criticism is quite right; it does have a sort of narrative of progress smuggled into it. I don't think I meant theoretical gains in that way but it may be that I did, and that it was part of the unconsciousness of what I was saying, that I meant more than I said, or said more than I meant. What I meant by theoretical gains was that the next kind of work that you feel able to do is done in a profoundly different way because you've had to wrestle with a new set of what I call conundra. You move within a different set of positions and with a set of conceptual insights which have emerged through what I metaphorically called struggling with the angels. I don't know if that new work has any built-in guarantee that it's better than the work you did before, quite often it's not. I'm trying to represent the movement of theory, not from theorist to theorist or problematic to problematic, but from problem to . . . I don't want to say solution because as soon as you get something which resolves a particular theoretical problem, you have instantly to recognize what it doesn't do.

Let me put it in a concrete way. As I tried to say, I entered Marxism as a problem; I wrestled with Althusser and finally was able to do some work within the framework of a Marxian problematic radically revised by Gramsci. Now, is that a gain? Well, it's a gain in the sense that I could get something said that I couldn't get said before. And I could say some different things. But if you think by that that we are now in the Gramscian problematic, we're also in the problems of the Gramscian problematic. There are problems that Gramsci's gains present to one, and then you have to look elsewhere, which forces you to wrestle on a different terrain. So I'm trying to describe what

I talked about as interruptions in Cultural Studies, the periods in which work was done, though it was never done in a guaranteed theoretical space, and the movements, a set of theoretical movements, that drove it on.

To be quite honest about your criticism, I guess I do think that some terrain is gained, otherwise I won't make those moves. I don't think those gains are guaranteed, but I do think the work is better when someone understands those complexities that one wrestles to gain insight into. Sometimes, they are actually reversals; some of those gains take one into terrains where the work is too facile, very good but empty. There are lots of blind alleys. I don't think that there's any simple notion of linear progress in theoretical work, as I see it. But I do think that one moves from one detotalized or deconstructed problematic to the gains of another, recognizing its limitations. That, I think, is the infinite open-endedness of critical work, why critical work is always dialogical. It does have the capacity to establish some important conversations on some ground. That's what I mean by the gain; it gains some ground where thinking can go on around a particular set of problems. It's almost never stable; it will be punctuated and interrupted by some new thing, not necessarily by a new book or by a new theory but by some new turn of events which requires one to address a problem which shows the underside of the positive ground you've gained. Suddenly, it doesn't explain that stuff, suddenly you've got to start again, perhaps from the bad side of the gains that you've made. In these ways I'm trying to describe what a critical practice is like which isn't just circular and repetitious and which has no guaranteed advances or progress written into it but which continues to be open-ended. In these ways I'm trying to use the term "gains" without looking at an infinite series of interconnected, well-ordered theoretical progressions from position to position.

RUTH TOMASELLI: The question I'm going to ask is an extremely presumptuous one, but I think somebody must voice it and I've decided to. I wonder how you would place your notion of the organic intellectual into the world which is made up of our colleagues and our students, because that after all is our world.

HALL: When I said that part of what the Centre was about was trying to produce organic intellectual work, I of course had the question of

pedagogy essentially in mind. I don't think we can divorce theoretical work and pedagogy. At the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies there were only three academics, so the organic intellectuals we were trying to produce were not only ourselves but our students. So the question of pedagogy as a form of intellectual production is crucial. I agree with what I take to be an underlying criticism in your comment, namely that when we talk about the institutional position of Cultural Studies, we often fail to talk about questions of teaching and pedagogy. We talk about intellectual practice as if it is the practice of intellectuals in the library reading the right canonical texts or consulting other intellectuals at conferences or something like that. But the ongoing work of an intellectual practice for most of us, insofar as we get our material sustenance, our modes of reproduction, from doing our academic work, is indeed to teach. And I suppose my real silence was in not responding to Ros Brunt by saying that the first people we might make some connection with are our students. Before we invoke the great mass ranks out there, it might be quite important that our students are with us in the project and that we are helping them to conduct a little intellectual work. I'm sorry if I appeared to take that for granted.

JENNY SHARPE: I wonder if you might elaborate upon the notion of "irritable tension" with which you organized your narrative (as opposed to solution and resolution). I was also wondering if this irritable tension could be productive in alliance politics.

HALL: I'll say just three brief things about the tensions. One of the most important examples for me of a tension which has been enormously theoretically productive for my own work and which I'm damned if I know how to resolve, and which I therefore have to live with, is exactly that triangle that I referred to earlier, which has been put on the agenda by the interruption of feminism. The interrelations between feminism, psychoanalysis, and Cultural Studies defines a completely and permanently unsettled terrain for me. The gains of understanding cultural questions in and through the insights of psychoanalytic work, especially as those have been reread through the political practices of feminism, opened up enormous insights for me—that's what I mean by gain. I just feel I know something after that moment that I didn't know before that I now have to work with. But every attempt to trans-

late the one smoothly into the other doesn't work; no attempt to do so can work. Culture is neither just the processes of the unconscious writ large nor is the unconscious simply the internalization of cultural processes through the subjective domain. The latter just doesn't work. Psychoanalysis completely breaks that sociological notion of socialization; I'll never use it again. That's what I mean by interruption: the term tails out the bottom. I cannot explain how social individuals are constituted and reconstituted through the concept of socialization. It just had to go. But I cannot translate the one onto the other. I have to live with the tension of the two vocabularies, of the two unsettled objects of analysis, and try to read the one through the other without falling into psychoanalytic readings of everything. It's the reason why, of many books on the subject, I like Jacqueline Rose's *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* so much because I think it is a very political book. It's also a deeply Lacanian book, and the arguments between those two things are unsettled and she just has to say: I know these two things are important, and I know that they're conjoined in a number of extremely complex ways, and I can't tell you how the translation is effected. That's what I mean by living in and with tension.

Let me say, secondly, I agree that this is not a question of theoretical practice alone, far from it. I think that just as we have to understand politics as a language we have to understand politics as living with the tension. The notion of a political practice where criticism is postponed until the day after the barricades precisely defines the politics which I always refused. And if you don't go that way you go into politics of contention, of continuous argument, of continuous debate. Because what is at stake really matters.

Finally, then, the question of the manner in which our tensions are worked through matters a great deal. I don't want to prescribe but I want to draw your attention to the problem of courtesy, of living with a tension that matters without eating each other. Because there is a kind of competitive way in which intellectuals live with their tensions in which they can only do so by climbing on the backs of those people whose positions they're trying to contest. We have a great deal to learn about respecting the positions being advanced while contesting them because something important is at stake. I don't think we're very good at that. We have a lot to learn about the manners of a genuinely dialogically critical engagement.

MEAGHAN MORRIS: I am not a pluralist but I actually like both those models—organic and specific intellectuals—because I think they describe different kinds of possibility that exist for people in the present, certainly in my country. But one thing that bothers me about the rhetoric of the organic intellectual is the way the problem of theory/practice/politics can get posed. At one moment, you said that if you don't feel the tensions in your work, it's because theory has let you off the hook. But sometimes it's not that theory lets you off the hook, it's that the academy or the forms of academic institutionalization can drive tension out of people's work, can absolutely kill the angels in a sense. And this, I suppose, is a question about how you see the resilience of Cultural Studies in the face of that. I've seen a moment in another time and place with feminist theory, for example, where a whole group of women who had wrestled with angels for many years suddenly found themselves teaching a curriculum which most of their students found boring and oppressive and irrelevant. And totally unangelic. But because of the nature of the structural political problems that feminism responds to, that moment passed. More people came in, infused by their criticism, to displace the work we had done, and renewed the whole project of feminist theory. I wonder whether Cultural Studies has a sufficient identity to do that. The reason I'm not a pluralist is that I don't think pluralism is an option, I think it's the problem. I think that when the academy institutionalizes the fact of pluralism, it makes it hard for people to care about the difference between various arbitrary closures. So what I would want to see is a definition against pluralism.

HALL: There are really a number of important questions there, and I can't respond to them adequately. But just let me say that I too like both the model of the specific intellectual and of the organic intellectual. I was not trying to ditch one in favor of the other. I tried to represent the second by talking about Cultural Studies as not having an aspiration to an overall metalanguage, as always having to recognize its positioning, as a set of contested localized knowledges, etc. Also, contrary to the promise that in the Gramscian discourse clinches the organic intellectual, namely that there is a party out there to deliver, the party isn't there. So it's the organic intellectual, metaphorically, as the hope, and it's the specific intellectual as the mode of operation. I

also agree with what you said about pluralism. And I think that one of the difficulties for us results because Cultural Studies has always been interdisciplinary, for very good and, I think, very important reasons. Some of the subversive force of Cultural Studies, along with a number of other forms of critical work, results from its having contested the institutionalized spaces of knowledge as disciplines and regulators. And so even in its rather loose way, it's surging across the boundaries and taking a number of vocabularies from different places in order to explain a problem. This is one of the most important things about it. But obviously in the moment of institutionalization that can become just an extremely slack form of pluralism.

But the moment of institutionalization has more dangers written into it from the outside as it were. And sometimes this can push people who are trying to do Cultural Studies in that pluralistic direction. For instance, one of the places where Cultural Studies is growing is in institutes of humanities which have emerged, out of the enormous goodwill and funding generosity of universities and institutions, but partly as places where the specific educational attack on the humanities, on the politicization of the humanities, on the destruction of a canon, can be contested. There are places of resistance which have been thrown up around some of that, so that critical intellectual work can get done. Not all the institutes are like that, but I know some where that is one of the reasons why they appear to be very pluralistic, because a number of people are coming under the umbrella of Cultural Studies as a mode of defense. So let us not fail to recognize that these institutional spaces have really quite specific conditions and constraints and that the work which can be done requires a much more careful job of trying to define what that project is, not in an empty pluralistic way that we've understood before. However, at that point I come to a halt because, when pressed to say what Cultural Studies is and what it isn't, something in me stops short. I have a stake, and Cultural Studies isn't every damn thing. But I think, for one thing, that in the American context it needs a whole range of work to say what it is in this context. What it is in relation to this culture that would genuinely separate it from earlier work or work done elsewhere. I'm not sure that Cultural Studies in the United States has actually been through that moment of self-clarification. So I don't want to, as it were, impose another set of definitions on it. But I do think it matters what it is in particular

situations. I don't think it can be simply a pluralistic umbrella. I think that sort of pluralism is the effect of certain political conditions which are constraints on intellectual work in the academy here. So I'm agreeing with your point—it's not theory that's let you off the hook, it's the precise insertion of a certain kind of critical practice at an institutional moment, and that moment is precisely the moment of academic institutional life in this country, which is a big enterprise to crack.

ALEXANDRA CHASIN: I have been anonymous up till now. Until, I suppose, the moment of speaking. I mean to be both courteous and constructive, but I'm also quite serious and I think this stuff really matters. My comment is not addressed to the speaker, although I take profound encouragement from what he has said. I speak now because there is no scheduled place for a participant in this conference to say anything which is not to or from the podium. I take encouragement, too, from previous attempts at intervention, like the remark on Friday by a participant that she felt terrorized. She asserted that there was no room for dialogue among all participants, an assertion which has also been made in the spatial margins of this conference: halls, bathrooms, motel rooms, etc. She said out loud what many others have whispered. I am responding in part to the invitation implicit in the literature of the conference itself, which says, among other things: "increasingly visible, increasingly influential, Cultural Studies is also in the process of being more widely institutionalized and commodified. This conference is designed not only to reflect on these events, but also to intervene in them." It says later, "we welcome substantive comments and questions from all attendants," and I hope that's still true. In its structure, the conference most definitely privileges certain people, empowering them to speak while disempowering others. It also duplicates the traditional structures of power which practitioners of Cultural Studies almost uniformly claim to be committed to subverting. One or two rounds of applause for graduate student labor and for staff helping with conference "mechanics" does not go very far towards changing a familiar and oppressive division of labor. Allowing people who can afford two dinners in one evening to slough off their extras in the general direction of those who cannot afford the meal pass, or don't want to buy it for health-related reasons, or any other reasons, does not go very far towards reconsidering exclusionary practices. The

presentation of a solution is mystified by concealing the problem. My friend and I gathered from this that we were not the only ones with a problem, more than this we could only guess. Yet this issue might have been an opportunity for self-criticism, for reflexivity, for asking the questions of ourselves that we ask theoretically about other institutions, organizations, groups, and even about academia as a whole. Or is it just too embarrassing to talk about meal passes, or child care? Where is our feminism? I do not just level these charges at the organizers, or the speakers, many of whom have made gestures at intervention. I address myself to everybody here, because although in this context silence is not exactly or immediately death, it is frustration and complicity. In order that my words might not be covered over, I come forward with concrete proposals. I hope that the bureaucracy of the conference is not too entrenched to deal with them. It might be useful to organize caucuses for lesbians and gays and for people of color whose work and livelihoods are often more marginalized and threatened than those of practitioners of Cultural Studies even where those categories overlap. How about small discussions, or workshops? How about some formal treatment or discussion of pedagogy, a subject whose absence here, until a minute ago, surprises and alarms me, since I have personally considered the classroom the place where I might integrate my, of course, politically correct intellectual politics with political action. Since I assume my dissertation will either be read in typescript by four people or in hardback by twice as many. What about taking a few minutes to open up the floor to suggestions for more constructive interventions than these?

BELL HOOKS: I feel very bad, because one of the things Gayatri Spivak says in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* is that things in this country always come down to the question of how the room is arranged. When I talk about being terrorized, I wasn't talking about the room, or the microphones; I was talking about how the discourse of Cultural Studies as it was being constructed here was silencing certain kinds of people. And I didn't like the fact that it took this personal form of people coming up to me, white people coming up to me, and making very negative comments about me: "bell hooks, come off it, how could you ever be terrorized?" That shows a lack of understanding of the issues of race, gender, and class that I was trying to raise. I

wanted to come to this conference because I am excited about Cultural Studies. I am excited about it as a critical intervention, as a critical political intervention. And when I felt that I was being marginalized and silenced, I felt that as terror. I felt that as terror about the danger of Cultural Studies appropriating issues of race, gender, and sexual practice, and then continuing to hurt and wound in that politics of domination. And I felt bad because I felt my comments got reduced to this question of the room and the microphones and things like that, which are important but which are not what I was trying to talk about. I was trying to talk about what kind of discourse was being produced here and its implications for political practice. I would much rather have been able to say, around the question of pedagogy, that I thought a lot about the fact that cultural critique for me has been about really responding to students. Really responding to students who go see *Do the Right Thing* and come back and say “Look, we took your class, we understand this feminist standpoint, but we also think Spike Lee is a down brother so how do we deal with what we feel we saw in this particular cultural production?” To me, that’s the exciting dimension of Cultural Studies, that it can take place, not as me writing a privatized article, but as a response to students asking what type of critical thinking allows them to engage this cultural production in a way that informs our political practice. I hope that clarifies some what I meant by the use of the word “terrorism.”

SCOTT COOPER: Stuart, I just wanted to say that I attended your class at the Institute that took place here at Illinois in 1983 and I share the concerns that were addressed here. But my concerns have more to do with what Cultural Studies is becoming in the American context. My fear is that Cultural Studies will be just another listing in the college catalog under the letter “C,” near Ethnic Studies and World Arts and Culture. In other words, it’s going to be denied its political meaning. American institutions of education are far more powerful than even all the people in this room. What I find lacking in this conference is any sense of the strategies by which we’re going to intervene in those institutions. I don’t mind listening to people I admire, but it seems to me we need four days of discussion about how we can intervene in the institutions in which we work, rather than four days reproducing the same kind of hierarchy we already have.

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Class, Race, and Articulation

We begin here with a chapter titled “The Hinterland of Science,” representing in the mid-1970s a key stage in the CCCS’s critical exploration of social and philosophical theory. This was when the Centre “took the plunge” into European critical theory, from Kant and Hegel through to Dilthey, Weber, Goldmann, Mannheim, and the phenomenologists. As Stuart explains, one fundamental motivation here was to find a way to avoid falling into the problems of the (then still influential) forms of deterministic Marxism in relation to questions of knowledge and ideology. This was the beginning of the route that took Stuart through his long engagement with the work of Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, and Nicos Poulantzas (and later Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe). The issue here was how to recognize various forms of economic and social determination on culture, while still allowing for the relative autonomy and significant effectivity of political and ideological superstructures. This part of the story is then picked up more substantively in the second essay here, on the problems of the base/superstructure metaphor.

“Hinterland” also represents the origin of another long-term intellectual project: the CCCS critique of what were then the conventional forms of sociology. The key to this latter project is articulated as it moves from the recognition of the significance of Alfred Schutz’s work on the construction of everyday knowledge to the argument in favor of the articulation of that phenomenological tradition with Émile Durkheim’s early work on “primitive

classification.” Until that time, the legacy of Durkheim’s work that had come to dominate sociology—especially in its baleful structural-functionalist mode, as developed by Talcott Parsons in the United States—had been a thoroughly positivist one, concerned simply with the collection of objective social data. The alternative strand of Durkheim’s work that Stuart was concerned to rescue was that in the neo-Kantian tradition, where in his work with Marcel Mauss he had come to study not simply “social facts” but rather the significance of the cognitive categories and mental classifications—the collective representations—through which members of a society perceive their world and, indeed, construct these facts.¹ To argue this was also to import an anthropological perspective on the significance of culture to a place close to the heart of social analysis.

As we have seen, Stuart claimed that he had been “dragged into Marxism backwards.” But in the case of his encounters with sociology, it might be said that he dragged the discipline itself backward into a new future, by his re-examination of this long-neglected part of its own intellectual foundations. As he explains here, Lévi-Strauss had earlier argued for the resumption of what he called the “forgotten part of the Durkheim-Mauss programme” to which the study of representations was central. The linguistic model developed by Ferdinand de Saussure was then extrapolated to argue that much of socio-cultural life could also be understood as structured like a language. This was the road that then led Stuart into engagement with Barthes and the broader field of semiology, with its emphasis on the role of the systems of signs “at the heart of social life”—a perspective that was central to the emerging focus on mediated forms of popular culture, as we shall see in part III. The later cultural turn in the social sciences can, in part, be traced back to these small beginnings at the CCCs.

The long-term consequences of this trajectory meant that by the time of writing the introduction to the Open University’s new undergraduate sociology course, *Understanding Modern Societies*, in 1992, Stuart offered a definition of sociology itself in which cultural, symbolic, and discursive practices were given a much greater prominence, and a higher explanatory status, than had been customary within the discipline. These processes were now presented as not merely reflective but also constitutive of economic, political, and social processes, which themselves are then seen to have cultural and ideological conditions of existence.² If, as we shall see later, textuality alone is never, for Stuart, an adequate object of analysis, it is nonetheless

central to the conception of sociology, to the extent that culture is seen to lie beneath—and to frame—the putative “bottom line” of economics.³

While in the case of the “Hinterland” essay Stuart was attempting to come to terms with the inadequacies of conventional sociology in the 1970s, the essay to which we turn in chapter 5, concerning the base/superstructure metaphor, is addressed to a corresponding set of difficulties deriving from the overly determinist nature of the various Marxisms that dominated intellectual debate at that time. They, just like sociology, failed to give sufficient attention to matters of culture. As he demonstrates in the early part of the essay, in which he concentrates on texts such as *The German Ideology*, the problem with the dominant forms of Marxism was that they proposed overly crude economic laws, which were assumed to automatically generate corresponding forms of culture and ideology, in a relentless process of determination.

At the same time, for Stuart, there is no question of abandoning the issue of determination—the problem is how exactly it is to be understood. He has no interest in any model of culture, language, and discourse that does not understand these phenomena as being in continual tension with the material, economic, and political dimensions of society.⁴ Nonetheless, in his view, it is essential to produce a model of determination that leaves room for the relative autonomy or effectivity of the superstructures. In a closely related essay, “The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees,” originally published in 1986, he argues for a conception of economic determination in the first instance, rather than the last—as a tendential process of the setting of limits and the establishment of parameters within which events can occur, rather than in terms of the absolute predictability of particular outcomes. Indeed, his position is that this is the only viable basis for what he calls a “Marxism without guarantees,” as models based on automatic forms of determination have long been the pernicious repository of “dreams of theoretical certainty.”⁵

The essay offers us a careful reading of the gradual development of Marx’s own conception of determination, from its crude origins in *The German Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto* to the more sophisticated practical deployment of the concept in texts such as *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*—which begins to offer an analysis of the possible disjunctions and displacement between economic, political, and ideological developments. Further, in an early usage of what was to become for him an absolutely critical

term, he notes that Marx's "1857 Introduction" to the *Grundrisse* contains the basis for what he describes as a theory of *articulations* between the different elements or levels of a social formation (to use the Althusserian terminology). These different elements are, he suggests, best seen as articulated with each other in complex ways, and critical forms of social change can best be explained by means of the model of overdetermination, which Althusser borrows from Freud.

Beyond this, the essay also offers, in its later sections, an exemplary account of Gramsci's contribution to the analysis of the political and ideological superstructures and, most specifically, to understanding what he calls the "ethical" functions of the state in the generation of ideological consent. This is, of course, the key starting point for Althusser's later model of the role of the ideological state apparatuses (especially the media and education systems) in securing the reproduction of a given social structure. However, while taking inspiration from Althusser's various theoretical interventions, Stuart also recognizes the limitations of his approach, insofar as it ultimately veers toward a functionalism that assumes the unproblematic reproduction of the social relations at stake.⁶ For these reasons, Stuart argues trenchantly for the superiority of Gramsci's own understanding of the reproduction of hegemony—as an inherently unstable process of constantly shifting equilibria—rather than a model of a static, dominant ideology unproblematically suffused throughout a society. In the later essay on the problems of ideology referred to above, Stuart advances the framework developed here by drawing not only on Poulantzas's work but also on that of Laclau. Both of them, as he shows, help provide the terms for a model of the articulation of the political and the ideological with economic class structures, which forgoes the clumsy presumption that classes have their political identifications permanently inscribed on their backs as "ideological numberplates."⁷

In chapter 6 Stuart outlines the logic of how the theoretical developments first outlined in his critique of classical Marxism can also be applied to the study of what he calls here "racially structured social formations." He takes the analyses of the "test-case" situation in South Africa produced by Harold Wolpe and John Rex as a key point of reference and carefully interrogates them for what lessons they can offer us, in developing an analysis that would finally be capable of articulating questions of race and class, without reducing either one to either an essentialist structure or an epiphenomenal status.

The exposition is long and detailed and has a section that to some extent previews the more condensed version of the argument about Gramsci's rel-

evance to the study of race and ethnicity presented in the opening chapter of volume 2. However, the formulation here is particularly worthy of attention because it more clearly shows the intellectual roots of his later development of a non-essentialist politics of black subjectivity and of “new ethnicities.” These roots lie, as this chapter shows, in the critique both of the mono-causal forms of explanation developed by “teleological Marxism” and of the descriptive (rather than properly analytic) approaches favored by various forms of sociological pluralism.

His central intention here is to develop a mode of analysis that avoids attributing to race a singular, unitary, and transhistorical character, which is presumed to assert itself in the same way everywhere, just as he simultaneously refuses to treat “His Majesty the Economy” (in Althusser’s deathless phrase) as ultimately determining everything else. For him, the question is precisely how to understand the articulation of questions of race, ethnicity, and class and to recognize the “tendential” forms of pressure and articulation that one structural factor in a social formation exercises on another. In all of this, the South African case (at a point at which the system of apartheid was beginning to creak but had not yet broken down) was particularly germane and offered an exemplary instance of how these issues would need to be worked through.

At a metatheoretical level the focus on apartheid helps clarify the specificity of the South African case. The peculiarity of its deviations from the classical capitalist path of development helps demonstrate that the society cannot be understood simply in terms of classical Marxism’s concept of the class struggle; the society also requires attention to the particular forms of what John Rex calls “the race war” engendered by colonial conquest. While the racial dynamics of the society cannot be understood without reference to its economic structure, this provides only the necessary—rather than the sufficient—conditions, if we are to understand the specific forms of social relations developed in South Africa. As Stuart notes, this approach alerts us to the importance of refusing classical Marxism’s Euro-centeredness, “based as it is on extrapolating to other social formations forms of development, paths, and logics peculiar to, and illegitimately generalized from, European cases.” Here we see the further roots of Stuart’s later analysis of the specificities of racial and ethnic dynamics in colonial and postcolonial societies in the Caribbean and elsewhere—which are also indicated here in his references to both Ernesto Laclau’s critique of Andre Gunder Frank’s ahistorical Marxism and the important work of Eugene Genovese on the “troublesome case” of plantation slavery.

In a way that then links directly to Althusser's work on the "relative autonomy" of the different levels of a social formation, in which matters of politics, law, culture, and ideology can themselves have determining effects, Stuart insists that we also see here the importance of "the specific . . . form in which underpaid labour surplus is pumped out of direct producers," as Marx formulates it.⁸

At a more fundamental theoretical level, the point is derived directly from Stuart's commentary on Marx's methodology, in his "Notes on the 1857 Introduction to the *Grundrisse*." In this commentary, which is central to Stuart's work, he is at pains to reject the notion of any abstract mode of analysis that fails to attend to the historical specificity of a particular social formation, as it has developed in empirically given circumstances. He is not interested in any all-encompassing "general model" of how the capitalist mode of production determines everything about a social formation. Rather, he is concerned with how the economic, political, legal, and ideological dimensions of a society come to form what he calls, following Althusser, a "complex unity, structured in dominance," where what needs to be understood is how its different elements are articulated together. This was crucial to Stuart's thought, and it was via Althusser's rejection of the Hegelian notion of any model of a society as an expressive totality determined by a single (economic) cause that he was able to develop a more flexible mode of Marxism, mobilizing the concepts of relative autonomy, displacement, dislocation, condensation, and overdetermination. Here, alongside Althusser, Gramsci is credited with making a fundamental contribution to the development of a non-reductionist form of Marxism and in his case, one that more specifically escapes the Eurocentrism of much of classical Marxism, precisely because of its attention to the (internal and external) colonial dimensions of the Italian situation.

What then becomes clear in the final part of this chapter is how readily the critique of essentialist forms of Marxism can be transposed to the analysis of questions of race and ethnicity. Here Stuart rejects analyses that invoke a common/universal structure of racism as a general feature of human societies. Rather his declared aim is to develop an analysis of the historically specific forms of racism and its effects and of the different ways in which racist ideologies have operated in specific historical and empirical conjunctures. Thus, in working through these common theoretical and methodological questions as carefully as this chapter does, it makes a major contribution

to our understanding of the articulation (to use his own terminology) of Stuart's analyses of class structures with his analyses of race and ethnicity.

Having dealt, in the first three chapters in this section, with the dynamics of Stuart's long-term engagements with sociology and then with Marxism, we arrive in chapter 7 at his responses to the deconstruction of Marxism initiated by the debates in the late 1980s concerning the rise of postmodernism. In one way these debates had a potentially relativizing function of a politically positive kind, in their undermining of all "Grand Narratives" (to use postmodern theory's own terminology), and especially those of Dead White Men (as the phrase of that era had it). However, as Stuart argues in this chapter, in the moment of their exportation to America from Paris (where most of the original postmodern theorizing was developed, especially in the work of Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard), something important was lost. Thus what might, in fact, have been usefully understood as a local phenomenon—the crisis of increasingly pessimistic intellectuals working in the decaying public institutions of the declining postindustrial nations of Western Europe—was improperly universalized as an almost nihilistic perspective announcing the end of politics, truth, the future, and, in Francis Fukuyama's infamous formulation, even of history itself.⁹

It is important to disentangle the two different narratives that Stuart constructs in this chapter, not least because they are told in a sequence which perhaps itself complicates matters. He begins with the question of Marxism's encounter with postmodern theory, moves from there to the deconstruction of postmodernism's own EurAm-centric presumptions, and then returns to the question of Marxism via his discussion of the merits and limitations of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of articulation. However, for purposes of exposition here, I will deal first with the question of Marxism's encounter with postmodernism and articulation and return later to the question of postmodernism's "EurAm-centrism."¹⁰

To take first the question of Marxism and articulation theory, while Stuart is positively appreciative of many of the insights generated by the discourse theory developed by Laclau and Mouffe, he is correspondingly dismissive of what he sees as the quite inadequate theories of power offered by both Baudrillard and Foucault, not least because both of them operate at such a level of abstraction as to find it difficult to make specific distinctions between, as Stuart puts it, "the *relative* power and distribution of different regimes of truth in the social formation at any one time" (emphasis added). For Stuart,

Laclau's work is crucial in understanding the contingent forms of connection between ideology and social forces in a way that breaks with the "necessitarian and reductionist logic which has dogged classical Marxist theories of ideology." He comments positively on the extent to which Laclau's approach allows us to develop many of Gramsci's fundamental insights into these issues.¹¹ In the end, however, he is determined to refuse the inflation of discourse theory, which he sees to have developed to the point where it is as much of an unhelpful "reductionism upward"—to the point where, famously, it can be claimed that nothing exists outside of discourse—as crude materialism was a reductionism downward. In this connection it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that, twenty years later, Derrida was still at pains to remind his deconstructionist followers of the significance of the ghosts of Marxism, which in his view continued to "haunt" contemporary intellectual life.¹²

To turn back to the question of postmodernism's blind spots, the central problem for Stuart is what he calls the "inexcusable ethnocentrism" of the high priests of postmodern theory—and what needs to be recognized is that their own cultural dominance is historically at an end. For him, postmodernism is also about "how the world dreams itself to be American"—and he is concerned to try and find a way between Habermas's intransigently backward-looking defense of the old Enlightenment project and Lyotard's naive celebration of the supposed postmodern collapse of all structures of meaning. He is certainly not persuaded by postmodernism's claims that the flood of representations has somehow caused an implosion of meaning in the new world of the "silent masses," such that political intervention is now inconceivable. In all of those ways, he insists, postmodernism itself plays an invidious ideological role: European intellectuals presume to declare whether or not the masses can any longer be represented, or when—and for whom—history has ended. Here his sentiments clearly chime with those of Edward Said, who regarded these perspectives as regrettably orientalist, and with Emmanuel Levinas, who would have categorized them as a form of "egology" or ontological imperialism.¹³ His position here is also close to Cornel West's comments when he derides Lyotard's tendency to uncritically generalize from his own local experience: "Who is he talking about . . . ? He and his friends hanging out on the Left Bank?"¹⁴ Stuart is entirely sympathetic to the postmodern critique which insists that neither Marxism nor any other analytical system can produce a finished theoretical paradigm of incontestable truths. However, he regards many of the authors of that critique as themselves insufficiently self-reflexive about their

own perspective—and there are also serious limits to what he will concede either to the relativism of discourse theory or to the idealism of the fully deconstructionist position.

NOTES

- 1 See Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1966).
- 2 Stuart Hall, David Held, and Tony McGrew, "Introduction," in *Modernity and Its Futures*, ed. Hall, Held, and McGrew (Cambridge: Polity/Open University, 1993), 13.
- 3 For a belated recognition of this issue in political science, see Francis Fukuyama's emphasis on the importance of trust as a social framework for economic activity in his *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).
- 4 As we have seen earlier, he despairs of the more populist/relativist forms of Cultural Studies, which speak only of cultures and discourses without reference to matters of institutions and structures.
- 5 See Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 45.
- 6 In this period there was a joke in circulation that pejoratively associated Althusser with the American functionalist tradition by using an Americanized spelling of his name—as "Al T. Husser."
- 7 Hall, "Problem of Ideology," 41; and Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2, no. 2 (1985).
- 8 Stuart's analysis here follows Barrington Moore Jr.'s approach to the crucial function of the particular political and legal forms for the extrusion of surplus value from the labor force, in explaining the historical development of different forms of dictatorship and democracy: *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Harmondsworth, UK: Peregrine, 1969). In some respects Moore's analysis itself shares some qualities with the "harder" form of Rex's distinctive "left Weberianism" of which Stuart speaks approvingly here.
- 9 See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
- 10 For the derivation of this phrase, David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1996), especially ch. 8, "Techno-Orientalism." It was originally an East Asian perspective on the North Atlantic trade bloc developed in the late 1980s, which saw little need to distinguish between Europe and America as partners in the dominant system of global economics of that period.
- 11 This might even also be seen, *sotto voce*, to implicitly signal a positive connection back to the work of E. P. Thompson on forms of class culture and

consciousness in *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, UK: Pelican, 1968).

- 12 Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx* (London: Routledge, 1996).
- 13 See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); and Emmanuel Levinas, "Beyond Intentionality," in *Philosophy in France Today*, ed. Alan Montefiore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 14 More specifically, Cornel West poses the question of how Lyotard can speak of "an increasing incredulity toward master narratives" when one looks at "the religious and ideological and national revivals in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union"—a comment that looks even more perspicacious a quarter of a century later: West, "Decentering Europe," *Critical Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (1991): 5.

The Hinterland of Science: Ideology and the Sociology of Knowledge

“Ideology” is a term which does not trip lightly off an English tongue. It has stubbornly refused to be “naturalized.” English political theory sometimes refers to “ideologies,” meaning simply “systematic bodies of ideas.” But the concept is largely descriptive—it plays no significant analytic role. Generally, the concept of “ideology” has never been fully absorbed into Anglo-Saxon social theory. In his important collection of essays published in 1949, Robert Merton included two essays on “The Sociology of Knowledge” and on “Karl Mannheim.”¹ In his introduction to this section, Merton self-consciously signaled these pieces as marking the “rediscovery” of the concept of ideology for American social science. This “rediscovery” was conducted in the context of a general *contrast* between two radically different styles of thought—the European (where the concept has played a significant role) and the American (where it had up to that point been largely absent). But Merton’s opening was not followed by a flood of new studies informed by this concept. What he called “the sociology of knowledge” has, until very recently, remained a minority interest in American empirical social science.

In his labor of rediscovery, Merton openly acknowledged that, “in this respect, as in others, Marxism is the storm centre of *Wissenssociologie* [the sociology of knowledge]. . . . We can trace out its formulations primarily in the writings of Marx and Engels.” The absence of an interest in the problem of ideology in American sociology thus clearly relates to the absence anywhere in this tradition of thought, until very recently, of any major open

confrontation with Marxist concepts. An interesting essay could be written on what concepts did duty, in American social theory, for the absent concept of “ideology”: for example, the notion of norms in structural functionalism and of “values” and the “central value system” in Parsons. Merton’s mind had undoubtedly been directed to this absence by the growing body of work in the study of mass communications and public opinion. But the concept of ideology was never rigorously applied to this promising area of work.²

Roger Bacon had called for a thoroughgoing investigation and critique of the roots of conventional wisdom—what he called a “criticism of the idols.” And Helvetius, a favorite of Marx’s, made much of the proposition that “our ideas are the necessary consequence of the societies in which we live.” But most of the recent “overviews” of the concept *ideology* agree that the word itself, in its modern meanings, originated with that group of *savants* in the French Revolution who were entrusted by the Convention of 1795 with the founding of a new center of revolutionary thought—an enterprise which was located in the newly founded Institut de France.³ It was to this group that the term *idéologues* was first applied. Their fate constitutes a salutary warning for all ideologues. For a time this group of thinkers constituted the spokesmen for revolutionary ideas—the French Revolution “in thought.” Their aim was to realize in practice what they conceived as the “promise” of the Revolution: the freedom of thought and expression. But they were hoisted on the horns of a dilemma which has dogged the concept of “ideology” from its inception. As George Lichtheim points out, they were concerned with “ideology” in *two* senses, which were logically incompatible. First, they saw the relation between history and thought—the tide of the Revolution and the “ideas” which expressed it. But they also wanted to advance certain “true” ideas—ideas which would be true whatever historical conjuncture they were located in. They thus compromised—“for the sake of ideas”—with that historical agent who they imagined had the power to make their ideas come true: Napoleon Bonaparte. This was an ill-judged faith. Napoleon took them up in 1799, in the “moment” of Brumaire, in order to win support in the class where the *savants* had greatest influence—the educated middle classes. He even signed his proclamations to the army during the 1798–1799 period, “Général en Chef, Membre de l’Institut.” But by 1803, in the “moment” of his Concordat with the Church, he abandoned them, deliberately setting out to destroy the Institut’s core, the “*classe des sciences morales et politiques*, from which liberal and republican ideas radiated throughout the educational estab-

ishment.” “The story of Bonaparte’s degeneration,” Lichtheim concludes, “can be written in terms of his relation with the *ideologues*.”

The interest in ideology did not, however, altogether disappear with the disbanding of this group. Destutt de Tracy inaugurated a “natural history of ideas,” treating the history of the contents and evolution of the human mind as a species of zoology—an enterprise whose warrant he claimed to have found in such sources as Locke and Condillac. He called his study *Éléments d'idéologie* (1801–1815). But de Tracy’s work was shadowed by the same contradiction as that of his predecessors. He wanted to unmask the historicity of ideas—but he also wanted this unmasking to yield a true and universal knowledge of human nature. His “materialist theme” was “crossed by a normative purpose.” The contradictory nature of this project revealed its true Enlightenment roots. Even Comte, the direct inheritor of this line of inquiry, did not escape its contradiction. In line with his massive evolutionary schemas, Comte also conceived of a branch of “positive science” which would be devoted to the evolution of the human mind as a “social” process. But he too thought that this study would reveal that the social was subject to “invariable natural laws.” Lichtheim describes this as a “chilling thought” which, despite itself, aimed “to sustain reason’s faith in itself.” What these and other examples from this period suggest is that, from its modern inception, the concept of “ideology” has been shadowed by its “Other”—Truth, Reason, Science.

Whatever else it signals, the concept *ideology* makes a direct reference to the role of *ideas*. It also entails the proposition that ideas are not self-sufficient, that their roots lie elsewhere, that something central about ideas will be revealed if we can discover the nature of the determinacy which *non*-ideas exert over ideas. The study of “ideology” thus also holds out the promise of a critique of *idealism*, as a way of explaining how ideas arise. However, the difficulty is that, once the study of ideas is placed at the center of an investigation, an immense theoretical labor is required to prevent such a study *drifting*, willy-nilly, into idealism. This dilemma is clearly revealed in the history of one of the major philosophical currents which has informed the study of ideas and ideologies—the tradition inaugurated by Kant.

Kantianism (with its roots in both Cartesian rationalism and Lockean empiricism) took the abstract Enlightenment notion of “Reason” and subjected it to a thoroughgoing critique. Kant asserted the primacy of the structures and categories of “mind” over matter. It was “mind” which organized experience into intelligible wholes. Mind “constructed” reality. The trace of

Kantianism is to be found in many of the subsequent theories of “ideology,” though—because it was itself a critical idealism—it did not promote a study of the *historical* roots of knowledge. The story is not so straightforward with Kant’s main rival—Hegel—even though Hegel “out-idealized” Kant’s reluctant idealism. For it was Hegel’s aim to heal the Kantian division of the world into the knowledge of things, produced by our mental categories, and “things in themselves,” which were radically unknowable. Hegel’s method for overcoming this discontinuity was the dialectic. The dialectic proposed a specific conception of the relation between knowledge and the world, between mind and matter, between the Idea and History: the relation of the dialectical supersession of each by the other. Once the Hegelian synthesis had been toppled from its idealist base and inverted—as it was by his radical disciples—it *did* once again produce the problem of the historical roots of knowledge as a theoretical problem. Thus for Feuerbach (who carried through the “inversion” of Hegel in its most radical form) and in the work of the Left Hegelians who followed him, a task of central importance lay in unmasking the human and sensuous roots of *religious* ideas.⁴ Feuerbach’s work, Marx observed, “consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis.” But “he overlooks the fact that after completing this work the chief thing remains to be done . . . the secular basis . . . must itself therefore first be understood in its contradiction and then . . . revolutionized in practice.”⁵ Here Marx explicitly advanced to a materialist theory of ideology on the back of Feuerbach’s inversion of Hegel.

For Hegel particular knowledges—one-sided knowledge, knowledge at any particular “moment”—were always partial. Analytic Reason could not overcome this limit. But in Dialectical Reason Hegel glimpsed the possibility of a truly universal knowledge. If one “moment” consisted of the objectivation of Mind in History, another “moment” represented the appropriation of History in Mind. Thoroughgoing idealist as he was, Hegel fixed the final apotheosis in the second of those synthetic leaps—in the disappearance of the “Real” into the “Rational.” Then—just like the Revolutionary *savants* before him—he could not resist actually locating this Universal Moment in a particular historical conjuncture. The savants chose Napoleon; Hegel chose the Prussian state. This “concretization” served Hegel no better than Napoleon had served the *savants*.

Hegel recognized that concepts were historical: but, he argued, “historical concepts possess true generality because they relate to a universal agent that unfolds through the histories of particular peoples and civilizations.” Thus,

Marx argued, for Hegel, “conceptual thinking is the real human being. . . . The conceptual world as such is thus the only reality, the movement of the categories appears as the real act of production.”⁶ But the Hegelian system, once “inverted,” led to precisely the opposite conclusion: “the real”—what Feuerbach called “sensuous human nature”—is the only motor of history; ideas are simply the projections of the essential human nature and human *praxis* which they reflect. It was from this “inverted dialectic” that Marx proceeded, by a further break, to inaugurate a *historical* materialist theory of ideology. (Though, as we know, his first attempt to do so in *The German Ideology* still contains traces of the “inversion” he was breaking from, particularly in its undifferentiated notion of “human *praxis*.”) It is certainly within this general framework that we must understand Marx’s famous assertion that “it is not consciousness which determines being but . . . social being determines consciousness.”⁷ But the materialist theory of ideology must be understood as a *break* with Hegel’s system—not merely as setting Hegel’s idealism on its materialist feet; since, as Althusser has shown, the inversion of a system is still the system inverted.⁸ For Marx, Feuerbach simply resolved religion into its “human essence.” But the point was to “rethink” human essence as “the ensemble of social relations.” Thus, the Left Hegelians unmasked the “truly human roots” of religion: Marx unmasked the historical roots of the Left Hegelians. He called this his “settling of accounts” with his “erstwhile philosophical conscience.”

The materialist path out of Hegel and Kant was neither the only nor indeed the most dominant residue of this theoretical encounter. In German thought, the problem of ideology is *framed*, for the rest of the century, by a double exposure: caught, as Gareth Stedman Jones has argued, between the dissolution of the Kantian and the dissolution of the Hegelian systems.⁹ Each leaves its distinctive trace. This circuitous path is not without its surprising short-cuts back to Marxism. We refer here to the line which winds its tortuous way from Hegel through Dilthey, Simmel, and Scheler, to Max Weber and the neo-Kantians; and thus to Lukács, Goldmann, and Mannheim. The starting point for this line of descent lay in Hegel’s conception that, until its final unity with Spirit, Mind was continuously, through the process of the dialectic, *objectivating itself* in palpable forms *in* the world (History). Mind was given what Hegel called “objective form.” For a lengthy period, the study of ideology is nothing more nor less than a study of Objective Mind.

Though Hegel was no evolutionist, he was not so far removed from the impulse of the Enlightenment as to be incapable of conceiving this endless

dialectic as arranged into distinct stages or epochs: the “Age of Religion,” the “Age of Poetry,” the “Age of Science”—crowned, of course, by the “Age of Philosophy.” These epochs had a shadowy history sketched within them, though they were in no sense precisely rooted in a historical periodization. Indeed, like much Enlightenment thought, they began with what *looked* like a historical moment, but was, in fact, something rather more like the essential moment of genesis of all human history: that is, with the Greeks. It was the neo-Hegelians—Dilthey above all (1833–1911)—who really seized on this notion of Mind objectivating itself through History in a sequence of distinct stages; and who set about constructing both an “objective social psychology” and an “objective history”—a history of the stages of human thought—on its foundations.¹⁰ Ideas, Dilthey argued, could be conceived and *studied* as a series of forms, arranged progressively into stages extending through history. Each stage was characterized by its own “style of thought.” The many different objectivations of each period could be studied as a *whole*, because they all reflected a particular “outlook” on the world, a world-vision, a *Weltanschauung*. Distinct *Weltanschauungen* could be identified for each period, for each society. Dilthey’s notion was thus easily extended into the idea that each nation or “people” possessed its own distinctive *Weltanschauung* or “Spirit.” This idea connected with earlier ideas of the “Volk,” stemming from German Romanticism, and fed into subsequent ideas about the peculiar historical character and destiny of each nation or national culture. A central theme in German thought could thus be plotted in terms of the complex history of this definition of “Spirit” (*Geist*), in its successive manifestations through to its debased coinage by fascist ideology in the 1930s. Marx once accounted for the radical etherialization of this whole tradition in terms of the “over-development” of German theorizing in contrast with the backwardness of its historical and economic development. But the career of the concept of “Spirit” also reflected to a significant degree the complex political history of German unification and the “peculiar” form in which Germany emerged as a nation-state.

The transformation of the problem of “ideologies” into the study of *Weltanschauungen* constitutes something like the *dominant* tradition in German thought for most of the nineteenth century. It displays a complex evolution. It contributes, as we have seen, to the emergence of German nationalism. It fed into the great schools of German “historicism.”¹¹ It nourished—through its attention to “styles of thought”—a distinguished tradition of art history.¹² Its legacy is clearly to be seen in the work of Lukács: in his translation of the

Marxist notion of “ideology” as “world-vision,” as well as in his use of the concept of *Weltanschauung* to analyze literary texts and periods.¹³ Lukács’s early works, *The Soul and Its Forms* and *The Theory of the Novel*, are directly Hegelian and Diltheyan in inspiration—especially the former, with its succession of “forms”—epic, lyric poetry, novel. In his later work, Lukács tried to relate particular “world-views” to class outlooks, but the underlying notion of *Weltanschauung* is never liquidated. The concept that each nation has its own distinctive “world-view” is transposed, in *History and Class Consciousness*, into the notion that each class has its “objective” world-view. The lingering presence of this concept thus accounts, in part, for the radical historicism of that text.

Via the early Lukács, the tradition passes directly to Lucien Goldmann. It forms the whole theoretical basis of *The Hidden God*, Goldmann giving it a further Marxist or sociohistorical gloss. But many of the same ideas are present, in a not dissimilar form, in the work of Karl Mannheim and in what has been called Mannheim’s “bourgeois Marxism.” Mannheim’s concern with ideology is, of course, central to his best-known work, *Ideology and Utopia*—a text in which he tries out his own resolution to the problem which has dogged this problematic from its inception: if ideas are “historically relative,” where can “truth” be found? (Mannheim’s answer is in the relatively un-relativistic thought of the detached intelligentsia). But the connections with Dilthey are even more pronounced in Mannheim’s earlier studies, for example the essays “Conservative Thought” (treated as a *Weltanschauung*) and “On the Interpretation of *Weltanschauung*.”¹⁴ The history of this series of transformations of the elements of the Hegelian system therefore marks out one of the seminal points of confluence between a *certain kind of* Marxism and a *certain kind of* historicism—both deeply colored by their Hegelian moment of inspiration.

The study of culture as Objective Mind (*Geisteswissenschaft*) and of history as the “objectivations of Spirit” (*Geistesgeschichte*) also entailed a particular *method* of studying them. Human objectivations required their own distinctive “mode of knowledge” different from the objects of the natural world. This method required an act of “understanding” (*Verstehen*)—a reconstruction of embodied meanings through imaginative projection or “empathy.” This enabled the successive manifestations of Objective Mind through history, and the “world-views” they expressed, to be grasped as “wholes.” Particular manifestations had meaning only in relation to the “wholes” (or totality) which they expressed. Spirit, the essence of history, could thus be

seen as this larger pattern or configuration of any epoch, manifested or expressed in each of its forms. The method of studying culture through “interpretation” was called *hermeneutics*; and the procedure of relating parts to whole and whole to parts in an endless process of “double fitting” was described as “the hermeneutic circle.”

The debate between hermeneutics and more positivist methods of analysis came to constitute the site of a major theoretical debate—the “struggle over method”—to which the sociologist Max Weber made a major contribution. Weber was not a Diltheyean, though the concept of the “uniqueness” of culture, exemplified in his essays in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, is more than fleetingly inflected by historicist formulations. But he did engage with the hermeneutic tradition when he came to formulate his own definition of social action. The argument turned on the question of whether there were, in fact, two sets of “things” to be studied—the world of Culture (ideas, human actions, Spirit) and the world of Nature: each with its appropriate method of analysis. The cultural world would then require a “historicist hermeneutics,” based on the imaginative reconstruction of the structures of past thoughts and actions; while the natural world would be subject to a positivist or causal-analytic mode of explanation. This debate divided the German intellectual world. The Marburg School became a center for the stricter Kantian approach to this question. The figures associated with Marburg argued for a radical split between the two areas and the two methods, with primacy of place being given to positivist approaches, as the truly scientific one. Heidelberg was more “historicist” in orientation, and thus more receptive to the work of Dilthey and to the anti-positivism of the influential sociologist Georg Simmel. Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert, against whom Max Weber polemicized in his *Methodology* essays, lectured at Heidelberg. So did their distinguished pupil, the philosopher Emil Lask. The group of young European intellectuals much influenced by Lask included Georg Lukács, whose early work, as we have seen, was steeped in the *Geisteswissenschaft* tradition.

Weber, in his search for an adequate sociological method, also addressed himself to the same problems. He attempted to combine the best in each, while more radical Kantians, like Lask, presented the problem as a stark choice. Thus in his *Methodology* essays Weber argued that Culture, the product of a historical rather than a natural process, had its own “uniqueness”; the study of Culture could not be expected to yield universal laws of the kind which, from a positivist perspective, would have made that study properly

“scientific.” On the other hand, he wanted a more empirical method than that offered by pure hermeneutics. Weber thus settled, methodologically at least, for a compromise position. The building up of heuristic models—ideal types—each of which accentuated a different aspect of a phenomenon (a position which foreshadows Mannheim’s *relationism*), was one way of ensuring a more comprehensive, and at the same time more carefully prescribed, view of the phenomenon than a simple empathizing with it could offer. So far as explanation was concerned, Weber argued that cultural objects and historical events required *both* hermeneutic (interpretive) *and* causal-historical understanding. The objective conditions producing an event or a cultural objectivation had to be rigorously constructed, so to speak, from the outside, showing where possible how the causal chain produced the “result” under analysis in that particular form, rather than any other. But this same path would also have to be traced “inside”—in terms of the logic of its meanings. Causal-historical explanations, Weber argued, also had to be “adequate at the level of meaning.” There are many examples offered by Weber in the course of his argument for this methodological compromise in his *Methodology of the Social Sciences*. But the most important fruit of this Weberian synthesis, from our point of view, is certainly Weber’s best-known contribution to the substantive analysis of an ideology, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber explicitly counterposed his attempt to reconstruct the “inner logic” of the relation of Protestantism to the rise of capitalism in Europe against what *he* defined as the one-sidedness of a materialist or Marxist explanation of ideologies. The latter he claimed to understand as a form of economic reductionism. The debate has raged ever since as to whether *The Protestant Ethic* is in fact necessarily contrary to a Marxist theory of ideology. In this study, in typical Weberian manner, both Capitalism and Protestantism are constructed as “ideal types”—one-sided accentuations. Sometimes Weber appears to be arguing that, of course. Protestantism could be looked at from another angle—a more materialist one: and that that accentuation, too, would reveal its relative truth (though not, as he says Marxism claims, its whole truth). This is not simply a gesture on Weber’s part, since his subsequent work on the world religions does examine the religions of Judaism, India, and ancient China in terms of the sociological structures which sustained them. This rather more “sociological” approach—in the traditional sense, of treating religion from the viewpoint of religious institutions—is, of course, no more “Marxist” than his method in *The Protestant Ethic*. Elsewhere, in the latter text, Weber does characterize his work as explicitly “anti-Marxist”;

and—so far as both method and theoretical emphasis is concerned—this characterization was undoubtedly correct.

The relation of Protestantism to capitalism was not, of itself, a non-Marxist question. Both Marx and Engels pointed to the connection.¹⁵ It became a favorite theme of inquiry in the German historicist school. In England, the work of R. H. Tawney and Christopher Hill shows that it is possible to give this question sustained attention without falling into an idealist problematic about the necessary primacy of ideas in history. Indeed, Hill's work suggests that an attention to the crucial role of ideology and religion is a necessary feature of a Marxist analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in the seventeenth century. It could even be argued that it was Hill's decision to treat the religious, ideological, and intellectual dimensions of the "English Revolution" seriously in their own terms—and not simply as a simple reflection of economic forces—which saved his work from its earlier tendency to economic reductionism: saved it, that is, not from but *for* Marxism. (Marxism is not an economic reductionism, although in the period of the Second International Weber could be forgiven for sometimes thinking that it was.) To say this is to say something more than that an attention to "ideas" ought to be added to an analysis of economic forces. It is to advance a proposition about the Marxist theory of ideology, properly formulated.

Marxism attempts to understand a social formation as a "complex unity," composed of different levels which exhibit their own "relative autonomy" while being determinate "in the last instance." A particular conjuncture like the seventeenth-century Revolution is the result of the accumulation of contradictions stemming from each of those levels and the overdetermination of effects between the relatively autonomous instances. It is precisely in giving to any social formation the full complexity of this articulation, and in not assuming a "given," simple, or immediate correspondence between the levels, that Marxism *breaks* with the expressive totality central to—among other traditions of thought—the *Geisteswissenschaft* approach outlined above. The fact that the appearance of the bourgeoisie on the historical stage in the seventeenth century took the ideological form of a clash between religious ideologies had—to use a current phrase—*pertinent effects*. The superstructure has its own effectivity, even if Marxism requires us to think it as determined by the economic "in the last instance."¹⁶ Ideologies are not self-sufficient; but in the Marxist theory of ideology, they are not empty and false forms, pure figments of the imagination, either. Otherwise they would not constitute an important area of analysis for Marxism. Anyone who seriously

attends to the problems of a Marxist analysis of the Northern Ireland crisis would be hard put to say that the articulation of class struggle through religious ideologies is not a pertinent feature. In so far, then, as the study of religious ideology constitutes a real, and not merely an “epiphenomenal,” problem for Marxist theory, Weber’s work has something of importance on which Marxists can draw. He makes a significant contribution to the analysis of the *internal structuration* of an emergent ideological formation. His radical weakness emerges precisely at the point—a central one for all Marxist theories of ideology—where he is required to show the *articulation between* the ideological instance and other instances. His failure at this point clearly relates to his ideal-typical and nominalist way of defining “capitalism” (essentially, in terms of rationalized and regulated economic activity) and the absence of a theory of class formations in relation to an analysis conducted at the level of the capitalist mode of production.

The detailed argument of *The Protestant Ethic*—which is by any reckoning an intellectual *tour de force*—cannot be rehearsed here. But some points which bear more generally on the theory of ideology ought nevertheless to be noted:

1. The essay works by means of what Weber calls an “elective affinity” between the structure of Puritan ideas (above all, of the Calvinist variant) and the structure of the *rationalization* of capital accumulation necessary to the development of capitalism. That is, it opposes any notion that economic change *directly* provides the *content* of capitalist ideas. Instead, it suggests that what is important is the “homology” between what capitalism needed in order to become a sanctioned system of regulated economic activity, and the impulse to planned and routinized “activity” in Puritanism. It adds to this a middle, mediating term: the Puritan/capitalist “character structure.” It is worth noting that the move from content to “homologies of structures” is the key theoretical advance represented in Goldmann’s *Hidden God*: and that the attention to “character structure” is an aspect to which both the “Frankfurt School” and Wilhelm Reich were, later, to pay considerable attention.¹⁷ This approach, though radically departing from a Marxist theory of ideology, does not contest Marx’s proposition (in *The German Ideology*) that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas”: it suggests, rather, one way in which, historically, this may have come about.

2. Thus, *The Protestant Ethic* suggests one approach to the question of how ideas might work to create in a class that “inner compulsion” to order its actions in certain ways: it points to the “psychological” aspect of ideologies,

without falling into an individual psychologism. It also suggests how an ideology may serve to break the hold of traditional ideas and give “new” ideas a compelling force for that class in which they take root.

3. It suggests that, as well as the “logic” which connects ideologies to economic forces—Puritanism to capitalism—ideologies have their own, complex, internal articulation whose specificity must be accounted for. In this latter respect, Weber’s demonstration is startling: for it turns on the paradox that the most secular, materialist of economic systems—capitalism—emerged at the level of ideology, paradoxically, *not* through the gradual erosion and secularization of Catholicism but through the intensified *spiritualization* of Puritanism. It is only much later, when the transformation has been accomplished, that the religious component—what Fredric Jameson once called “the vanishing mediator”¹⁸—can disappear. Thus, though ideology and economic development exhibit, in the long term, the same tendential direction, they are articulated through the *differences*, rather than through the correspondences, in their respective logics. Europe becomes capitalist—at the ideological level—not by moving further from God, but by setting everything, including man’s worldly activity, directly under His scrutiny. A theory of the “relative autonomy” of ideology *could*, therefore, be rescued from Weber’s work, without doing violence to his argument. It must be added, of course, that this is certainly *not* how Weber himself put it. He did not go on to develop anything approaching a “regional” theory of ideology. In his later studies, he simply inverted the point of view. He drew no general deductions for theory from this *virtuoso* study. In general terms, Weber remained to the end a “methodological individualist.” He continued to search for a resolution to the problem of knowledge within the framework of neo-Kantian, not Marxist, theory.

Three other lines of descent from the German tradition we have been examining must be briefly indicated. The first concerns what, earlier, we called certain important short-circuits in the tradition back to Marxism. The paradigm case here is that of Lukács. But Lukács is important to this part of the story because of his general position at the nexus of two traditions—post-Hegelian idealism and Marxism. Lukács, who is often treated as the perpetrator of a too-simple concept of ideologies—as “world-views”—sometimes also appears as its victim. He fell under the spell of *Geisteswissenschaft* as a gifted intellectual in the heady climate of the Heidelberg School, as he has himself acknowledged. To escape the lingering strains of positivism he tried to go “further back”—to Hegel himself, in *The Young Hegel*. In order to escape

from Hegel he turned to Marx—but the path from one to the other was ineradicable: the absent-presence of Hegel lay across the route Lukács took to Marx, like the sky-trail of a vanished aircraft. En route, he passed by way of the German irrationalists—that final revenge which Hegelian metaphysics wreaked on European thought.

“Irrationalism” constitutes the second line of descent. The “struggle over method” had polarized into two main camps—positivism and historicism. But historicism was itself a fusion of many different strands. It included German Romanticism, which had never been fully tamed by the efforts of figures like Dilthey to make the study of Objective Mind (the “beyond of Science”) orderly and, in its own way, “scientific.” Mannheim’s study of German “Conservative Thought” brings out clearly its irrationalist roots. And at the end of the century, this impulse surfaced again in European thought—this time in the form of Vitalism. For Nietzsche, who made himself its most forceful spokesman, there was no guiding philosophy or method left at all. There was only the general *debunking* of all ideas, and their savage reduction to the sordid interests masked within their high-flown generalities. “We live,” Nietzsche asserted, “only through illusions . . . the foundations of everything great and alive rest upon illusion. The pathos of truth leads to destruction.”¹⁹ Nietzsche believed that the contradiction inside the notion of ideology had at last been dismantled: Reason *was* a ruse: all that was left was the naked power-struggle between illusions, between interests. The most successful illusion was that which evinced the greatest “will to power.” We know what Hitler and the skilled masters of illusion who gathered around him in the 1930s did with that idea. They translated Nietzsche’s fantasy into reality: they set about constructing a *Götzendämmerung*. When the Frankfurt School came, under the circumstances of fully empowered fascism, to examine the problem of “ideology,” they therefore had strong reasons to treat it as requiring not much more than the analysis of the mass manipulation of administered “illusions.” In their efforts to reconstruct how the Age of Reason had produced, as its result, the Destruction of Reason, Adorno and Horkheimer were forced to look back at the irrationalist element which, they argued, had always been present in the Enlightenment dream: they unearthed what they called “The Dialectic of Enlightenment.”²⁰

The third line of descent really followed on, not from *Geisteswissenschaft* directly, but from Max Weber’s measured response to it. Though, in his *Methodology* essays, Weber had entered directly into the debate with *Geisteswissenschaft*, in his general sociology he remained, as we have said, a “methodological

individualist.” This does not mean that he believed all social phenomena could be reduced to the level of concrete historical individuals. He meant that sociological concepts, to be “adequate at the level of meaning,” had to be constructed, *heuristically*, in terms of the *typical* actions, meanings, and orientations which could be ascribed to *typical* individual actors. Hence his definition of social action was the ascription of typical motivations to an “individual” whose actions were oriented to “the other.” All the sociological concepts which followed on from this were necessarily heuristic devices—second-order constructs. One of the key figures who attempted to develop a more rigorously *sociological* approach, from this Weberian synthesis, was Alfred Schutz.²¹

Schutz was a “phenomenologist” who left his native Vienna to work as an assistant to the great phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. Schutz accepted the argument of phenomenology that all that could properly be “known” consisted of the contents and structures of *consciousness*. Whereas Marxism tended to treat consciousness as a realm of “false appearances” (Marx, of course, added *necessary* false appearances), phenomenology took the opposite position. Everything outside of consciousness had to be “bracketed out.” Meaning was the product of intention, and consciousness was the domain, *par excellence*, of intentionality. What could be studied was the intentionality of individual consciousnesses—and the interaction between consciousnesses, the realm of *inter-subjectivity*. In its pure form, certainly, phenomenology was a radical retreat into mentalism. Even that “drama” in the world of social action which Weber had tentatively grasped was transposed entirely into consciousness and the interchanges between consciousnesses.

Schutz held firmly to this phenomenological perspective. But he believed that it could be developed and extended into a rigorously “phenomenological *sociology*.”²² The problem was how to account for phenomena in the “real” social world from this phenomenological starting point. Here, Schutz once more made a stealthy return to the terrain of Objective Mind. The intentionality of consciousness was realized—*objectivated*—in the world through activity. Men then had to live in the structures of meaning which they had objectivated: the meanings inside their heads had “taken form” in the world outside. But these objective “worlds” were not the product alone of the single intentional consciousness, but of the inter-subjective exchanges *between* consciousnesses. Meaning was therefore produced through this reciprocity—the reciprocity or alignment of perspectives. This “reciprocity of perspectives” was the foundation—the common ground—for the reciprocal

processes of “meaning establishment” and “meaning interpretation.” Its most active basis was face-to-face exchange, where each actor is co-present to the other: where they are “consociates.” They share the same perspectives, the same “history,” and constantly come to “construct social reality” together. This mutually constructed space constituted the “lived” inter-subjective world. Through the medium—the storehouse—of language and sign-systems, these actors could “make active” other domains of existence not actually present to them (through the construction of “typical” constructs). They could also summon up the past. Though the shared ground between “consociates” constituted, for Schutz, the most massively “present,” the most taken-for-granted, sphere of reality, the whole of social and historical life could in fact be theoretically mapped out in terms of these basic processes of meaning construction/meaning interpretation. Since everything that had ever been in the world was the product of intentional inter-subjective consciousness, everything was *meaning*. Thoughts or references to others not present “to consciousness”—whether simply absent or deriving from the past—as well as “theories” *about* social actions were simply second- or third-order constructs.

Language enabled all the domains not actually present in face-to-face interchange to be preserved, stored, recalled. Constantly repeated or institutionalized actions had the effect of rendering the meanings active in them stable, standardized. The meanings which informed such actions no longer appeared to constitute a domain of meaning at all. Meaning, here, had become standardized, institutionalized, “backgrounded.” The “typifying medium *par excellence* . . . is the vocabulary and syntax of everyday life.” These constructs, once the product of intending consciousness but now lodged “in the world,” achieved a *facticity* of their own. They became objectivated meanings, capable of acting back upon the subjects who inhabited them, as if from the “outside.” The activity (praxis) of meaning construction which produced them has been lost to consciousness (alienated). They appeared now to impose their meanings, to constrain and rule men, from the outside. As Sartre, who was powerfully influenced by this general paradigm, put it, “Thus significations come from man and from his project, but they are inscribed everywhere in things and in the order of things. Everything at every instant is always signifying, and significations reveal to us men and relations among men across the structures of our society.”²³ Though the language which Sartre employs here is far removed from the terminology of “phenomenology,” and draws as much from early Marx as it does from Husserl, it inhabits very much the same paradigm: ultimately, for the purposes of this exposition, this

is a problematic rooted in what has come to be called the “Subject-Object dialectic.” In whatever form it appears, the presence of the Subject-Object dialectic always testifies to the unexorcized “ghost of Hegel.”

Schutz argued that the many various objectivations in the world correspond to the different levels or layers of consciousness. Reality was structured into different “regions,” each with its appropriate layer of consciousness: the “multiple realities” of play, dream, trance, theatre, theory, ceremony, and so on.²⁴ As one moved from one realm of social reality to another, so each “proposed” its own scheme of interpretation: bringing one mode of consciousness to the fore and backgrounding the rest. The most sedimented region of reality and of consciousness was that sector of reality which men had to take most for granted, since it formed the basis of their everyday, ordinary actions. This was the realm of “everyday life”: and the mode of consciousness appropriate to it was that which was the most taken-for-granted of all the modes: the domain of common sense. When we operate “in common sense,” Schutz argued, we are hardly aware at all that we are operating in a domain of constructed meanings. We simply take it for granted. Schutz proposed that sociology should concern itself, above all, with “the structure of the commonsense world of everyday life.”

In the work of Schutz, we see the “sociology of knowledge” taken to its most extreme point. We are no longer concerned with the relation *between* social knowledge and social relations. Social relations are conceived as, essentially, structures of knowledge (provided we treat “knowledge” in its widest, everyday sense, and do not confuse it with systematic ideas, with “ideologies” in their more limited sense). Berger and Luckmann, the modern sociologists who, in *The Social Construction of Reality*, have tried to advance this line to its farthest limits, put the point succinctly: “The social reality of everyday life is thus apprehended in a continuum of typifications. . . . Social structure is the sum of these typifications and the recurrent patterns of interactions established by means of them.”

It is in *this* form, above all, that the “sociology of knowledge” has come to exert a powerful influence within the dominant traditions of American sociology. The later schools of “symbolic interactionism” and of “ethnomethodology” are direct extrapolations from it.²⁵

In general, the sociology of knowledge has a complex position in relation to the theory of ideology. Ideas are no longer treated in terms of their historical roots, the classes which subscribe to them, the specific conjunctures in which they arise, their effectivity in winning the consent of the dominated

classes to the way the world is defined and understood by the dominant classes. The relation of the ideological instance to other instances in a social formation has been obliterated. Their specific practico-historical function is lost. Ideas have been given a far wider and more inclusive range: they form the background to *every* social process. Indeed, it would be more correct to say that social processes are treated essentially in terms of ideas. They are preminent because *it is through ideas that we construct social reality itself*. There is no objective reality—and hence there can be no “scientific” knowledge of it. There are only the different “takes on reality,” lodged in the different perspectives which social actors bring to the world. The area of everyday social interactions only *feels* like a substantial sector of reality, because it is the zone in which the vast majority of individual perspectives overlap.

Thus, whatever insights can be rescued for a Marxist theory of ideology from this tradition, it must be recognized that each is generated by a quite different problematic. Marx wrote *The German Ideology* precisely to show that the historical development of society could not be reconstructed “from what men say, imagine, conceive . . . from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived.” Phenomenology must assume that there is nothing to historical reality *but* what men say, imagine, and conceive. (We must add that, if, for Marxism, history does not consist of what men say, imagine, and conceive, it is still a problem *for* Marxism to account for why men say, imagine, and conceive what they do, where these “thoughts” arise, and what is their degree of effectivity. But this is a different problem.) True, for Schutz, the world is not *wholly* reduced to the thoughts in men’s heads; for he was concerned with how thoughts gained an objective facticity in the world, and thus, by shaping human actions, affected how reality was constructed. But this partial dislocation of the “pure” phenomenological impulse did not take him back to Marx, nor did it point in that direction. It pointed instead to another—and quite unexpected—convergence: a *rendezvous* of phenomenology with the tradition of positive social science as represented by Durkheim and his “school.”

Durkheim’s position on this question was misunderstood in his day and has been much misrepresented since.²⁶ A major factor in this must be attributed to the selective manner in which Durkheim’s work has been appropriated (expropriated might be more accurate) into mainstream American empirical social science.²⁷ Durkheim is regarded as the “father” of positive social science *because* he rejected all the Germanic nonsense about ideas: about Mind and Spirit. He consigned “ideas” to a little black box not because

they were unimportant but because they could not be analyzed. Instead, he determined to treat what *could* be analyzed—patterned social interaction governed by norms and channeled by institutional structures. The observable aspects of these had to be treated as if they exhibited the hardness and consistency of objects in the natural world. Hence the famous admonition to “treat social facts as things.”²⁸ Durkheim did believe that social phenomena had a reality of their own—a reality *sui generis*—and that they must be analyzed by rigorous and objective methods of study. In all these senses, he stood foursquare within the tradition of French positivism.

What is usually left out of this account is that those famous “facts” which Durkheim wanted to treat as “things” were social actions *informed by ideas*—or to put it in more positivist language, action governed by rules and norms: rule-governed behavior. It was the constraining effects of the “rules of social life” upon individual actions which made “society” possible for Durkheim—and, at the same time, by making behavior systematic, constituted it as the possible object of a positive science. Hence Durkheim’s concern with method: with things arranged as classifications, with the discovery of “the rule,” with the “type” and “rate” of social phenomena. It was because he despaired of the capacity of hermeneutics to give us an adequate knowledge of these things that he turned to the positive method. He was certainly not uninterested in how ideas informed actions. His question was: how do you discover what norms are operating? how weak or strong the norms are (and therefore what the degree of social solidarity is)? how unified or plural, obligatory or optional they are? Rather than ask what was the “intention” concealed in the mind of the individual actor, Durkheim began at the other end: from the codified legal or moral system of ideas. For these were the “collective representations” of social relations, and in them at least, one could find, in a studyable form, those “rules” which men had thought it worthwhile to embody in the formal system of the law. In this sense, Durkheimian positivism self-consciously closed itself off from that whole Subject-Object dialectic which Hegel had inaugurated. Positivism chose to start with *already objectivated social reality*: with the facticity which the “rules” of social life had achieved, and their constraining force over action. It treated the “knowable” world as, already, a reification. And, despite the very different routes by which they arrived at this point, it did establish a certain common terrain between Durkheimian positivism and sociological phenomenology.

Despite appearances, then, Durkheim belonged to the neo-Kantian tradition. “Noumenal” reality had to be studied through its forms of

appearance—through “phenomenal” reality. Two related concerns served to inflect this neo-Kantian position in rather different directions—leading to what can only be described as “two” Durkheims. The first was a classic concern with the nature, degree, and types of social solidarity. He followed earlier theorists here in believing that the bonds of social solidarity had been immensely weakened in societies of individual competition (i.e., capitalist market societies). This weakening was, precisely, to be seen in the loosening of the constraining power of “the rules” over individual behavior. The condition, typical of such societies, in which actions were insufficiently “ruled” by norms, he called *anomic*. This is the classic terrain of positivist sociology; and to it Durkheim devoted some of his major work, including *The Division of Labour*, *Suicide*, and *The Rules of Sociological Method*. It was *this* Durkheim which American sociology appropriated.

But Durkheim also believed that social integration depended on *normative* integration—or, as Pierre Bourdieu has recently put it, that “logical integration is the pre-condition of moral integration.” “Normative” integration depended in turn on the strength or weakness of the norms in society—or what Durkheim called the *conscience collective*. But the source of the norms and rules was *society itself*. Thus logical categories had society as their source of origin. It was “society”—the source of the normative—which made the rules “sacred,” and therefore binding, and “society” which men worshipped. This was the central argument of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

The seminal text in which Durkheim worked out this part of his theory was that which he wrote with his pupil, Marcel Mauss: *Primitive Classification*. In it Durkheim set out to show how the cognitive categories and mental classifications which “primitives” used to think their world were in fact modeled on social relations. Society did not—as rather crude functionalists assumed—provide the content of social taxonomies. Rather, Durkheim believed, following Kant, that what society did was to provide the *categories* in which men “thought” their world. Whereas Kant was concerned with the most abstract categories—space, time—Durkheim was concerned essentially with *social* categories. It was this line of thought which provided Durkheim’s main inspiration for his French followers and collaborators, and which distinguished the group of the *Année Sociologique* which he gathered around him.²⁹

It is hardly surprising, then, that when Claude Lévi-Strauss succeeded to the Chair of Social Anthropology at the Collège de France, and delivered the inaugural lecture which declared that the centerpiece of Social Anthropology

should be the study of “the life of signs at the heart of social life,” he was able to defend this enterprise as nothing more nor less than the resumption of the “forgotten part of the Durkheim-Mauss programme.”³⁰ Lévi-Strauss’s “structuralism” was crossed by many paths other than that of Durkheim and his followers. The influences on it included Marx and Freud, Rousseau, the schools of Prague linguistics and Russian formalism to which Roman Jakobson introduced him, and the anthropological linguistics of Franz Boas, the great student of American Indian languages. The latter connected him to that strand in American cultural anthropology which had taken up what is called the “Sapir-Whorf” hypothesis—that each culture classifies the world differently, and that the principal inventory of these social taxonomies is to be found in the categories of the native language. One way or another it was *linguistics* which gave structuralism its main thrust, as well as providing it with the “promise”—at last—of a truly “scientific” study of culture. But it was the inheritance from Durkheim and Mauss which enabled Lévi-Strauss so confidently to claim this new orientation *for* Social Anthropology. Thus Lévi-Strauss’s first application of structuralism was made to two classical themes of Social Anthropology: kinship systems (where the relationship between the kin and kinship terminology is crucial) and totemism.³¹ French structuralism commenced its work on this classical terrain, before it was applied—in *The Savage Mind*—to a wide range of signifying classifications and, subsequently, to the rich field of myth.

The essential difference lay in the two meanings of the key term, *structure*. By “structure” classical Social Anthropology understood the observable structures—the institutional orders—of a society. In Lévi-Strauss, the term is closer to the “deep-structure”: it means the underlying system of relations between terms, conceptualized on the model of a language. There was no longer any one-to-one, simple correlation between these two levels—the order of classification and meaning, and the order of “real relations.” The two had to be conceived as articulated through some relation other than that of reflection or correspondence, or even simple analogy. Certainly, this approach cut decisively into any notion that in language men “named” simple functional objects in the real world. The gulf separating the two approaches is neatly caught in the following distinction: Bronislaw Malinowski believed that primitive peoples classified certain edibles as totems because they were good (or bad) to eat. Lévi-Strauss’s response was that they were arranged within totemic systems “not because they are good to eat but because they are good to think with.” In *Tristes Tropiques* Lévi-Strauss claimed geology,

psychoanalysis, and Marxism as his “three mistresses.” Miriam Glucksmann is correct when she suggests that this is principally in a *methodological* sense.³² What all three had in common with Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism was that “all three showed that understanding consists in the reduction of one type of reality to another; that true reality is never the most objective of realities, and that its nature is already apparent in the care which it takes to evade our detection.”³³ As Marx once said of the vulgar economists, “it is only the immediate phenomenal form of these relations that is expressed in their brains and not their *inner connection*. Incidentally, if the latter were the case, what need would there be of *science*?”³⁴ The reduction of “immediate observables” to the level of structure therefore constituted for Lévi-Strauss the heart of a scientific method. But it was especially relevant to how thought, ideas, and meaning related to or corresponded with the real world. Men’s heads, too, were full of “ideas,” notions, secondary rationalizations, and “explanations” of their actions. These, too, constituted an endlessly open, variable, and infinite set of cultural lexicons. Here too, it was necessary to express the variety of observable ideas in terms of the *limit* of their underlying structures, in order to make them amenable to scientific analysis. It was not fortuitous, therefore, that Lévi-Strauss declared his interest as “the savage *mind*.” It was the impulse of “mind” ceaselessly to impose forms on contents which marked the origin of thought, as well as the break between Nature and Culture. In the myriad arrangements which this produced in different cultures, Lévi-Strauss identified the trace of a universal activity, common to the primitive *bricoleur* and the modern engineer alike. This was the activity of *making things mean* the collective, unconscious activity of signification. Just to complete—and confuse—the circle, he called this universal faculty “*l’esprit humain*.”

The emergence of structuralism constituted a major development in the analysis of the domain of culture and knowledge. Roger Poole, in his admirable introduction, suggests that the transformation which structuralism marked occurs at that point in the dismantling of the problem of totemism where Lévi-Strauss replaces the classic question, “*What is totemism?*” with the structuralist question, “*How are totemic phenomena arranged?*”³⁵ This represents what some would define as the principal transformation which structuralism as a method effects. It is the shift from contents to *forms* or, as Lévi-Strauss would say, to *structure*. It is through the *arrangement* of its field of significations that the “logic of totemic classification” relates to or, better, articulates the arrangement of things and objects in the world of the Australian

primitive. It is in *the forms of the arrangement*—to which the constitution of a structure gives us a privileged entry—that mental and social categories are related. Thus, discussing an important passage in E. E. Evans-Pritchard's study of *The Nuer* concerning associations in primitive thought between "birds" and "twins," Lévi-Strauss remarks that "Twins 'are birds,' not because they are confused with them or because they look like them but because twins, in relation to other men, are as 'persons of the above' to 'persons of the below'; and, in relation to birds, as 'birds of below' are to 'birds of the above.'"³⁶ The relation between the two levels is *not* one of direct reference, function, reflection, direct correspondence, or even *ressemblance* or analogy. It is the internal arrangement of the field of classifications which has been made to "resemble" the internal classification of the field of natural objects and men. "The resemblance is between these two systems of differences." It is not the "resemblances but the differences which resemble one another."³⁷

One could therefore only decipher the rules governing culture and knowledge by examining the internal relations through which these fields were produced. Structuralist linguistics (especially Saussure, but also Jakobson's seminal work on the contrastive features of the phonetic system) was of critical value in helping Lévi-Strauss to develop a *method* for "decoding" their production.³⁸ The arrangement was an arrangement of things—elements, terms, "bits"—into categories. These composed the classificatory sets or paradigmatic fields into which the elements of a culture were "inventoried." Then you had to know the rules by which certain terms or elements were *selected* from these cultural taxonomies and *combined* with others, to produce any specific cultural "utterance." This was the syntagmatic element of cultural articulation. The basic elementary "move" for structuralism was that which enabled the analyst to express the latter in terms of the former: to transpose a corpus of cultural significations (e.g., myths) into the classifications, the elements, and the rules of selection and combination from which they were generated. This was "the structure" for a corpus of myths—many of them not yet told! The many variants of the myth could then be shown to be generated—like the surface-strings of spoken language—from variations and transformations performed *on the deep-structure*. Each variant was constituted by transforming or transposing elements in a given structure. Thus a corpus of myths was nothing but the result (at the surface level of expression) of a structure and its variants. Different "moments" of the myth, produced at different times and in different places, could therefore all be expressed as variant realizations of the structure. In these ways, what appeared as articulated

through time (diachronic) could only be scientifically grasped and studied when it had been re-expressed as a “structure and its variations”—that is, with time arrested (synchronically). Saussure had argued that the body of real and potential utterances (*paroles*) were not amenable to scientific study, precisely because they did not constitute a closed field. Only “the social part of language”—what Saussure called *langue*—could be the object of scientific linguistic study. In the same way, for Lévi-Strauss, the endless variety of surface productions of a culture were too amorphous to compose a scientific field of study. That field had first to be subject to the “necessary reduction” to the elements and rules of its structure to become an object of scientific investigation. Thus, in *Totemism*, Lévi-Strauss proposed, “Let us define the phenomenon under study as a relation between two or more terms, real or supposed; construct a table of possible permutations between the terms; take this table itself as the general object of analysis.”

Culture was organized “like a language”: hence it could only be studied on the analogy of structuralist linguistics. This brought structuralism directly to the terrain of classifications and codes: “the analysis of relationships and transformations within symbolic systems.” These relationships were *not* those which we experienced but those which we used to “think the world with”: *con-cus*, not *vécus*. The aim of the enterprise thus became, not deciphering the social contents locked up or somehow expressed *in* symbolic forms, or examining the relationship between *what* was conceived and *who* conceived it. Its aim was to decipher the internal articulation: to *crack the code*. This is, without any doubt, the moment of the formation, within the sphere of the study of culture and ideology, of a quite distinctive problematic, based on an altogether different notion of causal relationship between social and mental categories: the moment of inception of what has come to be called “structuralist causality.”

The birth of structuralism as a general theory of culture, and of the structuralist method, constitutes something like a “Copernican” revolution in the sociology of knowledge; despite its apparently heterogeneous theoretical supports and antecedents. As intellectual fashion has tended to swing away from Lévi-Strauss’s work toward other points in the structuralist field, so the seminal character of its intervention, for all that has followed, has tended to be retrospectively repressed. There are at least three “lines of descent,” none of which can be traced here in anything but the most summary fashion, but which must be indicated.

The first is the development of a specifically “Marxist structuralism,” marked above all by the work of Louis Althusser. It is worth, however, noting that

Althusser and his collaborator, Étienne Balibar, in their major theoretical work, *Reading Capital*, go to considerable lengths to mark the distinctions between their “Marxist structuralism” and that of Lévi-Strauss. In the subsequent volume, *Essays in Self-Criticism*, Althusser acknowledges a number of theoretical debts—including, most significantly, that to Spinoza: but he continues to give little or no weight to the influence of Lévi-Strauss (the relevant section of “Elements of Self-Criticism” is only five pages). He repeats here what he has elsewhere identified as “the most important demarcation line”: Lévi-Strauss tends to “the ideal production of the real as an effect of a combinatory of elements,” whereas Althusser and Marx do “speak of the ‘combination’ of elements in the structure of a mode of production. But this combination is not a formal ‘combinatory.’”³⁹ Althusser and Balibar made this specific point in *Reading Capital*.⁴⁰ However, since both theorists have subsequently acknowledged a tendency to “formalism” in that work, the differences between a Marxist and a non-Marxist structuralism—not as they are affirmed but as they appear in the actual exposition—is worth examining again with care.

The second important “line of descent” is constituted by the two applications of the structuralist method to the field of the semiotic: the first most clearly identified with the work of Barthes, the second with that of Lacan and Kristeva. To judge from the *Elements of Semiology* it was principally from Saussure, rather than from Lévi-Strauss—that is, from linguistics rather than from anthropology—that Barthes derived the impetus for his work in semiology. Saussure saw the use of all sign-systems as part of the general science of linguistics. Barthes inverted this proposition, declaring that linguistic systems were only one element in a much wider field of sign-systems, the science of which was semiotics. Semiotics was *the* method by means of which the mental and symbolic or signifying systems of a culture could be systematically investigated. But Lévi-Strauss’s concern with mapping the inventories of a culture was seminal for Barthes.⁴¹ Unlike Lévi-Strauss, Barthes retained the concept of “ideology” as distinct from the general concept of *culture*, but it was the latter which constituted the proper object of “the science of signs.” Ideologies were only the particular “uses” of particular signification systems in a culture, which the dominant classes appropriated for the perpetuation of their dominance. In the subsequent development of semiotics, Barthes is perhaps the outstanding case of the semiotician who continued to be interested in the interface between signifying systems and

“fragments of ideologies.” On the whole, the dominant tradition in early semiotics was more concerned with identifying the rules by which signification as such took place at *all*. Thus, though semiotics certainly placed on the agenda the possibility of a more systematic and rigorous analysis of specific cultural systems and ideologies, this promise has been largely unfulfilled. Barthes’s contribution on “Myth Today”—despite its tentative nature—remains one of the few seminal treatments of the relationship between signification and ideology in what might be called the first phase of semiotics.⁴² The break with this first phase of semiology and with its directly Lévi-Straussian impetus was made by Lacan. Interestingly enough, Lacan’s transformation begins with a “rereading” of Freud from a linguistic standpoint; and the terms of structuralist linguistics continue to provide him with certain key terms in his conceptual repertoire. Lacan’s Freud is the Freud of the language of dreams and the “rules” of the dreamwork—condensation, displacement, etc.: the Freud of *The Interpretation of Dreams* rather than of *The Ego and the Id*. Lacan, too, treats the unconscious as if it were “structured like a language.” Lacan’s work, and more especially that of his followers, has also returned to a concern with the question of “ideology,” though this is not the terrain of ideologies arising from specific historical structures and objectivated in social representations and in public languages, but the “positioning of the subject” *in* ideology, through the mechanisms of the unconscious.

For both Lévi-Strauss and Barthes, what enables us to make a systematic study of sign-systems is the fact that men and women never cease “to impose forms on contents”: they are constantly “classifying out the universe.” But whereas, for Barthes, any particular set of significations is historically located, Lévi-Strauss was more interested in the rules of classification and combination themselves—rules which he regarded as synchronic and transhistorical. The comparison of “primitive” and “sophisticated” classification enabled Lévi-Strauss to show that every culture employs the same basic mechanisms in order to “make things signify.” He prefaced *Totemism* with a quotation from Auguste Comte to the effect that “the laws of logic which ultimately govern the world of the mind are . . . essentially invariable.” True, in *The Savage Mind* he described himself as making a modest contribution to “this theory of superstructures scarcely touched on by Marx.” “Without questioning the undoubted primacy of infrastructures, I believe there is always a mediator between praxis and practices, namely the conceptual scheme by

the operation of which matter and form are realized as structures.” These are among Lévi-Strauss’s most tantalizingly ambiguous formulations. However, the only characterization which Lévi-Strauss has ever accepted without demur was Paul Ricoeur’s description of him as a “Kantian without the transcendental imperative”—i.e., without God.⁴³

It is difficult to know precisely why it is that this Kantian legacy, in its manifold permutations, has continued so persistently to haunt the theory of ideology. One reading suggests simply that *idealism*, in one form or another, constitutes the dominant bourgeois philosophical tradition (apart from a behavioral empiricism which has never been much concerned with the problem of ideas at all); and materialism is constantly in danger of collapsing back into it. Another reading suggests that some variant of the Kant problematic continues to exert its force over this whole field because of the unoccupied spaces, the underdeveloped nature, of the materialist theory of ideology. The first proposition is certainly true; but the second is not without its pertinence too.

Ideology is one of the least developed “regions” in Marxist theory. And even where it is possible to construct the *site* of ideology, and the general relation of the ideological instance to other instances, the forms and processes specific to this region remain peculiarly ill-defined and underdeveloped. Semiotics has greatly contributed to our understanding of how signification systems work, of how things and relations signify. But—precisely in the hope of constituting a closed field amenable to positive scientific inquiry—it tends to halt its investigation at the frontier where the internal relations of “languages” articulate with social practices and historical structures. The materialist theory of ideology has considerably advanced our understanding of the nature of the economic and sociohistorical determinations *on* ideas—but it lacks an adequate theory of *representation*, without which the specificity of the ideological region cannot be constituted.

Bourdieu has recently advanced this criticism again, in his discussion of two syntheses. The first synthesis is that accomplished by Lévi-Strauss on ground staked out by Durkheim and others. This takes the *internal relations* of a field of classifications as the object of analysis. This completes one line of thought: the Kantian one. Marxism, on the other hand, stresses the *political* functions of symbolic systems: it treats logical relations as relations of power and domination. Ideologies, from this standpoint, “contribute to the real integration of the dominant classes . . . to the fictitious integration of society as a whole, and hence to the demobilization . . . of the dominated classes and

the legitimation of the established order by the establishment of distinctions (hierarchies) and the legitimation of these distinctions.”⁴⁴ This represents for Bourdieu a second synthesis.

Bourdieu suggests that both as they stand are inadequate. The first makes the study of the *internal* relations of a field of classifications self-sufficient—autonomous; whereas the second collapses the symbolic field of ideology *into* the social field of class relations—it is, he says, reductionist. Bourdieu wants to treat the problem in terms of the mutual articulation of two discontinuous fields. Symbolic relations are not disguised metaphors for class relations: but nor are they “merely signifying.” It is *because* they do symbolic work of a certain kind that they can function as the articulation of another field—the field of class relations: and hence also do the work of power and domination. “It is as structured and structuring instruments of communication and knowledge that ‘symbolic systems’ fulfil their political function as instruments of domination. . . . [Thus] the field of ideological positions reproduces the field of social positions *in a transfigured form*” (our italics).⁴⁵

We can see at once Bourdieu’s own—third?—synthesis in these formulations: his concern with the “laws” which constitute many different “fields” as distinct, each reproducing other fields, by reproducing itself—reproducing them, that is to say, “in a transfigured form.” And this synthesis presents its own order of problems. However, there can be no doubt that Bourdieu is trying to “think” the problematic of the second synthesis (the Marxist) while holding to some of the advances made within the problematic of the first (the structuralist). For it is a first principle of structuralist linguistics that a sign cannot signify on its own (only within a field of relations to other terms): but also that it does not signify by referring directly to *an object* in the world. As Bourdieu paraphrases Saussure (and Lévi-Strauss, not to speak of Althusser), meaning arises “in the correspondence between one structure and another (ideological field and social field) or one position and another (within each of these fields) and not between one element and another.”⁴⁶ When Lévi-Strauss was discussing the relationship between totemic systems and the natural world, he insisted that we could not take any single term of a totemic classification as directly “referencing” an object or animal in Nature. It was the relation of one term to other terms within the system which “resembled”—corresponded, in structure, to—the relation between one animal and another in the species referred to.

Whether or not we try to develop an adequate Marxist theory of ideology from this point, it seems to be the case that the problem of ideology presents

us with a paradigm instance of Marxist theory as *such*, what Althusser has called the necessity—and the difficulty—of holding on to “both ends of the chain” at once: the relative autonomy of a region (e.g., ideology) and its “determination in the last instance” (i.e., the determinacy of ideology by other instances, and, in the last instance, by the economic). It is the necessity to hold fast to the latter protocol which has, from time to time, sanctioned a tendency to *collapse* the levels of a special formation—especially, to collapse “ideas” or ideology *into* “the base” (narrowly defined as “the economic”). On the other hand, it is the requirement to explore the difficult terrain of “relative autonomy” (of ideology) which has given the field of ideology its awkward openness. It is through this gap—to borrow a recent metaphor of Althusser’s—that the “pup” of semiology continues to “slip between the legs” of a Marxist theory of ideology.⁴⁷

NOTES

- 1 Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*.
- 2 It is not surprising that it should have been Robert Merton who reintroduced the topic to American sociology, since his own early work was concerned with the social roots of the Scientific Revolution of seventeenth-century England: see his “Puritanism, Pietism and Science” and “Science and Economy of Seventeenth Century England” in *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*.
- 3 The following account is taken from Lichtheim, “The Concept of Ideology,” in his *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays*.
- 4 See McLennan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*; and Lowith’s “Hegelian” discussion of these issues in his *From Hegel to Nietzsche*.
- 5 Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*.
- 6 Marx, “1857 Introduction” to the *Grundrisse*.
- 7 One of the best-known formulations of *The German Ideology*.
- 8 The metaphor of “inversion” to describe Marx’s relation to Hegel is extensively debated by Althusser in *For Marx*.
- 9 Stedman Jones, “The Marxism of the Early Lukács.”
- 10 Not much of Dilthey is available in English. But see *Pattern and Meaning in History*, selected with an introduction by Peter Rickman, and the long, patient exposition of his ideas in Hodges, *The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey*.
- 11 For an outline of this development, Antoni, *From History to Sociology*.
- 12 The work of the art critic and historian Aloïs Riegl is a good example. But the influence can be traced in both Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Gombrich; see, for example, Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History*.
- 13 Lukács reexamines his relation to Hegel in the “Preface to the New Edition” of *History and Class Consciousness*.

- 14 See Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge and Essays in Sociology and Social Psychology*.
- 15 For example, in Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, and in “Socialism, Utopian and Scientific” and “Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy,” both in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*.
- 16 The most illuminating discussion of “determination in the last instance” remains Althusser, “Contradiction and Overdetermination,” in *For Marx*.
- 17 The “Frankfurt School” in their (untranslated) *Studies in Authority and the Family* and in Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*; and Reich, particularly *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*.
- 18 Jameson, “The Vanishing Mediator.”
- 19 For the position of Nietzsche in this constellation, Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology*.
- 20 Adorno and Horkheimer argue this case, especially, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.
- 21 See Schutz, *Collected Papers*.
- 22 The work of Schutz’s which most systematically develops a “phenomenological sociology” from the critique of Max Weber is *The Phenomenology of the Social World*.
- 23 Sartre, *The Problem of Method*, an essay of 1957 subsequently appended as a prefatory paper to volume 1 of his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Sartre, who in the essay plays existentialism off against “lazy Marxism,” sets up Kierkegaard as the “phenomenological pole” of the argument.
- 24 Schutz, “Multiple Realities,” in *Collected Papers*, vol. 1.
- 25 Schutz’s and Mannheim’s “documentary method” are the two major supports in the volume, which establishes “ethnomethodology” as a sociological perspective: Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*.
- 26 Durkheim set about correcting some of the misinterpretations at once: see the “Second Preface” to his *Rules of Sociological Method*.
- 27 For American sociology, Durkheim’s *Division of Labour* provided the basic problematic (the problems of order, social cohesion, and consensus); *The Rules of Sociological Method* provided the method; and *Suicide* (read as the correlation of variables) the demonstration. A major simplification was involved at each stage. The actual moment of this expropriation is most clearly exemplified in the “work” which Talcott Parsons does on Weber and Durkheim to produce the Parsonian synthesis, in *The Structure of Social Action*.
- 28 The much-misunderstood injunction of *The Rules of Sociological Method*.
- 29 That work included Durkheim and Mauss, *Primitive Classification*; Mauss, *The Gift and General Theory of Magic*; Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*; Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*; and Granet, *Chinese Civilization*—exploring the idea of the “mentalities” of ancient China, which functioned as one of the sources of this concept later much expanded by the *Annales* school of historians. It was from this intellectual world that Maurice Halbwachs’s investigations into the categories of memory developed, as well as Antoine Meillet’s structural linguistics. Less

directly connected but very considerably influenced by these currents include Lévy-Bruhl, *The "Soul" of the Primitive*; and, of course, Saussure's structuralist theory of language.

- 30 Lévi-Strauss, *The Scope of Anthropology*.
- 31 The two studies are his *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and *Totemism*. But similar themes are extensively discussed in *Structural Anthropology* and *The Savage Mind*.
- 32 Glucksmann, *Structuralist Analysis in Contemporary Social Thought*.
- 33 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*.
- 34 Marx to Engels, June 27, 1867, in Marx and Engels, *Correspondence*.
- 35 Roger Poole, "Introduction" to Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*.
- 36 Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*.
- 37 Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*.
- 38 Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*; and Jakobson and Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*.
- 39 Althusser, "Elements of Self-Criticism," in his *Essays in Self-Criticism*.
- 40 See Althusser's discussion of the combination/combinatory distinction in Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 215–216 and 226. Also, the first "reply" by Althusser to the charge of "structuralism" in his work: the "Foreword to the Italian Edition," reprinted in the English edition of *Reading Capital*.
- 41 Roland Barthes's review of Lévi-Strauss's work, "Sociology and Socio-Logic." Unpublished English translation, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham, 1967. Later included in English in Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*.
- 42 Barthes, *Mythologies*.
- 43 Lévi-Strauss, "Overture" to *The Raw and the Cooked*.
- 44 Bourdieu, "Symbolic Power."
- 45 Bourdieu, "Symbolic Power."
- 46 Bourdieu, "Symbolic Power."
- 47 The daring metaphor occurs at the end of the "Science and Ideology" section of Althusser's "Elements of Self-Criticism," in his *Essays in Self-Criticism*.

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Rethinking the “Base and Superstructure” Metaphor

Of the many problems which perforce Marx left in an “undeveloped” state, none is more crucial than that of “base and superstructure.” The manuscript of the third volume of *Capital* breaks off at the opening of the tantalizing passage on “classes.” The promised volume on the state, which appears in several of the schemes for *Capital* which he prepared, was left unwritten. Both, if completed, would have thrown the light of his mature reflection on the base/superstructure question. As it is, we have a very substantial part of his mature thought on the “laws of motion” of the capitalist mode of production, but nothing from the same period which takes as its theoretical object a capitalist social formation as a whole, encompassing all its levels and the relation between them, including the “superstructures.”

There is a view that everything that Marxism needs is already there in *Capital*: and that, if you stare hard enough at it, it will—like the hidden books of the Bible—yield up all its secrets, a theory of everything. I don’t subscribe to this thesis in its literal form. Apart from anything else, it denies one of the central premises of *Capital*—that the capitalist mode of production is constantly developing, and this in turn requires a continuous labor of theoretical development and clarification. “There is no royal road to science,” Marx warned the French.¹ Besides, it smacks too much of the religious attitude. Of course, Marx’s work on the laws of the capitalist mode of production contain many profound hints and pointers which await further theoretical development. What is more, *Capital* unravels the essential movements of that level

which precisely Marx insisted was “determining.” Hence, the problem of base/superstructure must be “thought” within the terrain of concepts elaborated in that fundamental work. But it is a different proposition to imagine that it will be resolved by slavishly repeating the “logic of *Capital*.” This too often results in an exercise which may be logically elegant but is, in the larger theoretical sense, abstract: reducing everything to “political economy.” To rethink the base/superstructure problem, within the framework of Marx’s problematic as evidenced in *Capital*, requires difficult theoretical labor. This paper addresses itself, of necessity, to some starting points only.

What is fundamentally at issue here is: how does Marxism enable us to “think” the complexities of a modern capitalist social formation? How can we conceptualize the relationships between the different levels which compose it? Further, can we “think” this problem in such a way as to retain a key premise of historical materialism: the premise of “determination in the last instance,” by what is sometimes misleadingly referred to as “the economic”? Can this be done without losing one’s way in the idea of the *absolute* autonomy of each of its levels? For Marx insists that we must think the “*ensemble* of relations,” its complex unity. He quoted with unqualified approval, in a text which Althusser unwarrantably defines as “gestural,” his Russian reviewer, who pointed to Marx’s concern with “that law of movement . . . which governs these phenomena, in so far as they have a definite form and mutual connexion within a given historical period.”² Can it be done without succumbing to the notion of a capitalist social formation as a functional “whole,” without antagonism or contradiction? “The contradictions inherent in the movement of capitalist society . . .,” comments Marx, “whose crowning point is the universal crisis.”³ Can it be done without falling back into the essentially relativistic sociological notion of a social formation as composed of a multivariate interaction-of-all-sides-on-one-another, without primacy of determination given or specified at any point? Can *determination*—one of the central themes of Marx’s theoretical work—be thought without simplifying what it is that “determines” (the economic?), when (in the last instance?), or how that determination operates (one-directionally)? In essence these are the problems posed by the central position in Marxism occupied by the topographical metaphor of base/superstructure.

I want to look, briefly, at some of the key formulations in Marx and Engels’s own work, which throw light on the base/superstructure question: noting not only the hints they throw out, but also at the developments in them and

the shifts between them. Secondly, I examine one or two key developments in recent theoretical work which mark significant moments of further clarification; and attempt to estimate how far they take us, and what remains to be done.

The German Ideology

The first texts are taken from formulations offered in and around the period of *The German Ideology*. It is important to situate this text itself, and thus the conceptual field and the theoretical problematic in which the formulations are offered. This is the text where the “species-being” perspective of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* is replaced, in often a simple but thoroughgoing manner, by a historical, often an evolutionary *genetic* materialism. It registers the “break” with the problematic of Feuerbachian sensuous-materialism. It constitutes a “settling of accounts,” by Marx and Engels, with German “critical criticism”—the speculative philosophy of the Left Hegelians. Its whole thrust—including its “materialism”—is *polemical*. This polemical thrust, reasonably simplifying, of the text must be borne in mind if we are properly to situate the reductive simplifications which sometimes appear to intrude.

The production of life, both of one’s own by labour and of fresh life by procreation, appears at once as a double relationship, on the one hand as a natural on the other as a social relationship. By social is meant the cooperation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner or to what end. It follows from this, that a determinate mode of production, or industrial stage, is always bound up with a determinate mode of cooperation or social stage, and this mode of cooperation is itself a “productive force.” It also follows that the mass of productive forces accessible to men determines the condition of society, and that the “history of humanity” must therefore always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange. (*The German Ideology*)

There are two key points to note here: both are restated in only a slightly different form at several other points in the text. The first is the proposition—the reverse of the Hegelian premise—that it is “the mass of productive forces accessible to men” which “determines the condition of society.” The second point is slightly more complex, but just as important. It just concerns the

“double relationship.” For Marx and Engels, “men” (this is the general, historically undifferentiated, way in which people are referred to in this text) intervene in Nature in order to produce and reproduce their material conditions of life. This “intervention” is accomplished through human labor and the use of tools. Human labor, ever since its first rudimentary historical appearance, is only possible through social cooperation between men: these “relations,” which develop between men and constitute the “determinate mode of co-operation,” result from the historically specific mode of men’s social intervention in Nature—their mode of production. The basis of all history is the successive modes of production, including the modes of social cooperation dependent on them. As Marx puts it in another similar passage: “we are bound to study closely the men of the eleventh century and those of the eighteenth, to examine their respective needs, their productive forces, their mode of production, the raw materials of their production, and finally the relations of man to man which resulted from all these conditions of life” (*The Poverty of Philosophy*). Each “mode of production,” each “mode of cooperation” is “determinate”: historically specific. The latter “results from” or “is bound up with” the former. The premise of historical specificity in this relation between the two relations—the “double relationship”—is insisted on throughout: but always in a very general, epochal, way. One way of measuring the distance—and the difference—between the Marx of this period and the Marx of *Capital* is precisely by comparing these general formulations with the chapters on “Co-operation” and “The Division of Labour and Manufacture” in *Capital, Volume I* (chs. 13 and 14) to see how far the concept of historical specificity could itself be further specified.

The premises which inform these ways of attempting to “expound” the relations between the different levels of a social formation are stated in an admirably simple and clear way, elsewhere in the same text. They constitute the working analytic principles of Marx’s “historical materialism,” as this was developed by this point in time:

This conception of history, therefore, rests on the exposition of the real process of production, starting out from the simple material production of life and on the comprehension of the form of intercourse connected with and—created by this mode of production, i.e. of civil society in its various stages as the basis of all history, and also in its action as the State. From this starting point, it explains all the different theoretical productions and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc., and

traces their origins and growth, by which means the matter can of course be displayed as a whole (and consequently, also the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another). Unlike the idealist view of history, it does not to have look for a category in each period, but remains constantly on the real ground of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice, and accordingly comes to the conclusion that all the forms of and products of consciousness can be dissolved, not by intellectual criticism, not by resolution into “self-consciousness,” or by transformation into “apparitions,” “spectres,” “fancies,” etc., but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gave rise to this idealist humbug; that not criticism but revolution is the driving force of history, as well as religion, philosophy, and all other types of theory. (*The German Ideology*)

The passage is too well known to require much comment. It contains the easily recognized anti-Hegelian “inversion”: “not practice from the idea but . . . the formation of ideas from material practice.” It begins to identify the different levels of a social formation. Note that these—constituting the germ of the base/superstructure metaphor—appear, if anything, as *three* levels, not two. The difference is important, even though the text, in its compression, tends to run them together. First, the “material production of life . . . and the form of intercourse connected with and created by this mode of production.” Then—at, as it were, a different though related level of representation—“i.e. civil society . . . and also its action as the State.” Then—another half distinction worth remarking: “all the different theoretical productions and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc.” Note, here also, the variety of ways in which the principle of “determination” is rendered: “connected with”; “created by”; “in its action as”; etc.

The classic formulation, in its tightest and most succinct form, and clearly resting on the same conceptual terrain, appears again in the often quoted passage (but written nearly a decade later, and by a Marx already into his second draft, at least, of what is to become the first book of *Capital*): from the “1859 Preface” to *The Critique of Political Economy*, replacing the longer, more complex, more theoretical and difficult “1857 Introduction” to the *Grundrisse*.

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production

constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which legal and political superstructure arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness. (Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*)

This clarifying but over-condensed paragraph contains all the elements of the base/superstructure problem as Marx formulated it in the middle, transitional period of his work up to the verge of the preparation of the first volume of *Capital*. Here, not only is material production and its relations the determining factor, but the “corresponding” social relations are *given*—definite, indispensable, and independent of men’s will: objective conditions of a social mode of production. These, under determinate conditions, constitute a *stage*. This—material mode, relations of production—is what is designated as “the economic structure.” It forms the base, the “real foundation.” From it arise the legal and political superstructures. And *to this* correspond theoretical productions *and* definite forms of social consciousness.

Marx’s “Historicism”

The formulations in both *The German Ideology* and the “1859 Preface” clearly exhibit what would now be identified as the traces of Marx’s *historicism*. That is to say, a determining primacy is given to the base—basis, real foundation—and the other levels of a social formation are seen to develop in close correspondence with it: even if this is not phrased uni-directionally (“and consequently, also, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another”); and even if changes at one level are subject to a time-lag at the other levels (“the entire immense superstructure is *more or less rapidly* transformed”). The “matter which is displayed as a whole” is thought in terms of a broad determination; changes in the economic structure of society will, “more or less rapidly,” produce consequent and determinate changes in the legal and political superstructures and in the “ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out”—that is, also, at the ideological level.

Althusser would argue that, here, the social totality is conceptualized, essentially, as an “expressive totality,” in which, despite its apparent levels and differentiations, contradictions in the “base” appear to unroll, evenly, and

to be reflected sooner or later through corresponding modifications in the superstructures and the ideological forms. This, then, is still an “essentialist” conceptualization of a social formation. It is also “historicist,” in Althusser’s view, because it makes little if any separation between “theoretical productions” and “ideological forms”; it makes the theoretical level appear also as a “correspondence” or a reflection of the material base.

We shall return at a later point to the weight and force of this critique of the “historicist” Marx. But in Althusser’s *For Marx*, *The German Ideology* is presented as the work of a “break” and “transitional” period in Marx’s work; to be superseded, in *Capital*, by a transformed dialectic, which produces an altogether different manner of conceptualizing a social formation. It is therefore worth noting *where* and *how* this earlier formulation (which, appearing as it does in the “1859 Preface,” comes relatively very late in the so-called epistemological rupture between the early and middle Marx, and the “late”) reappears again in Marx’s mature work.

In a passage in *Capital, Volume III*, Marx offers an interesting and important gloss, which is, however, different, from *The German Ideology*, above all in the tightness of its formulation:

The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers determines the relation of domination and servitude, as it emerges directly out of production itself and in its turn reacts upon production. Upon this basis, however, is founded the entire structure of the economic community, which grows up out of the conditions of production itself, and consequently its specific political form. It is always the direct relation between the masters of the conditions of production and the direct producers which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden foundation of the entire social edifice, and therefore also of the political form of the relation between sovereignty and dependence, in short, of the particular form of the State.

Here it is the relations of “domination and servitude,” defined far more specifically in terms of the way surplus value is extracted in capitalist production, which “reveals the innermost secret, the hidden foundation of the entire social edifice”; hence, its political forms, and thus the forms of the state itself. In another, more significant, passage, Marx quotes his own words from the “1859 Preface” in a long and important footnote in the chapter on “Commodities” in *Capital, Volume I*. He quotes it without modification—and clearly with approval. The context and development is also significant. A

German critic had quoted Marx's "1859 Preface": and, while acknowledging the primacy of "the economic" in the capitalist epoch, denied its determining role for the feudal period or for classical antiquity, "where politics reigned supreme." Marx, in reply, restates the basic premise: it is "the economic structure" which is "the real basis." (We must remember, however, that whereas this "structure" is treated in a very reduced and simple form in the original formulation, it is now recalled in the context of a work which is devoted to an extremely comprehensive and elaborate consideration of just what the forms and relations of this "structure" are). The Middle Ages, he continues, could not live on Catholicism nor ancient Rome on politics.

However, he adds, "it is the mode in which they gained a livelihood which explains why here politics and there Catholicism played the chief part" (*Capital, Volume I*). Thus, while the mode of production plays a determining role in all epochs, its role appears here as that of assigning to some *other* level of practice (politics, religion—i.e., ideology) the "chief role" (the *dominant* role, as it has come to be designated). This is a new way of formulating the problem of "determination by the economic," and one which, incidentally, gives far greater reflectivity to the "superstructures" (which can now, in some epochs, be dominant). The argument is already anticipated in the "1857 Introduction," where Marx argues that "in all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. . . . It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialised within it" (*Grundrisse*).

These are, of course, two of the principal sources for the Althusserian distinction between "determining" and "dominant" instances: and thus for the thesis that, in his later work, Marx ceased to think a social formation as a simple expressive totality. We will return to this important turn in the argument later.

The crucial formulations of the base/superstructure problem first occur, and are given at least one decisive, and quite consistent form, in the period between the consignment of *The German Ideology* to the "gnawing criticism of the mice" and the replacement of the "1857 Introduction" by the "1859 Preface." Whether later superseded and transformed or not, these formulations give a radical impetus to the whole body of Marxist thought on the question of how to conceptualize a social formation and how to "explore" the nature of its unity. Let us sum it up.

The texts here are reformulated in the problematic of a broad, epochal historical sweep. In this sweep, mode of production is given, first, its initial definition; secondly, its position of determination over the whole social edifice and structure. Mode of production is already conceptualized as consisting, neither of economic relations *per se*, nor of anything so vulgarly material as “level of technology”: but as a combination of relations—of productive forces and the social relations of production. These, in each epoch, form the determining matrix, in which social life and material existence are produced and reproduced. The structures raised on this foundation, which embody and articulate the social relations stemming from the productive matrix, correspond to it. Indeed, in the “double relationship,” both material and social reproduction are simultaneously founded. As men, through the division of labor, progressively combine to intervene by means of the developing forces of production in Nature to reproduce their material life, so they in the same moment reproduce the structure of their social relations, and reproduce themselves as social individuals. The two cannot be separated, even if, in the last instance, it is the former which determines the form of the latter. Indeed, this “double relation” is conceptualized as *asymptotic*: since, in production, the social relations themselves progressively become “a productive force.” As these social relations, rooted in and governed by production, develop, they achieve a distinct articulation: they are embodied in political and legal relations. They give rise to determinate forms of the state (“The existing relations of production must necessarily express themselves also as political and legal relations”). They define the character of civil society (“Only in the 8th Century, in ‘civil society,’ do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity”: “1857 Introduction”). They produce their corresponding theoretical fields and discourses (religion, ethics, philosophy, etc.) and “determinate forms of social consciousness.” “That these concepts are accepted as mysterious powers is a necessary consequence of the independent existence assumed by the real relations whose expressions they are.” This is, indeed, the point toward which the whole trajectory of *The German Ideology* tended—the setting of the feet of German idealist speculation in the soil of man’s “profane history.”

No simple or reductive reflexivity of the superstructures is assumed here, though the *thrust* behind the many reformulations is consistent, and unmistakable. And perhaps it is worth stressing that, if Marx’s thought on the subject subsequently developed, what changed is *how* he came to understand

determinacy by a mode of production, not whether it determined or not. When we leave the terrain of “determinations,” we desert, not just this or that stage in Marx’s thought, but his whole problematic. It is also worth noting that, though the determinacy of “the economic” over the superstructures is the prevailing form in which this is expressed here, it is sometimes overlaid by a second template: the tendency to reduce determination, not to “the economic” but to History itself—to *praxis*: to an undifferentiated *praxis* which rolls throughout the whole social formation, as its essential ground. Some passages of *The German Ideology* are not all that far from the more humanist-historicist assertion of *The Holy Family* that “History is nothing but the activity of men.” Succinct as are its formulations, then, *The German Ideology* remains, at one and the same time, a key early text of historical materialism *and* a text haunted or shadowed by the trace of more than one conceptual problematic.

Engels’s Letters on Historical Materialism

One of the best ways of seeing what the problems were for Marxism of “*The German Ideology*” way of conceptualizing the base/superstructure question is to watch Engels wrestle with its consequences in his lengthy correspondence with a number of Marxist veterans of his and the next generation, in the two decades after Marx’s death, reproduced in the Marx-Engels *Selected Works*. In addition to editing and bringing together Marx’s vast unpublished work, Engels found himself both the guardian of his and Marx’s joint legacy and its most privileged interpreter. This was a key moment, and role, for it “marked the transition, so to speak, from Marx to Marxism and provided the formative moment of all the leading Marxist interpreters of the Second International and most of the leaders of the Third” (Stedman Jones). Marx had laid the foundations, above all in his work on the capitalist mode of production. But he left “no comparable political theory of the structures of the bourgeois State, or of the strategy and tactics of revolutionary socialist struggle by a working-class party for its overthrow” (Anderson 1976). Nor did he provide any systematic general statement of historical materialism as a “world view.” Engels attempted to repair both omissions—a task which gives the general sense “of a completion, more than a development, of Marx’s heritage” (Anderson 1976).

Marx had established that the economy is determinant in the last instant, but that the superstructures had their own “effectivity” which could not be

simply reduced to their base. But “the precise structural mechanism connecting the two is always left unclear by Marx” (Stedman Jones). The clarification of this problem was one of Engels’s most urgent and important tasks: the more so since Marxism was fast becoming absorbed into the dominant field of “positive science,” which reduced it to a simple economic determinism in which the superstructures were a pale and automatic reflex of the base—a tendency which was destined to be disastrously installed as the official version in the Second International. Engels struggled vainly to combat this reductionism. But he struggled to do so on the ground, essentially, of his and Marx’s formulations of *The German Ideology* period: and the development and clarification he undertook were sustained by precisely those conceptual tools and instruments which had produced the formulation in this form in the first place. That is, *essentially* as an inversion of the idealist premises left intact in Left Hegelianism—by setting the Hegelian dialectic right-side up, and working from its “revolutionary” aspect. In the letters, Engels wrestles with this inheritance valiantly, courageously, and often elegantly. But the conceptual chickens are fast coming home to roost.

The German Ideology proposed a general historical scheme: but now that this threatened to harden into a rigid and abstract orthodoxy, Engels was obliged to insist that “all history must be studied afresh” and that Marx’s materialism is “not a lever for construction à la Hegelianism” (Engels to Carl Schmidt, 8/5/1890). Face-to-face with “determination by the economic,” Engels has to win some space for the “interaction of all these elements,” and for the “endless host of accidents” through which “the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary” (Engels to J. Bloch, 9/21–22/1890). He accepts some blame (“Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame”) for the tendency to reduce everything to the economic, and to disregard the effect of the superstructures and the ideological forms in “exercising their influence upon the course of the historical struggles.” The play between contingency and necessity, the “infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant,” the intersection of many individual wills into “a collective mean, a common resultant,” are bold attempts to circumvent some of the problems implicit in the original problematic (Engels to Bloch). There are some useful and provocative advances made in Engels’s long, detailed letter to Schmidt (10/27/1876), which deal specifically with the superstructural instances of the law and the state, which are worth pursuing in a later context.

But we cannot depart far from Althusser’s judgment on this correspondence, in the lucid “Appendix” to his “Contradiction and Overdetermination”

essay in *For Marx*, which suggests that, despite their many strengths, Engels's attempts to find a theoretical solution in his correspondence principally have the result of declaring that a solution is not yet to hand, and of reminding us how difficult it is to find. The problem, Althusser suggests, is: how to think the specific relations between the relations of production and the political, juridical, and ideological forms in such a way as to grasp, simultaneously, the "determination by the economic in the last instance" and the "relative autonomy" or effectivity of the superstructures. Engels knows what the question is. But he does not produce a satisfactory solution to it.

We have traced the "after-life" of *The German Ideology* formulations beyond Marx's death, partly as a way of registering the continuing theoretical power and resonance which they still—and in a sense, must—carry within the Marxist tradition. But the fact is that they were beginning to be superseded and transformed, implicitly if not explicitly, in terms of the bringing into use of the elements of an alternative paradigm, even if not "fully theorized," within Marx's own lifetime and within the scope of his later work. We can identify three ways or directions in which this modification is taking place.

The first is to be found in the political writings—above all, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, *The Class Struggles in France*, and the more incidental notes on Britain—which Marx wrote after it became clear that the revolutions of 1848 were not destined to produce a swift resolution to the emerging proletarian struggles. (I draw here from the papers collected in *Surveys from Exile* and from David Fernbach's excellent introduction.) In these writings Marx is not only dealing with concrete social formations at a specific historical moment, but his attention is focused on one level of the superstructure—the *political* instance. Hence, though these writings contain no general theoretical reformulations, they contain essential insights into how, in detail, Marx thought of the "effectivity of the superstructures."

Second, there are Marx's cryptic notes at the end of the "1857 Introduction," tantalizingly headed "Forms of the State and Forms of Consciousness in Relation to Relations of Production and Circulation. Legal Relations. Family Relations." These are too epigrammatic and condensed to help us much. But they point to Marx's recognition of the difficulty; and they contain the crucial, if cryptic, identification of the "law of uneven development."

Third, there is, of course, the whole monumental theoretical edifice of *Capital* itself. There is no extensive passage, as we have said, in *Capital* in which

the “laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production” are extended into the other levels of a social formation. But there are absolutely pivotal indications and traces of how this might be done, on the basis of Marx’s decipherment of capital’s secret. These do not add up to a thorough reworking of the base/superstructure problem. But they do, in sum, constitute an important, if incomplete, reflexive theoretical clarification.

The Eighteenth Brumaire

Before briefly looking at each of these moments, in turn, we can usefully sum up here the direction in which this incomplete clarification points. Crudely put, the relation of base to superstructure is thought, in *The German Ideology*, as some kind of fairly direct or immediate correspondence—i.e., within the framework of an *identity* theory. Marx progressively criticizes and departs from identity theory. Essentially, two things provoke this “break.” Historically, the antagonisms multiplying at the economic level fail, in the revolutions of 1848, to produce their “corresponding” political resolutions. Marx is therefore forced, not only to abandon the perspective of “immediate catastrophe” which had been ringingly tolled out in *The Communist Manifesto*, but to look again at the much more complex interplay between the political and the economic; and to consider the ways in which “solutions” could be found, at the political level, which thwarted, modified, or even displaced the contradictions accumulating at the economic level—taking them forward, in their contradictory form, to a higher level of development.

The Eighteenth Brumaire is the classic instance of such an analysis of the “effectivity” and specificity of the political instance in relation to the economic. “Here Marx began, for the first time, to develop a systematic set of concepts for coming to grips with the phenomena of a politics which is certainly that of class struggle—the struggle of groups and interests are defined by the relations of production—but which is nevertheless *politics*, practised in the field of ideology and coercion that gives it its specific character” (Fernbach). This is the direct result of a longer and more complex perspective, born in the failed denouement of 1848. Gwyn Williams has recently brilliantly expounded, from an *internal* reading of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, precisely how and where this historical “break” registers as an analytic “break” inside Marx’s text. Engels subsequently remarked that in 1848, he and Marx had mistaken the *birth-pangs* of capitalism for its *death-throes*.

But the break is also provoked theoretically. For the more Marx examined in depth the capitalist mode of production, the more he observed the internal complexities of its laws and relations: and the less he thought this complex whole could be expounded in terms of the immediate correspondence between one of its circuits and another, let alone one of its levels and all the others. This major revision is of course practically exemplified in the conceptual structure of *Capital* itself. But it is also stated, as a matter of theory and method, in the “1857 Introduction,” which contains a thorough critique of “identity theory” and begins to sketch out a Marxist alternative—a theory of *articulations* between relations which are in no sense immediately corresponding. We cannot examine this here, but it provides, so to speak, the pivotal transitional point between *The German Ideology* and *Capital* itself. (See here Hall.)

Thus, in this period, Marx’s “clarification” turns our attention in a new direction. He is concerned, now, with the *necessary complexity* of the social formations of advancing capitalism and of the relations between its different levels. He is concerned with the “unevenness,” the non-immediate correspondences, between these levels which remain, nevertheless, connected. He is concerned with the functions which, specifically, the superstructures “perform” in relation either to the maintenance and reproduction, or to the retardation of the development, of capitalist social relations: and with the fact that these functions not only appear in ever-more complex forms, but that, at a certain stage of their development, may actually *require* the non-immediacy—the “relative autonomy”—they exhibit. This is a different problematic from that of *The German Ideology* period. It is also different from Engels’s attempts to extend the chain of reflexivity between base and superstructures, in a simple, linear way (in his correspondence especially: elsewhere, as we shall suggest, Engels contributes some useful insights for Marx’s new problematic).

Before looking, briefly, at *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, his most “worked” example, we can pinpoint from a number of sources the problems which constitute the field of Marx’s new problematic.

When Marx examined British politics in the series of articles for the *New York Daily Tribune* which he commenced in 1852, he had to confront the stubborn fact that, though the capitalist mode of production was fast developing, and with it an emergent industrial bourgeoisie, the latter appeared to “rule” either through a Tory party, representing the large landed proprietors, or through the Whig party, consisting of “the oldest, richest, and most

arrogant portion of English landed property,” “the aristocratic representatives . . . of the industrial and commercial middle class.” To them, apparently, the bourgeoisie had abandoned the “monopoly of government and the exclusive possession of office.” How capital advanced through this complex political configuration—giving rise to a distinction between an “economically ruling class” and, at the level of the political superstructures, a “politically governing caste”—was a fundamental problem; for the dynamic of British politics (and the politics of the working class, which remained tied to the tail of the Whig-Radical alliance) was constantly mediated—deflected—through its structure (*Surveys from Exile*). In fact, as Fernbach notes, Marx understood Britain politically far less well than France. He never grasped the deep compromise on which, after the settlement, British political life was stabilized; and he believed that ultimately, the industrial bourgeoisie would transform everything in its wake and assume power directly, “battering Old England to pieces.” In fact, “the industrial bourgeoisie managed to integrate itself politically and culturally into the old ruling bloc and the aristocratic ‘mask’ was to remain for at least a further half-century to camouflage and mystify the rule of capital” (Fernbach). But, if Marx mistook the line of development, he was not wrong in locating the issue: an issue, essentially, of non-identity between the classes in dominance at the economic level and the class factions in power at the level of politics and the state.⁴

Take another superstructural domain. In his *Critique of Hegel’s “Philosophy of Right,”* Marx noted that the Law served “to perpetuate a particular mode of production”; yet insisted that “the influence exercised by laws on the preservation of existing conditions of distribution, and the effect they thereby exert on production, has to be examined *separately*.” Engels echoed this sentiment when, in *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in a long and interesting section on the state, law, and ideology, he shows how England retained the forms of the old feudal law, while giving them a bourgeois content: how Roman Law provided the foundation for the evolution of bourgeois legal relations elsewhere; how this “working up into a special code of law” proved to be a poor basis for the development of Prussia, but—transformed into the *Code Civil*—an extremely favorable one for France. Thus, though “bourgeois legal rules merely express” the economic life conditions of society in legal form, they can do so well or ill according to circumstances. In the same passage, Engels notes how to achieve articulation as a sphere of the superstructure, economic facts must “assume the form of juristic motives,” thereby leading on to the formation of a fully-fledged

juridical sphere, a set of complex legal ideologies, with an efficacy of their own. “It is indeed among professional politicians, theorists of public law and jurists private law that the connection with the economic facts, gets really lost” (Engels, *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*). It is, then, not surprising that it is in relation to legal relations that Marx states his “law of uneven development.” “But the really difficult point to discuss here is how relations of production develop *unevenly* as legal relations. Thus, e.g. the relation of Roman private law . . . to modern production” (*Grundrisse*). There seems little doubt that, had this point been expanded by Marx at the length of, say, Book One of the first volume of *Capital*, the one thing it would *not* have exhibited is a simple law of *correspondence* between the material base and the forms of the superstructure.

The Eighteenth Brumaire is, then, relatively simple to set in this context of problems—though its argument is not simple either to follow or resume. It concerns, essentially, the relation of the politics of the 1851 crisis in France, the forms of political regime and of the state which emerge, the nature of the Bonapartist “solution,” and, more incidentally, the basis of ideology—“Napoleon’s ideas”—in the accumulating contradictions generated by the development of an industrial capitalist mode of production. The latter is, however, here refracted through the former: it is the political instance which is in the foreground, just as, in 1851, it was politics which “took command.” The French mode of production is beginning to develop, throwing up its antagonisms: the class fractions related to this development are already, politically, on stage: but so are those fractions which represent continuing, if declining modes of production still coexisting with industrial capital in the French social formation. The fact that the political complexity of the moment of 1851 is related to the coexistence of modes of production, with no single mode as yet in full dominance, is a crucial step in the argument. In one sense, then, the political crisis of 1851 is *given* at the level of mode of production. It may even be seen that, in a long-term sense, the stage of development (i.e., underdevelopment) of the capitalist mode of production is what prescribes—determines, in an epochal sense—the *range* of “solutions” to the *crisis* possible at this stage of development (i.e., no clear resolutions, one way or another). What it certainly does *not* do is to prescribe, in detail, either the content or forms of the political conjuncture. The December crisis runs through a succession of different regimes, each representing a shifting coalition of class fractions. Daily, the political content of the Napoleonic state shifted, forming and dissolving. Each coalition temporarily gave rise to a suc-

cession of forms of regime; social republic, democratic republic, parliamentary republic. It is only as each exhausts its possibilities of hegemony, and is dissolved, since none can rule the whole social formation on its own, that the Bonapartist “solution” is prepared: the *coup d'état*. This is a regressive moment, from the point of view of capital, arresting its development. France “seems to have escaped the despotism of a class only to fall back beneath the despotism of one individual” (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*). The falling of France on its face before the rifle butt of Louis-Napoleon’s troops corresponds to the “backwardness” of the French mode of production—and ensures that backwardness dominates for a period. The lack of resolution—the situation of almost perfect equilibrium between the various contending fractions, leaving room for none definitively to prevail—provides the conditions in which the state itself appears, as a neutral structure “above the contending classes,” and enormously expands its range and “autonomy.” Finally, Louis-Napoleon’s regime—which appears in the form of a single despotism—in fact is seated on the back of a particular class interest: that of the “most numerous” class in France at that moment, though one destined to decline: the small-holding peasantry. This class fraction cannot rule in its own name. It rules *through* Napoleon and through his ideas. It is this class which temporarily gives content to the expanding state—for the state is not “suspended in mid-air”: but Louis-Napoleon, revivifying spirits, names, battle cries, and costumes from the past (the past of another and greater Napoleon), is the *conductor* of the power of this class to the political level. Capital settles for a “postponement.” “Bonapartism” is its name and form.

Without examining this argument in any further detail, it should be sufficient to see from this and the related essays of this period that the domain of the political/juridical superstructures and the forms of the state itself are no longer thought by Marx as in any simple reflexive or expressive sense corresponding to their base. In the development of a Marxist theory of the superstructures, this essay must occupy a *pivotal position*—as it did for Gramsci, one of the major contributors to such a theory.

Rereading *Capital*

We have suggested that, properly understood, there are hints in the structure of the argument in *Capital* about how this new problematic of base and superstructure can be developed, as well, of course, as a major exposition of the necessary conceptual ground on which this theoretical development

should be undertaken. There is no space to take this very far here. One way is to take the law and tendencies of “the self-expansion of capital,” not as specifying in detail the content and forms of the superstructures and thereby “determining,” but as providing the governing movements (including the contradictions and crises in that self-expansion, and the “solutions” which permit capital to continue to accumulate while reproducing its antagonisms at a more advanced level of composition), dictating the tempo and rhythms of development in the other parts of the social formation: setting limits, as it were, to what can or cannot be a solution adaptable to capital’s self-expanding needs, and thus as determining through the *repertoire* of solutions (political, social, ideological) likely to be drawn on in any particular historical moment of conjuncture.

This involves a “reading”—some would say *another* “reading”—of *Capital*, treating it neither as the theoretical analysis of a “pure” mode of production (whatever that is), nor as a history of British capitalism in the nineteenth century, which seem at this point in time to be the two prevailing alternatives on offer. We would have to try, instead, to understand, for example, as Marx does, the shift from the extraction of absolute to the extraction of *relative* surplus value as one of the key dynamics of the developing capitalist mode of production; as not merely a theoretical distinction but one which can be made concrete and historically specific in, say, the capitalist mode in England after the factory legislation of the mid-century. We can then see this shift as providing the baseline of solutions to the contradictions to which capitalism, as a fully established mode of production, is progressively exposed. If we then attempt to think all that is involved—politically, socially, ideologically, in terms of the state, of politics, of the reproduction of skills, of the degree of labor and the application of science as a “productive force,” as a consequence of the uneven development toward this second “moment” in the unfolding of capitalist accumulation (i.e., as the inner spark which prompts many of the transformations in capitalism which we now sum up as the “transition from laissez-faire to monopoly”)—then we begin to see how *Capital* provides a foundation for the development of a Marxist theory of the superstructures within the framework of “determination in the last instance,” without falling back into the identity-correspondence position outlined in *The German Ideology*.

That is, so to speak, re-examining the base/superstructure problem from the perspective of “the base.” But it is also possible, within the framework of *Capital*, to reconstruct certain key mechanisms and tendencies of the superstructures from distinctions Marx is always drawing between the “base” lev-

els of production and exchange. And this helps us to understand how it can be possible to insist that, within Marxism, the superstructures are at one and the same moment “determined” and yet absolutely, fundamentally necessary and required: not empty ideological forms and illusions. This relates to what is now sometimes called the theory of *Darstellung* or “representation” in Marx.⁵ Without taking on a complex account of this theory here, we may try to approach it more easily through Marx’s notion or concept of *appearances*, and thus to the theory of “fetishism” as outlined in the first part of *Capital* I—though there is considerable argument as to whether the theories of *Darstellung* and the theory of “fetishism” are in fact the same.

Often, though by no means exclusively, the question of appearances or of “real relations”/“phenomenal forms” is linked, in *Capital*, with the distinction between production and exchange. In the “1857 Introduction” and throughout *Capital* Marx insists on the necessary relation between the circuits of exchange (where value is realized) and the conditions pertaining to it, and the circuits of capital through production and the conditions pertaining to that. These, he says, must not be thought of as “identical.” They are complementary but different, articulated with each other, but each still requiring its own conditions to be sustained. Hence the “unity” which these processes exhibit is not a unity of identity, but “unity of the diverse”—the “concentration of many determinations.” Now, though these processes remain linked in their differences, and each is necessary for the “self-expansion and realization of value,” production is the determining level: “consumption appears as a moment of production.” The sphere of exchange is, however, what *appears* to dominate, to provide the “real” level of social relations under capitalism. It is also the sphere in which the myriad everyday “exchanges” of capitalist market relations take place, dictated only by the hidden but miraculous hand of the market. It is thus the sphere of capitalism’s “common sense”—that is, where our spontaneous and everyday commonsense perceptions and experiences of the system arise. It is also the starting point of bourgeois theory, both vulgar political economy and, after that, marginal economics which deals principally with the domain of circulation.

Now, all the relations of the sphere of exchange really exist—they are not figments of anyone’s imagination. Value could not be realized without them. There is a labor market, where labor-power is bought and sold—the form of the contract being the wage. There are markets in which commodities exchange against money—the form of the contract being prices. This sphere of “free exchange,” where labor appears to exchange against its “due price” (a

“fair wage”) and where goods appear to exchange at their equivalences (real prices), is the domain of private, egoistic exchanges which political economy named “civil society.” To put it briefly, and in a very simplified form, Marx argues two things about this sphere of capitalist society. Looking—to use a special metaphor—“downward,” this sphere conceals the real, but highly unequal and exploitative relations of production. The concentration on—indeed *the fetishization* of—the sphere of exchange *masks* what founds it and makes it possible: the generation and extraction of the surplus in the sphere of capitalist production. Thus, at the level of exchange, the agents of the process appear as one individual confronting another: whereas, of course, this epoch of egoistic individuals “which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed *social . . .* relations” (*Grundrisse*). Thus, when the production relations of capitalism *appear as*—and are treated, conceptually, as consisting of nothing except—exchange relations, the effect of this re-presentation is to mask and occlude what the “real relations” of capitalism are. This is the theory of representation, and it is also part of the theory of “fetishism.” It indicates why Marx is so insistent throughout *Capital* on the difference between “real relations” and their “phenomenal forms”—without his entertaining for a moment the idea that the “phenomenal forms” are imaginary or do not exist.

However, looking—to use the spatial metaphor again—“upward,” Marx then notes that it is these phenomenal relations which constitute the basis of civil society and the politico-juridical relations: that is, the superstructures. And from that level, also, arise the various forms of ideological consciousness. “*On the surface* of bourgeois society,” Marx writes, “the wage of the labourer *appears as* the price of labour, a certain quantity of money that is paid for a certain quantity of labour. . . . This phenomenal form which makes the actual relation invisible and indeed shows the direct opposite of that relation forms the basis of all the *juridical notions* of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, of all its illusions as to *liberty*, of all the apologetic shifts of the *vulgar economists*. . . . The exchange between capital and labour at first *presents itself to* the mind in the same guise as the buying and selling of all other commodities,” he adds a little further on. Finally, he concludes, “The former [the ‘phenomenal form’] appear directly and spontaneously *as current modes of thought*: the latter [the real relations] must first be discovered by science.” (All these quotes from chapter 19 on “Wages,” in *Capital* I. Our italics. The formulations are

recapitulated again and again through this volume.) Thus, he says elsewhere, in a famous passage at the end of part 2 of *Capital*,

we . . . take leave for a time of this noisy sphere where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them . . . to the hidden abode of production. . . . This sphere that we are deserting, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say, labour power, are constrained only by their free will. They contract as free agents, and the agreement they come to is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will.

Those who would like to found a theory of the superstructures, and the ideological discourses and spontaneous commonsense notions which fill out and help to organize the terrain of the superstructures, and who wish nevertheless to know how *and why* these emerge, in determinate forms, from the level of a mode of production, have, it seems to me, little or no alternative but to begin to work outward from this essential starting point at the heart of the argument in the mature Marx in *Capital* itself.⁶

Gramsci

The problem of base/superstructure has been the subject of considerable further development and theorizing, especially within “Western Marxism”—though it must be said that few appear to try to work *outward* from the terrain of the mature Marx in the way tentatively formulated above. Most attempts have preferred to go back to the less adequate formulations of *The German Ideology* period. What is more, many of these attempts have been concerned with the specifically *ideological* dimensions of the superstructures. We have neglected this aspect here, not only because it has been much written about, and because it constitutes a difficult area of theorizing in itself, but also because the concentration on the problems of ideology has, until recently, obscured the fact that when Marx refers to the superstructures, he is discussing the forms, relations, and apparatuses of the state and civil society, *as well as* the ideological forms and forms of social consciousness corresponding to them. Since Lenin and Gramsci—until Nicos Poulantzas and Louis Althusser placed the problem once more squarely on the agenda—the

superstructures in the true Marxian sense, including the absolutely critical question of the nature of the capitalist state, have been woefully neglected.

In the space left at our disposal, only two positions can, even cursorily, be considered. They constitute, however, in our view, the really significant contribution, post Marx, Engels, and Lenin, to the development of a Marxist “theory of the superstructures” and of the base/superstructure relation.

The first contributor here is Gramsci. Gramsci’s work was undertaken first in the very center of the great upsurge of proletarian struggle in Italy in the immediately post–First World War period, and then continued, under the most difficult circumstances of imprisonment. Gramsci was forced to ponder long and hard the difficult question of how Marxism could inform revolutionary political practice. He was also forced, by the “exceptional” nature of the Italian state, to consider deeply the question of the nature of the capitalist state in both its “normal” and its exceptional forms (it was one of those exceptions, after all—the fascist state of Mussolini—which put him behind bars). He was also, as a result of his Crocean early training, peculiarly alerted to the enlarging or (as Benedetto Croce himself put it) “ethical” functions of the state, and what this concept would mean when translated into Marxist terms. And he was involved, as one of the leading militants in the international communist movement, directly with the same problems which had precipitated Lenin’s fundamental text, *State and Revolution*.

It is not possible to recapitulate Gramsci’s formulations about the state and the superstructures here. All that we can do is to indicate the *direction* of Gramsci’s thinking in this domain. Much of Gramsci’s work is directed in polemic against economic reductive theories of the superstructures. Hence he argued that the proper posing of the relation between base and superstructures was the seminal issue in a Marxist theory of politics. (See particularly “The Modern Prince,” which composes part of the *Prison Notebooks*.) Fundamental class relations always, under conditions of developing capitalist relations, extend themselves in and through the “complex spheres of the superstructures”; for only thus could the reproduction of the social relations of capitalism be carried through in such a way as, progressively, to draw civil, social, political, and cultural life into a larger conformity with capital and its needs. In developed capitalist social formations, this *enlargement* of capital’s sway throughout the social formation as a whole depended, precisely, on the development of the state and of civil society. Here, Gramsci paid close attention to the “ethical” function of the state, by which he meant the “work” which the state performs on behalf of capital in establishing a

new level of civilization, creating a new kind of social individual appropriate to the new levels of material existence accomplished by the development of capitalism's base. It was through the state, through its work in and with the family, the law, education, the multiplicity of private associations, the cultural apparatus, the church, the formation of new strata of the intelligentsia, the formation of political parties, and the development of public opinion—in short, in the complex sphere of the superstructures—that capitalism ceased to be simply a system of production and became a whole form of social life, conforming everything else to its own movement. This expansion of the conception of what it is the superstructures “do” for capital is Gramsci's first contribution.

The second is the manner in which he generates those critical intermediary concepts which enable us to think the *specificity* of a superstructural level. Here we have in mind Gramsci's development of the political instance, and the critical (if often provisional and cryptic) concepts he elaborates there of “relations of force,” hegemony, historical bloc, corporate and subaltern classes, class fractions, Caesarism, Bonapartism, etc. Once again, in Gramsci's concept of “hegemony,” for example, we discover the beginnings of a way of conceptualizing how classes, constituted at the fundamental level of production relations, come to provide the basis of the social authority, the political sway and cultural domination of a “class alliance on behalf of capital,” without reducing the idea to what Marx once called the “dirty-Jewish” question of class interest, narrowly conceived. This latter form of economic reductionism, Gramsci argues, conceives of history as “a continuous *marché de dupes*, a competition in conjuring and sleight of hand. ‘Critical’ activity [i.e., Marxism] is reduced to the exposure of swindles, to creating scandals, and to prying into the pockets of public figures” (*Prison Notebooks*). Which of us cannot quickly recall *that* brand of Marxism of exposure?

Gramsci's third contribution in this area is the attention he paid to the nature, specifically, of the *capitalist* state, its role in the generation of ideological consent, and thus to how class power secured itself in its “decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures,” while at the same time providing, at the level of the superstructures and of ideologies, that “cement” which welded the social formation together under the hegemonic sway of an alliance founded on the fundamental class of capital. “In reality, the State must be conceived of as an ‘educator,’ in as much as it tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilization. Because one is acting essentially on economic forces reorganizing and developing the apparatus

of economic production, creating a new structure, the conclusion must not be drawn that the superstructural factors should be left to themselves to develop spontaneously, to a haphazard and sporadic germination. The State, in this field too, is an instrument of rationalization, of acceleration and of Taylorization. It operates according to a plan, urges, incites, solicits, ‘punishes’; for once the conditions are created in which a certain way of life is ‘possible,’ then criminal action or omission must have a punitive sanction, with moral implications, and not merely be judged generically as ‘dangerous.’ The Law is the repressive and negative aspect of the entire, positive, civilizing activity undertaken by the State” (*Prison Notebooks*).

A Marxist grasp of the nature of the state and its functions and processes under capitalism, especially in its classical “liberal” or laissez-faire form, and the complementary discussion of “consent” and “coercion,” of the role of ideology and common sense, etc., which fill out Gramsci’s subtle and perceptive thought on this question, has rarely if ever been surpassed. Gramsci’s work remains, of course, theoretically underdeveloped: the concepts are often in what Althusserians would call their “practical” state: they are hardly ever “pure”—never thoroughly or radically dismembered from their location within specific conjunctures. But if Lenin was correct to argue that what a Marxist analysis pointed to as its proper conclusion was the “concrete analysis of a concrete situation”—in other words, precisely, the analysis of conjunctures—then it is Lenin himself, first, and Gramsci immediately behind who—in so far as such an analysis embraces the superstructures—lead the way.

Gramsci is the one “historicist” whose work continues to haunt, and can never be expunged from, the starting points which the structuralists, like Althusser and Poulantzas, the other major contributors to a Marxist theory of base and superstructure, adopt. Both Althusser and Poulantzas criticize Gramsci’s starting position within a “philosophy of praxis.” (See particularly Althusser’s “Marxism Is Not a Historicism” in *Reading Capital*; and Poulantzas’s “The Capitalist State and Ideologies” in his *Political Power and Social Classes*.) Both are *massively* indebted to Gramsci, in seminal not just in marginal or incidental ways. Poulantzas’s work on the political instance and on the state is conceptually impossible without Gramsci. And, as Althusser has revised his more “theoreticist” earlier positions and moved toward a more substantive, less epistemological approach to the object of Marxist analysis (as for example in his seminal and extremely influential essay “Ideology and the State” in *Lenin and Philosophy*), so his debt to Gramsci, already handsomely acknowledged, becomes both more explicit and more pronounced. The con-

cept of “Ideological State Apparatus,” which has become a generative idea in the post-Althusserian analysis of the capitalist state, is a direct reworking of a few seminal passages on apparatuses of consent and Gramsci’s “State and Civil Society” essay (*Prison Notebooks*), though, of course, translated—with effect—into a more structuralist Marxist language.

Althusser

The contribution of Althusser and his followers, especially Poulantzas, in elaborating a Marxist theory of base/superstructure is too complicated a matter to undertake here. We can only note three significant aspects which, taking up in his customarily rigorous fashion, Althusser has deeply transformed; thereby making a contribution of considerable theoretical significance to the problem of base and superstructure.

First, let us note that, in the manner in which a social formation is “thought” by Althusser—beginning with the formative and classic essay “Contradiction and Overdetermination,” in *For Marx*, and developed in *Reading Capital*—there is more than a hint that the topographical metaphor of “base/superstructure” ought to be superseded altogether. For Althusser conceives a social formation as composed of different *practices*—essentially the economic, political, and ideological (with, perhaps, a fourth: theoretical practice?)—each of which is required for the production and reproduction of the relations of the capitalist mode: and each of which has its own inner constitution, its own specificity, its own dynamic and “relative autonomy” from the others. Some of Althusser’s most effective polemical passages are indeed reserved for taking the base/superstructure metaphor *literally*: and thus showing the absurdity of waiting for a historical moment when the determining level—His Majesty, the Economy—could detach itself from its more incidental and epiphenomenal superstructural forms, and exert its “determination” over a social formation on its own! Neither in time nor history can “determination in the last instance by the economic” be so read as to suggest that the level of economic practice could stand free and appear denuded of political and ideological practices.

This theory of the necessity, as well as of the “relative autonomy,” of the practices formerly consigned to the “superstructures” as we have already seen—constitutes one end of the double chain of a Marxist theory of a social formation. But then, what of the other end of the chain? How, then, is determinacy to be understood?

It is not, in Althusser's view, to be understood in terms of what produces a particular conjuncture, especially a revolutionary conjuncture. Such moments of fundamental rupture are no more exclusively produced by the single determinacy of "the economic" than any other moment. Such moments are constituted, rather, by the accumulation of the different contradictions, peculiar to each of the levels or practices, in one space or moment: hence, such conjunctures are, like Freud's symptoms (from whom, indeed, the metaphor is adopted), not determined, but "over-determined." Determinacy, then, for Althusser, is thought principally in terms of the economic level (determining) having, as one of its effects, the deciding which of the levels of the social formation—economic, political, or ideological—will be "dominant."

Each level or practice is, thus, conceived, not as autonomous but as part of a "complex, structured whole, structured in dominance." Determinacy consists in the combination or articulation (the *Darstellung*) of instances and effects in and through this complex structure. "The fact that each of these times and each of these histories is relatively autonomous does not make them so many domains which are independent of the whole; the specificity of each of these times and each of these histories—in other words, their relative autonomy and independence—is based on a certain type of dependence with respect to the whole" (*Reading Capital*). This is a conception of "determination" rigorously reinterpreted in the form of what Althusser calls a "structural" rather than a sequential causality. The whole point of *Reading Capital* is indeed to establish, via a "symptomatic reading" of Marx's work, that this is indeed the form of "causality" which the mature Marx employed.

The theoreticism, the "straightening out" of Marx in the interests of proving his structuralist lineage, which is characteristic especially of Althusser's work in the period of *Reading Capital*, has been widely criticized; not least by some of his former collaborators (important in this respect is Jacques Rancière), and by Althusser himself (Althusser 1976). But this should not detract from the seminal advance which the base-superstructure problem has undergone in his hands. This is brought forcefully forward in the now-famous "Ideological State Apparatuses" essay (published in his *Lenin and Philosophy* and widely referred to as the "ISAs" essay) in which Althusser puts forward some "Notes" on the nature of ideology and the state, and restores some of the problems he had previously addressed to the more classical terrain of the "class struggle"—although actually, both here and in Poulantzas, more often invoked than present as a concept performing

knowledge. Again, the “ISAs” essay cannot be resumed here. It requires careful and critical reading. It falls very much into two parts. The first—which examines the locating of ideology in the apparatuses and structures of the state—is far more convincing than the second, which, following the sinuous path of a Lacanian revision of Freud, enters, it seems to us, another problematic which—however important—is as yet hardly within hailing distance of any which can be attributed to Marx without straining credibility.

What is most significant from our point of view here, however, is the manner in which the “effectivity” of the superstructures is posed in this essay. Althusser recapitulates the central position in Marxism occupied by the base/superstructure metaphor. It is, he suggests, a metaphor: a “metaphor of topography.” It “makes something visible”—namely “that the upper floors could not ‘stay up’ alone, if they did not rest precisely on their base.” Despite Althusser’s probing irony here at the expense of this topographical depiction, he acknowledges that it has a function: “the great theoretical advantage of the Marxist topography . . . is simultaneously that it reveals that questions of determination (or of index of effectivity) are crucial: that it reveals that it is the base which in the last instance determines the whole edifice; and that, as a consequence, it obliges us to pose the theoretical problem of the type of ‘derivatory’ effectivity peculiar to the superstructure, i.e. it obliges us to think what the Marxist tradition calls conjointly the relative autonomy of the superstructures and the reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base” (*Lenin and Philosophy*). Thus, while retaining the classical metaphor, Althusser proposes to go beyond its purely descriptive limitations, and rethink the problem “on the basis of reproduction.” What he means, broadly, by this is that the specific “effectivity” of the superstructures is to be understood in terms of their role in *the reproduction of the social relations of production*; or what has come to be terms on the basis of the problematic of “social reproduction.”

Althusser makes, at best, a tentative start in this essay with this concept. The idea of regarding the superstructures in terms of social reproduction has, however, already proved innovative and productive conceptually, not least in those areas of Marxist theory (for example, in relation to the family, the sexual division of labor, and the role of so-called “unproductive labor”) which have hitherto hardly survived the reductive thrust of the originating topographical metaphor. It is true that the notion of “social reproduction” tends to produce in its wake its own distortion: that of an endlessly successful, functionally unfolding, reproduction of capitalist social relations

without either end, contradiction, crisis, or break. But then, the one question which Althusserians, in their peremptory haste to dismantle empirical and historicist-humanism forever (“Marxism is not a Humanism,” “Marxism is not Historicism”), have not deeply enough considered is whether, in declaring that Marxism is a “structuralism,” they have sufficiently satisfied themselves—or us—that Marxism is *not a functionalism*. However, while bearing this crucial but difficult theoretical issue in view, it must be said that the attempt to reconceptualize the base/superstructure problem in terms of “social reproduction,” and thus in much closer conceptual touch with the starting point of Marx’s mature work (production, reproduction), has done a great deal to revivify theoretical work on the problem, and to set work on it moving in what may well prove to be a fruitful direction.

To take this conceptual opening further—both to modify and to extend it, critically—is, at the same time, to advance Marxism as a critical science and as a theoretically informed revolutionary practice. Only when we can grasp and comprehend the dense, opaque integument of capitalist societies—their base and their complex superstructures—through the former are we likely to be able to develop a sufficiently informed practice to transform them.

NOTES

- 1 Preface to the French edition of *Capital*, Vol. I, 1872: Marx 1961.
- 2 Afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*, Vol. I, 1872: Marx 1961.
- 3 Afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*, Vol. I, 1872: Marx 1961.
- 4 See Anderson, “Origins of the Present Crisis”; Nairn, “The English Working Class,” “The British Political Elite,” “The Anatomy of the Labour Party I,” and “The Anatomy of the Labour Party II”; and Thompson, “The Peculiarities of the English.”
- 5 See Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*; Geras, “Fetishism in Marx’s *Capital*”; Mepham, “The Theory of Ideology in *Capital*”; Glucksmann, “The Althusserian Theatre”; Callinicos, *Althusser’s Marxism*; and Hall, “Marx’s Notes on Method.”
- 6 See here particularly Geras, “Fetishism in Marx’s *Capital*”; Mepham, “The Theory of Ideology in *Capital*”; and Hall, “Marx’s Notes on Method.”

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Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance

The aim of this paper is to mark out a set of emergent questions and problems in the study of racially structured social formations, and to indicate where some new and important initiatives are developing. In order to do this, it is necessary to situate the breaks which these studies represent from the established field of study; this, in turn, requires a crude characterization of the field. I begin with a crude sketch, at a very general level of abstraction—offering only passing apologies for the necessary simplification involved. The attempts to deal with the question of “race” directly or to analyze those social formations where race is a salient feature constitute, by now, a formidable, immense, and varied literature, which is impossible to summarize at all adequately. No justice can be done to this complexity and achievement here.

Something important about this field of inquiry can nevertheless be grasped by dividing many of the varied tendencies represented within it into two broad dominant tendencies. Each has generated a great variety of different studies and approaches. But the selection of these two tendencies is not wholly arbitrary. In many ways, they have come to be understood as opposed to one another. As is often the case with such theoretical oppositions, they can also be understood, in many respects, as inverted mirror images of one another. Each tries to supplement the weakness of the opposing paradigm by stressing the so-called “neglected element.” In doing so, each points to real weaknesses of conceptualization and indicates, symptomatically, important

points of departure for more adequate theorizations. Each, however, I suggest, is inadequate within the operative terms of its present theorization. The break thus constitutes a theoretical rupture, in part or in whole, with each of these dominant tendencies, and a possible restructuring of the theoretical field such as might enable important work of a new kind to begin.

For simplification sake, the two tendencies may be called the “economic” and the “sociological.” Let us begin with the first—the economic. A great range and variety of studies must, for convenience, be bundled together under this crude heading. These include both differences of emphasis and differences of conceptualization. Thus, some studies within this tendency concentrate on internal economic structures, within specific social formations (analyses of the economic and racial structures of South Africa would be a good example). Others are more concerned with relations between internal and external economic features, however these are characterized (developed/underdeveloped; imperialist/colonized; metropolitan/satellite, etc.). Or very different ways of conceptualizing the “economic” are involved, based on radically different economic premises or frameworks. For the purposes of this paper, I shall group together within this tendency—the pertinent differences will be dealt with later—those which are framed by neoclassical “development” economics (e.g., a dual sector analysis-capitalist and subsistence sectors); those which adopt a modernization or industrialization model (e.g., based on something like Walt Rostow’s theory of “stages of growth”); those, like the “dependency” theorists associated with the Economic Commission for Latin America, utilizing a radical theory of the economics of world underdevelopment; or those like Paul Baran or Andre Gunder Frank, who have employed a Marxist orientation (how, classical it remains, as shall be seen, is a matter of continuing controversy). What allows for a characterization of these very different approaches as belonging to a single tendency is simply this: they take economic relations and structures to have an overwhelmingly determining effect on the social structures of such formations. Specifically, those social divisions which assume a distinctively racial or ethnic character can be attributed or explained principally with reference to economic structures and processes.

The second approach I have called sociological. Here again—rather tentatively—a great variety of approaches are placed under a single rubric. Some concentrate on social relations between different racial or ethnic strata. Some deal more exclusively with cultural differences (ethnicity), of which race is only one, extreme case. Some pursue a more rigorously plural theory,

derived from J. S. Furnivall and M. G. Smith and others of that school. Some are exclusively concerned with forms of political domination or disadvantage, based on the exploitation of racial distinctions. In the vast majority of these studies, race is treated as a social category. Biological conceptions of race have greatly receded in importance, though they have by no means wholly disappeared (for example: the revival of bio-sociology, and the re-introduction of biologically based theories, through the genetic principle, in the recent work of Jensen and Eysenck). The principal stress in this second tendency is on race or ethnicity as specifically social or cultural features of the social formations under discussion. Again, what distinguishes the contributors to this school as belonging—for the purposes here alone—to a single tendency, is this: however they differ internally, the contributors to the sociological tendency agree on the autonomy, the non-reductiveness, of race and ethnicity as social features. These exhibit, they argue, their own forms of structuration, have their own specific effects, which cannot be explained away as mere surface forms of appearance of economic relations, nor adequately theorized by reducing them to the economic level of determination.

Here it can be seen how the two paradigms have been counterposed to one another, each correcting the weakness of its opposite. The first tendency, whether Marxist or not, gives an overall determinacy to the economic level. This, it is said, imparts a hard center—a materialist basis—to the otherwise soft-centeredness or culturalism of ethnic studies. The stress on the sociological aspects, in the second tendency, is then a sort of direct reply to this first emphasis. It aims to introduce a necessary complexity into the simplifying schemas of an economic explanation, and to correct against the tendency of the first toward economic reductionism. Social formations, the second tendency argues, are complex ensembles, composed of several different structures, none of which is reducible to the other. Thus, whereas the former tends to be monocausal in form, the latter tends to be pluralist in emphasis, even if it is not explicitly plural in the theoretical sense.

It will be seen that this debate reproduces, in micro, the larger, strategic debates which have marked out the field of social science in general in recent years. Consequently, developments in the latter, larger, field—whether they take racially structured social formations as their specific objects of inquiry or not—are bound to have theoretical effects for that region of study. Hence, the consequences of such breaks in the paradigms for the “sociological theories of race.” The debate is not, however, exclusively a theoretical one. Differences of theoretical analysis and approach have real effects for the

strategies of political transformation in such societies. If the first tendency is broadly correct, then what is often experienced and analyzed as ethnic or racial conflicts are really manifestations of deeper, economic contradictions. It is, therefore, to the latter that the politics of transformations must essentially be addressed. The second tendency draws attention to the actual forms and dynamic of political conflict and social tension in such societies—which frequently assume a racial or ethnic character. It points to the empirical difficulty of subsuming these directly into more classical economic conflicts. But if ethnic relations are not reducible to economic relations, then the former will not necessarily change if and when the latter do. Hence, in a political struggle, the former must be given their due specificity and weight as autonomous factors. Theory here, as always, has direct or indirect practical consequences.

Political circumstances—while not sufficient to account for the scientific value of these theories—also provide one of the conditions of existence for theory, and have effects for its implementation and appropriation. This has clearly been the case, even if restricted (as is done for a good section of this paper) primarily to Latin America and the Caribbean. The dual sector model—based on an export-led, import-substitution, foreign investment supported type of economic development—sponsored a long and disastrous period of national economic development, which further undermined the economic position of one country after another in the region. The theory of modernization was for long the economic cutting edge of alliance-for-progress strategies in the continent.

Versions of the “dependency” school have been harnessed, under different conditions, to the promotion of anti-imperialist, national-capitalist development of a radical type. The metropolitan/satellite theories of Gunder Frank and others were specifically developed in the context of the Cuban Revolution and the strategies of Latin American revolution elaborated, for example, in the resolutions to the 1962 Second Declaration of Havana. The whole field, indeed, provides an excellent case study of the necessary interconnections between theory, politics, and ideology in social science.

Each tendency exhibits something of its own rational core. Thus, it may not be possible to explain away race by reference to the economic relations exclusively. But the first tendency is surely correct when it insists that racial structures cannot be understood adequately outside the framework of quite specific sets of economic relations. Unless one attributes to race a single, unitary transhistorical character—such that wherever and whenever it appears

it always assumes the same autonomous features, which can be theoretically explained perhaps by some general theory of prejudice in human nature (an essentialist argument of a classic type)—then one must deal with the historical specificity of race in the modern world. Here one is then obliged to agree that race relations are directly linked with economic processes: historically, with the epochs of conquest, colonization, and mercantilist domination, and currently, with the “unequal exchanges” which characterize the economic relations between developed metropolitical and “underdeveloped” satellite economic regions of the world economy. The problem here is not whether economic structures are relevant to racial divisions but how the two are theoretically connected. Can the economic level provide an adequate and sufficient level of explanation of the racial feature of these social formations? Here, the second tendency enters its caveat. Similarly, the second tendency is surely correct to draw attention to the specificity of those social formations which exhibit distinctive racial or ethnic characteristics. The critique of economic reductionism is also, certainly, to the point. The problem here is to account for the appearance of this “something else”—these extra-economic factors and their place in the dynamic reproduction of such social formations. But these “real problems” also help us to identify what weaknesses are obscured by the inversions which each paradigm practices on the other. If the dominant tendency of the first paradigm is to attempt to command all differences and specificities within the framework of a simplifying economic logic, then that of the second is to stop short with a set of plural explanations which lack an adequate theorization, and which in the end are descriptive rather than analytic. This, of course, is to state the differences in their sharpest and most oversimplified form. It is worthwhile, now, exploring some of the complex terrain and arguments which are contained by this simple binarism.

The first aspect can be pinpointed by looking at some features of the recent controversies which have arisen in the analysis of the South African social formation. South Africa is clearly a “limit case” in the theoretical sense, as well as a “test case” in the political sense. It is perhaps the social formation in which the salience of racial features cannot for a moment be denied. Clearly, also the racial structures of South African society cannot be attributed to cultural or ethnic differences alone: they are deeply implicated with the forms of political and economic domination which structure the whole social formation. Moreover, there can be little argument that this is a social formation in which the capitalist mode of production is the dominant economic mode. Indeed, South Africa is the “exceptional” (?) case of an industrial

capitalist social formation, where race is an articulating principle of the social, political, and ideological structures, and where the capitalist mode is sustained by drawing, simultaneously, on what have been defined as both “free” and “forced” labor.

Now substantial parts of the literature on the South African social formation deal with the racial aspects of the society as accounted for, essentially, by the governing economic relations. These relations are characterized as, for all practical purposes, class relations in the classical sense. The structuring of the South African labor force into black and white strata is therefore analyzed as similar to the “fracturing” of the working class, which one finds in all capitalist social formations—with the single exception that, here, race is the mechanism by which this stratification of the class is accomplished. As Harold Wolpe has observed, these analyses assume that white and black working classes stand in essentially the same relation to capital. Hence, the dynamic of social relations will fall within the basic logic of class struggle which capitalist relations or production classically assume. The racial divisions amount to “nothing more than the specific form which the fractionalization of the working class, common to all capitalist modes of production, has taken in the South African social formations” (Wolpe 1976). Such analyses—Wolpe refers to several sources—thus tend to fall into what we have defined as our “first” paradigm: the subsumption of racial structures under the “logic” of capitalist economic relations. This approach can then be easily matched by its immediate, and inverted, opposite. These alternative analyses treat economic class formations as largely irrelevant to the analysis of the social and political structures, where race, rather than class, is treated as the pertinent factor, through which the society is socially structured and around which social conflicts are generated. Such a “sociological” approach can be found in, for example, Kuper (1974) and van den Berghe (1965).

Much more important—and more difficult to slot easily into either of the two approaches—is the work of John Rex, himself a South African and a distinguished sociologist. Rex has not worked extensively on South African materials. But his writing, though often necessarily programmatic, represents the “sociological” approach at one of its richest and most complex points. Rex’s first essay on the subject, “South African Society in Comparative Perspective” (Rex 1973), opens with a critique of the failure of both structural-functionalist and Marxist perspectives to deal effectively with race and ethnicity in South African society. He is equally critical of, though he gives more attention to, the “plural” theory of Furnivall and Smith. Smith argued that the different

ethnic segments of Caribbean society were “plurally” distinct, held together only through the monopoly, by one of the segments, of political power: “the monopoly of power by one cultural section is the essential precondition for the maintenance of the total society in its current form” (Smith 1965). Against this, Rex correctly argues that “the dynamics of the society turn upon the involvement of men of differing ethnic backgrounds in the same social institutions, viz., the slave plantation” (Rex 1973: 261). The same could be said of the attempts to extend the “plural society” paradigm, with its primacy of attention to cultural segmentation, and its ascription of the factor of cohesion to the instance of political monopoly, to South Africa. However, he is equally critical of any attempt to explain the racial forms in which social conflict appears in such societies as a species of “false consciousness.”

Rex bases his own approach on a significant historical fact of difference. Whereas, “classically,” capitalism has been installed through the expansion of market relations, production for which is based on “free labour,” capitalism in South Africa arose on the basis of conquest (of the Bantu peoples) and their incorporation into the economic relations on the basis of “unfree labour,” “as part of an efficient capitalist system of production.” This inaugurates the capitalist mode on very different historic “presuppositions” from those derived from the general account said to be offered by Marx—presuppositions, however, more typical of “colonial” formations, where conquest and colonization have been central features, and thus pertinent to the appearance, in such societies, of “not simply the class struggle engendered by capitalist development, but the “race war” engendered by colonial conquest” (Rex 1973: 262). Rex makes a great deal of these differentiating features: the “capacity of the employers to command the use of coercive violence during and after colonial conquest,” and the fact that the “central labour institution” is not classical free labor but “migrant labour in its unfree form.”

Taking as the central feature of his analysis this quite atypical “central labour institution,” Rex is able to delineate more precisely the specific economic mechanisms which have served to “incorporate” the African working class into the capitalist system in ways which preserve rather than liquidate its segmentary racial character. The racial structure of the South African social formation is, thereby, given concrete economic conditions of existence—the link being traceable, precisely, through its “peculiarity,” its deviation from the “classical” capitalist path. Rex traces historically the various economic forms of this “unfreedom”: the rural reserves, the labor compound, the emergence of the third element of the migrant labor system, the “urban native location.”

“Nearly all African labour partake, in some measure of the characteristics of the compound worker and the domestic worker’s status. All are liable to masters and servants legislation, and none are completely free, even though the development of secondary manufacturing industry may lead to greater flexibility of wages, greater permanence of the labour force and hence greater recognition of the needs of the worker for kinship and community” (Rex 1973: 278). These “differences,” both in the mode of entry and in the status of African labor, are seen by Rex as operating principally through the means by which African labor supply is recruited to capitalist industry. The economic relations are thus the necessary, but not the sufficient condition of the racial structure of the South African social formation. For this is also preserved by a “non-normative” element—for example, political and legal factors—which stems from the political domination of the state by the white settler capitalist class, and the “workable compromise” between this class and the white working class, which leads both to reap the advantages of confining native labor to its subordinate status in the labor market. In the context of the “classical” line of capitalist development, a capitalism which preserves rather than abolishes such “irrational” features must be, to say the least, a “deviant” case.

There is certainly no simple counterposing of “social” as against “economic” factors here. Rex cannot be accused of neglecting the level of economic relations, as many “culturalists” can. Indeed, it is his concern with the specificity of the forms of economic relations peculiar to the South African case which enables him to grasp some of the fundamental features of a social formation which is both identifiably “capitalist,” and yet different in structure from “the capitalist type” of social development—as the latter has been derived from one reading of the Marxist literature. The attention to the “central labour institutions” of this formation enables him to bring forward what Marx in another context called the “*differentia specifica*”—the basis, as he put it, of an adequate historically specific abstraction: “just those things which determine their development, i.e., the elements which are not general and common, must be separated out . . . so that in their unity . . . their essential difference is not forgotten” (Marx 1973: 85).

Nor is there a neglect of class relations and the class struggle. The segmentary approach of “pluralism” is specifically refused. “If there is division, the divisions can be seen as functionally integrated within an over-all pattern of political conflict generated by the capitalist development of the country since the mineral discoveries of 1867 and 1886.” The “revision” involved is rather the refusal of any attempt to subsume these into a universal and univocal

form—"capitalist class relations" in general. "Clearly what we have here is not something which can be adequately interpreted in terms of some universal Marxist law of class struggle but a specific kind of class struggle there undoubtedly is, namely one in which the classes are groups of varying rights and degrees of rightlessness, according to the kind of conquest or unfreedom which was imposed on them in an earlier period. The history, the structure and the forms of social differentiation which South Africa presents [i.e., its "racial" aspect] are, as in the case of any former colonial society, the product of such conquest and unfreedom." These two criteria—conquest and "unfree" labor—are the critical conceptual mechanisms through which Rex's analysis is organized. The "origin" of the capitalist mode in conditions of conquest, coupled with the "peculiar institutions" of unfree labor, thus preserve, at the economic level, and secure its continuing racially ascriptive features. This is a capitalism of a very specific and distinctive kind: "there are a number of different relationships to the means of production more subtle than can be comprehended in terms of distinction between owners and non-owners," each of which "gives rise to specific class situations . . . a whole range of class situations." The analysis therefore begins with the economic level but differentiates it from the classical type.

In addition, however, there are other relations which are not ascribable within the "social relations of production." These include distinctions at the level of culture and values—maintained, for example, by such institutional structures as the system of Bantu education and forms of political power—established through the separation of political and economic power, such as the control of political power by the whites. These generate conflicts between groups distinct from "control of the means of production." Here the analysis encompasses the position of social groups—the African "middle class," the Cape Coloureds, the Indian traders—which cannot be easily assimilated to the earlier analysis of economic relations. From them many ascriptive features of South Africa's "closed" structure of social relations also arise.

This analysis, while predicated on the "peculiarity" of the South African system, is not limited to it. Rex has recently proposed a similar sketch as the basis for analyzing ethnic relations in Latin America and the Caribbean (Rex 1977). Here, too, the analysis begins with delineating "the basic forms of economic exploitation which can arise in colonial conditions," including "other possible types of capitalist and non-capitalist exploitation and accumulation." In this instance, the range includes forms of "unfree" or "partly-free" labor—the economy of slavery and the plantation system, the formation of

a “dependent peasant.” It includes a similar range of social strata—the “set-
tlers,” pariah trader groups, middlemen, the caciques, missionaries, admin-
istrators. The general form of the argument is very similar to that employed
in the South African case. “Some of these groups are opposed to one another
as classes in a Marxian sense. All of them, however, form relatively close
groups with their own distinctive cultural traits and social organization. The
overall effect is of too much overlap and inter-penetration to justify us in
calling it a caste system, but too much closure of avenues of mobility for us
to call it a system of social stratification. It is much too complex, involving
overlapping modes of production, for it to be described as a situation of class
struggle in the Marxian sense. All of these aspects need to be kept in mind
when we speak of a colonial system of social stratification” (Rex 1977: 30).

On the broad theoretical plane, we must see this as a model founded on a
very specific theoretical revision. Without undue simplification, it combines
elements of a Marxist and a Weberian approach. The synthesis is, however,
secured on essentially Weberian terrain. I say this, not because Rex con-
stantly counterposes his own approach to what he sees as an inadequate
and simplifying application of the “Marxist law of class struggle”—though
he does. Rather, this characterization refers to the conceptual structure of
Rex’s revisions. The synthesis is accomplished, theoretically, in two differ-
ent, complementary ways. The first is the distancing of the analysis from
what is conceptualized as a “classical” Marxist approach. Much depends on
how this definition is established. “Classical” Marxism is characterized as a
mode of explanation which assumes that all the various instances of con-
flict are subsumable within and dominated by the class struggle. Classes are
defined by economic position—loosely, in terms of the distinction between
“owners and non-owners” of the means of production. They are economic
groups “in themselves” which can be organized, through the pursuit of their
distinct class interests in competing market situations, by means of the class
struggle, to become “classes-for-themselves.” The Marxist approach is also
identified, here, with a set of propositions as to the form, the path, and the
logic of capitalist development. The classical form is that in which free labor
confronts the capitalist in the labor market. Capitalism “can spring to life
only when the owner of the means of production and subsistence meets in
the market with the free labourer selling his labour power. And this one his-
torical condition comprises a world’s history” (Marx 1961: 170). The classical
path is that which makes this struggle between owners and non-owners the
typical, dominant, and determining set of relations in all social formations in

which the capitalist mode is dominant. The classical logic is that the “economic rationality” of capitalist market relations sooner or later prevail over and transform those relations stemming from previous, now displaced, modes of production, so that capitalist relations “net” the latter within their sway. Rex distances himself from this “classical” account, in terms of the pertinent differences between it and the actual social formations it is required to explain. True, he concedes that where there is capitalism, there will be economic struggles of a capitalist type—class struggles. However, social formations of a colonial type exhibit different forms which take a different path and obey a different logic. In addition, there are in such social formations other structural relations which are not attributable to class relations of a classical capitalist type.

The second feature is a recuperation of these problems within the framework of a “classical” Weberianism. By this we mean that, contrary to those who have adopted Weber against Marx, as a way of moving decisively from economic-structural to more “superstructural” features, Rex always works from that often-forgotten side of Weber’s work which treats extensively of economic relations including, of course, economic class conflict of a capitalist type, as one among a range of possible types of such relations. This is a distinctive stress, which allows Rex to encompass Marxian analysis of class relations as one, limited case within a more inclusive range of economic relations, defined as a set of “ideal-types.” This “one among a range” approach thus also permits the elaboration of other economic relations to explain peculiar features of social formations which do not exhibit Marx’s hypostasized classical capitalist structure. For Weber, economic class conflicts were conceptualized as one among a range of possible market situations, in relation to which groups, differently composed, struggled in competition. For Weber, these different market relations do not overlap into anything which can be called the general form of the class struggle. Groups competing in the struggle over prestige or status may not be the same as groups competing over the power over scarce resources. Thus, in his work on immigration and housing, Rex distinguishes between and within economic groups in terms of the stratification of the housing market—in relation to which, he identifies a set of distinct “housing classes.” It follows that the groups dominant in each market situation do not cohere into anything so singular as a single ruling class in the Marxian sense. Instead, one must generate, according to each empirical case, a range of ideal-typical market situations, the sum of these plural structures constituting the social formation. This does not mean that the analysis

excludes questions of exploitation. This is not, however, a general feature but one which remains to be specified in each individual case. It is, thus, Weber in this “harder” form—Weber, so to speak, “corrected for” by Marx—which is the theoretical basis of the synthesis Rex proposes. The solution to a limited, one-sided form of Marxian explanation is the adoption of a powerful and distinctive “left Weberianism.” It should be pointed out here that this “solution” is not restricted exclusively to those who are opposed to the “totalism” of Marxian forms of explanation. It has been noted recently (see McLennan 1976; Schwarz 1978) that some Marxist theorists, when required to integrate political and ideological structures into an economic analysis of a Marxist kind, sometimes also attempt to deal with these levels by a somewhat untheorized appropriation of Weberianism. (This, it has been suggested, is sometimes the case with the work of so distinguished a Marxist economic historian as Maurice Dobb.) So what has been pinpointed here is something like a “theoretical convergence,” operated at one time or another from arguments which begin from either the Marxist or the Weberian pole of the debate.

Significantly, there is one point where Rex challenges both Marx and Weber—a point where, incidentally, they both appear to agree. This is the contention that “free labour was the only form of labour compatible in the long run with the logic of rational capitalism” (Rex 1973: 273). This argument—founded, in Weber, by his particular ideal-type definition of “capitalist rationality,” and in Marx, by his historical analysis of the “typical” path of capitalist development, based on the English case—is contested by Rex on both fronts. Instead, Rex argues that historical deviations from this “modal” type can often be found in social formations of a “specifically colonial type.” Here, in contrast, conquest, and a variety of forms of “un-free labour” (based on apparently irrational forms of ascriptive relations, such as those founded on racial differences) can be possible conditions of existence for the emergence and development of an “effective” capitalist mode of production. Lying behind this analytic distinction is, undoubtedly, a theoretical-political point: namely a refusal of the “Euro-centeredness” of Marxism, based as it is on extrapolating to other social formations forms of development, paths, and logics peculiar to, and illegitimately generalized from, European cases (especially, of course, the English case, which forms the basis for the analysis in Marx’s *Capital*).

With this important qualification, we can now identify the dominant tendency of this synthesis (the following passage may stand for many other

instances in Rex's work): "Of course, one problem in adopting terms like 'caste' and 'estate' . . . is that all of them seem to omit what is essential to the Marxist definition of class, i.e. relationships to the means of production. What we wish to suggest here, however, departs from simple Marxism in a twofold sense. First it recognizes that at the level of relationships to the means of production there are more possible positions and potentialities for class formation than simple European Marxism seems to allow; and second, that over and above the actual means of production, there are a number of social functions and positions and that these functions are appropriated by closed groups which, thereafter, have their own interests and their own power position vis-a-vis society as a whole." When this "Marx plus Weber" theoretical position is then translated to the domain of politics, it yields a "Marx plus Fanon" sort of argument (Rex 1978: 23–24, 45).

The position, the synthesis of which has been outlined here, has of course been criticized in the context of its application to South Africa. For example, Wolpe in a recent article (1976) points out that the distinction between "free" and "forced" labor is not an adequate way of conceptualizing the relations of production of a capitalist social formation, since, for Marx, even in its classical form, "free labor" is "free" only in a very specific and formal sense: it is, after all, subject to economic compulsions to sell its labor-power as a commodity. Thus, in the South African case, the free/unfree couple, while effective in distinguishing the different constraints which structure the availability of black and white labor in the market, is not theoretically powerful enough to establish, for black labor, a relation to capitalist production of a conceptually distinct kind: "all labour-power is in some way and in some degree unfree, the type, gradation or continuum of degrees of unfreedom 'merely' affect the intensity of exploitation but not its mode" (Wolpe 1975: 203). Secondly, this distinction does not encompass what for Marx was central to "relations of production"; namely, the mode of appropriation of surplus labor. Thirdly, such an approach abstracts the labor market and its constraints from the system of production relations proper, which are in fact the central preoccupation of a Marxian analysis. Fourth, the absence of an adequate theorization at the mode of production level leaves us with a political and ideological definition of "classes" which are then too easily homogenized with the main racial groupings. However, a detailed analysis of the position of the black and white working class in South Africa, in terms both of their complex relations to capitalist production and their internal stratifications, does not allow us to "treat racial groups" as "homogeneous

in their class composition.” Wolpe, indeed, uses Guglielmo Carchedi’s recent work on the identification of social classes to say that the “functions” of even the white working class with respect to capital are not homogeneous. Fifth, Wolpe argues that political and ideological positions cannot be ascribed as a bloc to classes defined at the economic level: “A social class, or fraction or stratum of a class, may take up a class position that does not correspond to its interests, which are defined by the class determination that fixes the horizon of the class struggle” (Carchedi 1977). The example taken is that of the “labour aristocracy.” This leads on to a more general argument, that the analysis of classes and class struggle must begin from the level of the relations of production, rather than from political and ideological criteria; but that the latter have their specific forms of “relative autonomy” which cannot be ascribed to the place of a class or class fraction in the relations of production.

I am not concerned to assess in detail the merits of these arguments as they relate to the South African case. Instead, I want to use the example of this exchange to establish the basis of a more general argument. Rex’s arguments may not be entirely satisfactory in themselves, but undoubtedly they win effective ground from what he calls “simple Marxism”—as Wolpe is obliged to concede. These represent real theoretical gains, against some of the weaknesses and lacunae in what has become the dominant form in which the classical Marxist paradigm has been applied. These gains are not wholly offset by pointing, correctly, to the ways in which Rex sometimes misrepresents Marx, and distorts Marx’s real theoretical effectivity. Secondly, Wolpe’s response shows that these weaknesses can only be “corrected for,” while retaining the broad outline of a Marxist approach, by significantly modifying the dominant form in which the Marxist paradigm has been applied: either by means of a more scrupulous or rigorous application of Marx’s protocols (which have often, over time, been subject to severe theoretical simplification and impoverishment); and/or by bringing to the fore aspects and arguments which, though they can be shown not to contradict Marx, have not tended to play a very significant part when applied to the peculiar features of post-conquest or postcolonial social formations. This paper’s interest in certain new approaches to these problems, from within a substantially new application of Marxist protocols of analysis, arises precisely from a concern to indicate where and how these new emphases are beginning to develop.

Wolpe himself concedes some of the points, at least. He acknowledges that Rex “was right to insist upon the need for a more comprehensive and more refined conceptualization of class than was encompassed by the bare

reference to property relations.” This, however, he suggests, means moving away from the attention which Rex gives to market relations and constraints on the labor supply, into a fuller analysis of the relations of production and “modes of production” analysis. He acknowledges that Rex was correct to draw attention to pertinent differences in the conditions affecting the entry into the labor market of “black” and “white” labor: though he would add that the distinction between free/unfree labor is then too sharply and simply applied. Wolpe also recognizes the Rex brings forward a point of great theoretical interest by his reference to the form of the “political compromise” between the white capitalist and the white working classes, and the consequent “supervising and policing” functions which white labor exerts over black. It follows from this that some of the more simplistic political recipes based on the call for “black” and “white” labor to sink their differences in a common and general class struggle against capital—the famous call to “unite and fight”—are abstract political demands, based on theoretically unsound foundations, since they do not adequately grasp the structurally different relations in which “white” and “black” labor stand in relation to capital.

Indeed, on this point, Wolpe may not have gone far enough. For a larger argument is involved here, even if only implicitly. Rex is arguing that the South African social system shows no strong or “inevitable” tendencies to be gradually assimilated to the more “rational” forms of “free” labor, which Marx suggested was a necessary precondition for the establishment and reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. Hence, he would argue, the racial fractioning of the South African working classes has a real and substantial basis, with pertinent effects at the economic as well as at the political and ideological level. Rex thus points to the need for a definition of “the capitalist mode” which is able to deal with “other types of capitalist and non-capitalist exploitation and accumulation”—that is, to a “capitalist” system founded quite securely on forms of labor other than traditionally free and mobile labor. This formulation may be criticized as being, finally, too plurally descriptive. It avoids the necessity to specify the articulating mechanisms, and the modes of dominance, between these different “types.” But Rex has clearly succeeded, once again, in putting into question an analysis predicated unquestioningly on a general and necessary classical path of capitalist development, with a classical and irreversible sequence of evolutionary stages. To put this more broadly: he opens up the crucial theoretical question of the teleological and evolutionary form in which Marx’s work on the necessary preconditions and optimal line of development of the capitalist

mode has been interpreted—from the famous assertion, in *The Communist Manifesto*, that “the bourgeoisie . . . compels all nations on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production. . . . It creates a world after its own image,” through to the legendary discussion on the “sequence of stages” which is often derived from the section on “pre-capitalist forms” in the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1964). Against this teleological extrapolation, it must be said that the fact of conquest, and thus the very different conditions in which pre-conquest social strata have been inserted into the capitalist mode, have not, on the whole played a central role in the versions of Marxist theory usually applied to such post-conquest societies. (The difficulty of deciding precisely what was the nature of the American slave systems—clearly inaugurated within yet separate from the expanding mercantile capitalist phase—is an aspect of the same theoretical problem [Genovese 1965; Hindess and Hirst 1975]).

These, then, represent some of the gains which Rex’s critique makes against a too-simple Marxism. What I am concerned to show, now, is how current Marxist theorizings on these questions have begun, through their own internal critique of what earlier passed as “classical” or orthodox Marxism, to rectify some of the weaknesses correctly pinpointed by the critics of reductionism. These departures are, at once, rich and complex, often only at a rudimentary stage of formulation, and—as is often the case at a critical moment of paradigm shift—locked in an intricate internal debate. Only certain indications of some of the main directions in this work can be provided in this review.

We might begin, here, by looking at one, very distinctive formulation with respect to the development of the social formations of Latin America, which not only defines itself within “classical” Marxism, but which develops, in what is held to be a Marxist direction, one of the lines of argument which the critique by Rex and others has put in question: namely, the work of Gunder Frank, and recent critiques of Gunder Frank’s work from within a transformed Marxist perspective.

One distinctive but seminal application of what is taken to be the Marxist paradigm is to be found in Gunder Frank. His work was itself counterposed to the dominant and formative school of “dependency” theorists, grouped around the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) which was established in 1948. This school adopted a more rigorously structural analysis to explain the “underdevelopment” of the underdeveloped countries of the region. As against earlier developmentalist models, the ECLA “school” insisted that development and underdevelopment had to

be treated within the single framework of a world economic system. The “underdeveloped” countries were the dependent sectors of such a world economy: as Celso Furtado put it, “the theory of underdevelopment turns out to be essentially a theory of dependence” (Furtado 1971, cited in O’Brien 1975). This starting point within a global economic framework had much in common, in a “broadly” Marxist way, with those writers who had attempted to deal with modern aspects of capitalist development on a world scale in terms of a “theory of imperialism” (e.g., Lenin, Luxembourg, Hilferding, and Bukharin). The ECLA theorists accepted some such general framework of imperialism, giving of course greater attention than the classical theorists did to the effects of this world system at its peripheries. They were not necessarily Marxist in any other sense. These general relations of dependency, they argued, had created internal structures promoting a form of what they called “dependent capitalist development” in those sectors, and among those classes, closely linked with the imperialist chain, while marginalizing other sectors, including the great mass of the population, especially the peasantry. “The differences between the internationalized sector and the non-industrialized or marginal sector are the direct result of capitalist expansion, and become a form of structural dualism” (O’Brien 1975). However, the “school” promulgated a variety of different strategies for overcoming this externally induced sectoral imbalance—often of a technical-economic, rather than of a political kind.

Gunder Frank certainly shares with the dependency theorists the necessity to begin from a world capitalist system in which development and underdevelopment were structurally related. However, he explicitly argued against the possibility of a genuine, indigenous program of economic development, of, say, a national-bourgeois type, as a possible path for Latin America out of its phase of dependent development. And this argument was supported by a startling thesis, which takes us back to the problems posed earlier. Gunder Frank argued that Latin America had been thoroughly incorporated into capitalist world relations since the period of the conquest by the European powers in the sixteenth century. Its underdevelopment stemmed from this dependent nature of its early insertion into the world capitalist market. Implicit in this thesis was the view that no structural differences remained between the more and the less developed sectors of these dependent social formations. “Dependency” he argued, was no recent phenomenon in the region. It was only the latest form of the longstanding “satellitization” of the Latin American economies within the framework of imperialist economic

relations. The “expansion of the capitalist system over the past centuries effectively and entirely penetrated even the most isolated sectors of the underdeveloped world” (Frank 1969). The fundamental term for understanding this penetration and subversion by capitalist relations which had brought about the structural coupling of development and underdevelopment was that of a single continuum—the “metropolis-satellite polarization . . . one and the same historical process of the expansion and development of capitalism” which continues to generate “both economic development and structural underdevelopment.” This was the imperialist chain, which “extends the capitalist link between the capitalist world and the national metropolises to the regional centres . . . and from these local centres and so on to the large landowners or merchants who expropriate surplus from small peasants or tenants, and sometimes even from these latter to the landless labourers exploited by them in turn” (Frank 1969).

The most telling critique of Frank’s work is offered in Ernesto Laclau’s review essay “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America,” republished in a recent volume of essays (Laclau 1977). Laclau’s specific criticisms are easily resumed. The object of his critique is Frank’s assertion that Latin America has “been capitalist from the beginning”—a single process, which must, for Frank, be “identical in all its aspects from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.” Laclau, first, criticizes Frank’s conception of “capitalism.” Frank defines this as a system of production for the market, of which profit forms the driving motive. This, Laclau argues, differs fundamentally from Marx’s conception of mode of production in so far as it dispenses with Marx’s principal criteria for defining a “mode”—the relations of production. This “error” leads Frank to assume that, wherever there is capital accumulation, then Marx’s “law”—the rapid and inevitable transformation of the social formation by capitalist relations—must follow. However, as Laclau shows, for Marx, the accumulation of commercial capital is perfectly compatible with the most varied modes of production and does not by any means presuppose the existence of a capitalist mode of production: e.g., “However, not commerce alone, but also merchant’s capital is older than the capitalist mode of production, is in fact historically the oldest free state of existence of capital” (Marx 1974: 319–321). This leads Laclau to mount a further critique of Frank’s lack of historical specificity—exploitative situations as different as the Chilean *inquilinos*, the Ecuadorian *huasipungeros*, West Indian plantation slaves, and Manchester textile workers being, for all practical purposes, subsumed into a single relation, declared “capitalist.” The same can be said in more

detail of the troublesome case of plantation slavery in the New World. This is, of course, the site of a protracted, and still unresolved, debate. Ulrich B. Phillips—whom, despite his offensive anti-slave viewpoint, Eugene Genovese correctly praises for a seminal analysis of the political economy of slavery—argued, long ago, that plantation slavery was a form of capitalism. That was, indeed, the basis of his objection to it (Genovese 1971). Genovese himself argues that slavery had a distinct set of exploitative relations—a “seigneurial society . . . [which] created a unique society, neither feudal . . . nor capitalist.” Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst constitute plantation slavery as its own distinctive “mode,” using primarily formal criteria. Eric Williams, early on, and subsequently Genovese, and Jairus Banaji among others, have concentrated on the relationship between plantation slavery—whatever its characteristic “mode”—and the global capitalist economy. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman have recently described slavery as a profitable form of “capitalist agriculture” (Hindess and Hirst 1977; Williams 1944; Genovese 1971; Banaji 1977; Fogel and Engerman 1974).

Frank quotes Marx’s observation which describes the plantations as “commercial speculations, centres of production for the world market,” as proof that Marx regarded them, too, as “capitalist.” Laclau reminds us that Marx, pertinently, added, “if only in a formal way.” Actually, Marx seemed to be arguing the opposite to Frank; for he insists the plantation slavery could only be “formally capitalist,” “since slavery among the Negroes excludes free-wage labour, which is the base on which capital production rests. However, those who deal in slave-trading are capitalists.” As Beechey (1978) has recently argued, slavery certainly presupposed private property, a class of owners, and a propertyless class. However, whereas under capitalism the worker owns his own labor-power which he sells as a commodity to the capitalist, slaveholders owned both the labor-power and the slave. “The slaveholder considers a Negro, whom he has purchased, as his property, not because the institution of slavery as such entitles him to that Negro, but because he has acquired him like any other commodity through sale and purchase” (Marx 1974: 776). However, both the slave trade itself, and the extraction of the commodities so produced, were funded by mercantile capital and circulated within the global circuits of capital. As Beechey puts it, with great clarity: “Slaveholders were both merchants, dealing with the purchase and sale of commodities on the world market, and slaveholders exploiting their slaves within the plantation system, which emerged as a specialized agricultural region, a kind of internal colony within the expanded world market” (Beechey 1978).

What Marx was describing, then, was something radically different from Frank's interpretation: namely, an articulation between two modes of production, the one "capitalist" in the true sense, the other only "formally" so: the two combined through an articulating principle, mechanism, or set of relations, because, as Marx observed, "its beneficiaries participate in a world market in which the dominant productive sectors are already capitalist." That is, the object of inquiry must be treated as a complex articulated structure which is, itself, "structured in dominance." Slave plantation owners thus participated in a general movement of the world capitalist system: but on the basis of an internal mode of production—slavery in its modern, plantation form—not itself "capitalist" in character. This is a revolutionary proposition in the theoretical sense, since it departs from that very teleological reading of Marx which produced, in Frank, the indefensible thesis that Latin America has been "capitalist" since the conquest. What we have now, in opposition to the thesis of "inevitable transformation" of pre-capitalist modes and their dissolution by capitalist relations, is the emergent theoretical problem of an articulation between different modes of production, structured in some relation of dominance. This leads on to the definition of a social formation which, at its economic level, may be composed of several modes of production, "structured in dominance" (Althusser and Balibar 1970; Hindess and Hirst 1975, 1977; Poulantzas 1973). This has provided the basis for an immense amount of formative work, especially on "pre-capitalist modes of production," offering a more rigorous approach to that reading of Marx, rightly criticized—on this very point—by Rex, while retaining the systematic terms of a Marxist analysis. This work is, of course, pitched principally at the level of economic relations. Though it has clear consequences for other levels of the structure of social formations (class formations, alliances, political and ideological structures, etc.), these have not been spelled out (for example in Laclau's essay quoted here: though for related developments pertaining to these levels, see Laclau, and others referred to more extensively below). It has, for example, pertinent effects for any analysis of the way this articulated combination of modes inserts economic agents drawn from different ethnic groups into sets of economic relations which, while articulated into a complex unity, need not be conceptualized as either necessarily the same or inevitably destined to become so.

This emergent problematic constitutes perhaps the most generative new theoretical development in the field, affecting the analysis of racially structured social formations. The emergent theoretical position is grounded by its

proponents in a certain “rereading” of the classical Marxist literature. It is part of that immense theoretical revolution constituted by the sophisticated return to the “reading” of Marx’s *Capital* which has had such a formative intellectual impact over the past decade. It is also being currently developed in a range of different theoretical fields. Laclau puts the essential argument in a strong form: “The pre-capitalist character of the dominant relations of production in Latin America was not only not incompatible with production for the world market, but was actually intensified by the expansion of the latter.” Marx, in a passage less well known than *The Communist Manifesto* “scenario” quoted earlier, spoke of the fact that “the circuit of industrial capital . . . crosses the commodity circulation of the most diverse modes of social production. . . . No matter whether commodities are the output of production based on slavery, of peasants . . . of state enterprise . . . or of half-savage hunting tribes . . . they come face to face with the monies and commodities in which industrial capital presents itself. . . . The character of the process of production from which they originate is immaterial. . . . They must be reproduced and to this extent the capitalist mode of production is conditional on modes of production lying outside of its own stage of development” (Marx 1956: 109). Charles Bettelheim, who may appear to take a more “classical” view, argues that the dominant tendency is toward the dissolution of other modes by the capitalist one. But this is often combined with a secondary tendency—that of “conservation-dissolution”: where non-capitalist modes, “before they disappear are ‘restructured’ (partly dissolved) and thus subordinated to the predominant capitalist relations (and so conserved)” (Bettelheim 1972).

Using this schema, Wolpe shows that certain problems of the South African social formation, referred to earlier, which could not be satisfactorily explained within the older reading, and which Rex among others correctly criticized, begin to be resolvable through the use of these new theoretical instruments and in a manner which throws significant light on the racial fracturing of class relations in South Africa. While the detailed outlines of this attempted “solution” cannot be entered into here (Wolpe 1975), its broader consequences are worth quoting. Wolpe suggests, for example, that the reliance of the capitalist sector in South Africa on the non-capitalist sectors in the African areas for both cheap labor supply and subsistence reproduction enables capital to pay for labor-power below the cost of its reproduction, while having always available a plentiful labor supply whose costs of subsistence it does not fully bear (Wolpe 1972). He employs both the “articulation”

and the “dissolution-conservation” variants of the thesis. In South Africa, the tendency of capital accumulation to dissolve other modes is cross-cut and blocked by the counteracting tendencies to conserve the non-capitalist economies—on the basis that the latter are articulated in a subordinate position to the former. Where capitalism develops by means, in part, of its articulation with non-capitalist modes, “the mode of political domination and the content of legitimating ideologies assume racial, ethnic and cultural forms and for the same reasons as in the case of imperialism . . . political domination takes on a colonial form” (Wolpe 1975). He adds: “The conservation of non-capitalist modes of production necessarily requires the development of ideologies and political policies which revolve around the segregation and preservation and control of African ‘tribal’ societies”—that is, the relation assumes the forms of ideologies constructed around ethnic, racial, national, and cultural ideological elements.

In short, the emergent theory of the “articulation of different modes of production” begins to deliver certain pertinent theoretical effects for an analysis of racism at the social, political, and ideological levels. It begins to deliver such effects—and this is the crucial point—not by deserting the level of analysis of economic relations (i.e., mode of production) but by posing it in its correct, necessarily complex, form. Of course, this may be a necessary, but not a sufficient starting point. In this respect, Wolpe’s term “requires” may go too far, suggesting a necessary correspondence, of a too-functionalist kind, between the structure of modes of production and the specific forms of political domination and ideological legitimation. The level of economic analysis, so redefined, may not supply sufficient conditions in itself for an explanation of the emergence and operation of racism. But, at least, it provides a better, sounder point of departure than those approaches which are obliged to desert the economic level, in order to produce “additional factors” which explain the origin and appearance of racial structuring at other levels of the social formation. In this respect, at least, the theoretical advances briefly outlined here have the merit of respecting what we would call two cardinal premises of Marx’s “method.” The materialist premise—that the analysis of political and ideological structures must be grounded in their material conditions of existence; and the historical premise—that the specific forms of these relations cannot be deduced, *a priori*, from this level but must be made historically specific “by supplying those further delineations” which explain their specificity. Both premises are well expressed in one of the most justly famous passages from *Capital*: “The specific economic form, in which unpaid

labour-surplus is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form" (the materialist premise). But "this does not prevent the same economic basis—the same from the standpoint of its main conditions—due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environments, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances" (the historical premise) (Marx 1974: 791–792). Both premises are indeed required, if the conditions of theoretical adequacy are to be met: each, on its own, is not sufficient. The first, without the second, may lead us straight back into the impasse of economic reductionism; the second, without the first, snares us in the toils of historical relativism. Marx's method, properly understood and applied, provides us with the conditions—though not, of course, the guarantee—of a theoretical adequacy which avoids both. (For a further elaboration of the "basic premises" of Marx's method, see Johnson et al. 1978 and Johnson 1978; for a condensed version of the argument outlined by Wolpe, as applied to Latin American and Caribbean social formations, see Hall 1977.)

The application of the "articulation" thesis, briefly outlined here, has had revolutionary theoretical consequences in other fields of inquiry, which can only be shortly noted here since they fall outside of our principal concern. They can be found, in the English context, in the work on "pre-capitalist modes" and social formations, by Hindess and Hirst (1975, 1977); in Banaji (1977); in the recent work on "colonial modes of production" (e.g., Alavi 1975); in recent issues of *The Review of African Political Economy*, *Critique of Anthropology*, and *Economy and Society*; also, in a related form, in the renewed debate about "transition," sparked off by the reissue of the formative set of essays on *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (Hilton 1976); and in the forthcoming work on Jamaica by Ken Post (1978). In France, it is most noteworthy in the context of the revived interest in the new "economic anthropology" to which such writers as Maurice Godelier, Claude Meillassoux, Emmanuel Terray, Pierre-Philippe Rey, and Georges Dupré have made outstanding contributions (see the selection by Seddon 1978). (For interpretive overviews and critiques in English, see, inter alia, Clammer 1975; Bradby 1975; Foster-Carter 1978; Seddon 1978; Wolpe 1978.) Meillassoux princi-

pally deals with “self-sustaining” agricultural social formations, and their dissolution-transformation, when they have grafted onto them production for external “capitalist” markets. This has certain theoretical consequences for those articulated social formations where the non-capitalist sector is “able to fulfil functions that capitalism prefers not to assume in the under-developed countries” (see Wolpe’s development of this argument, above)—and thus for such societies as the South African one, where (as John Clammer extrapolates) “people who are obliged to become wage-labourers in a neo- and quasi-colonial situation are forced back on the ‘traditional’ sector to obtain precisely those services which the capitalist does not provide.” Clammer correctly points out that this revives the “dual sector” analysis—though in a radically new form since, as Meillassoux argues, it is precisely the ideological function of “dual sector” theories to “conceal the exploitation of the rural community, integrated as an organic component of capitalist production” (Meillassoux 1972, 1974; for a more extended critique, Clammer 1975).

Rey’s work deals principally with “lineage” societies and, like Meillassoux, derives from African fieldwork: but wider extrapolations of a theoretical nature have been made from this terrain (Rey 1971, 1973, 1975; Rey and Dupré 1973). It differs from other work in the French “economic anthropology” tradition by being concerned, in part, with problems of extending the “articulation” argument—as the title of his second book indicates—to the question of class alliances, and thus to the political level. Rey also departs somewhat from the problematic of “articulation.” He is concerned with the “homoficence” of capitalism—what Aidan Foster-Carter (1978) calls the problem of the “parallelism of action” of capitalism, delivering also a more substantive review/critique both of Rey and of the “articulation” literature. A major distinction in Rey’s work is, however, the attempt to periodize this “parallelism of action” as a process, into three principal stages, marked by the character of the articulation in each. These are: (i) the period of the slave trade, where the European market acquires supplies, through relations of exchange, “essentially by playing on the internal contradictions of the lineage social formations”; (ii) a transitional phase—colonialism in the full sense—where capitalism takes root, grounding itself in the pre-capitalist mode and gradually subordinating it; (iii) a new type of social formation, with the capitalist mode of production internally dominant; frequently then, dependent on a metropolitan capitalism (neocolonialism). To each phase a different set of class alliances corresponds. Rey is also much concerned with the way the lineage societies are interrupted and disarticulated by the exterior force of capital—often through

violence and what Marx called the “fact of conquest” (Foster-Carter 1978). Rey sees the “rooting” of capitalism in these pre-capitalist modes as possible only with the implantation of “transitional modes”—precisely the function of the colonial period. While giving to this phase a seminal role not normally accorded to it, or even distinctly remarked, Rey’s approach leaves the history of capital and the mechanism of transition as one largely “written outside such social formations,” and he tends to treat the relations of exchange as the central articulating feature (for a wider critique, see Clammer 1975; Foster-Carter 1978; Terray 1972; Bradby 1975).

The term “articulation” is a complex one, variously employed and defined in the literature here referred to. No clear consensus of conceptual definition can be said to have emerged so far. Yet it remains the site of a significant theoretical rupture (*coupure*) and intervention. This is the intervention principally associated with the work of Althusser and the “school” of structuralist Marxism. The term is widely employed, in a range of contexts, especially in the *For Marx* essays (1965), and in the succeeding volume, with Étienne Balibar, in *Reading Capital* (1970). At least two different applications are particularly relevant to our concerns here (though, interestingly, the term is not defined in the “Glossary,” prepared by Ben Brewster and sanctioned by Althusser himself, which appeared in the English editions of both books). Aside from these particular usages, the term has a wider reference of both a theoretical and a methodological nature.

Foster-Carter correctly suggests that articulation is a metaphor used “to indicate relations of linkage and effectivity between different levels of all sorts of things”—though he might have added that these things require to be linked because, though connected, they are not the same. The unity which they form is thus not that of an identity, where one structure perfectly recapitulates or reproduces or even “expresses” another; or where each is reducible to the other; or where each is defined by the same determinations or have exactly the same conditions of existence; or even where each develops according to the effectivity of the same conditions of existence; or even where each develops according to the effectivity of the same contradiction (e.g., the “principal contradiction” so beloved, as the warrant and guarantee of all arguments, by so-called “orthodox” Marxists). The unity formed by this combination or articulation is always, necessarily, a “complex structure”: a structure in which things are related, as much through their differences as through their similarities. This requires that the mechanisms which connect dissimilar features must be shown—since no “necessary correspondence”

or expressive homology can be assumed as given. It also means—since the combination is a structure (an articulated combination) and not a random association—that there will be structured relations between its parts, i.e., relations of dominance and subordination. Hence, in Althusser's cryptic phrase, a "complex unity, structured in dominance."

Many of the classic themes of the Althusserian intervention are resumed in and through his various uses of this term: for example, his argument that Marx's "unity" is not the essentialist "expressive unity" to be found in Hegel, and that, therefore, Marx's dialectic is not merely an inversion, but a theoretical advance over Hegel. This is the critique against conceiving Marx's "totality" as an "expressive totality," which grounds Althusser's early critique of the attempts to rescue Marx's work from "vulgar materialism" by way of a detour through Hegelianism (see Althusser's *For Marx*, especially the chapter "On the Marxian Dialectic"). It also founds Althusser's critique of the attempt to read Marx as if he meant that all the structures of a social formation could be reduced to an "expression" of the economic base; or as if all the instances of any historical conjuncture moved in a relation of direct correspondence with the terms of the "principal contradiction" (that of the "base," between forces and relations of production)—this is Althusser's critique (the opposite of that against Hegelian idealism) against "economic reductionism." Marx's "complex unity," Althusser argues, is neither that in which everything perfectly expresses or corresponds to everything else; nor that in which everything is reducible to an expression of "the Economic." It operates, instead, on the terrain of articulation. What we find, in any particular historical conjuncture (his example, in "Contradiction and Overdetermination" in *For Marx*, is Russia in 1917) is not the unrolling of the "principal contradiction," evenly, throughout all the other levels of the social formation, but, in Lenin's terms, the "merger," "rupture," condensation of contradictions, each with its own specificity and periodization—"absolutely dissimilar currents, absolutely heterogeneous class interests, absolutely contrary political and social strivings"—which have "merged . . . in a strikingly 'harmonious' manner" (Lenin, *Letters from Afar*). Such conjunctures are not so much "determined" as overdetermined, i.e., they are the product of an articulation of contradictions, not directly reduced to one another.

Althusser and Balibar, then, employ this general theoretical concept in a variety of different contexts. They conceive of a social formation as composed of a number of instances—each with a degree of "relative autonomy" from one another—articulated into a (contradictory) unity. The economic

instance or level, itself, is the result of such a “combination”: the articulation between forces and relations of production. Particular social formations, especially in periods of “transition,” may themselves be an “articulated combination” of different modes with specified, shifting terms of hierarchical ordering between them. The term also figures in Althusserian epistemology, which insists that knowledge and the production of knowledge are not directly produced, as an empiricist reflection of the real “in thought,” but have a specificity and autonomy of their own—thought, “established on and articulated to the real world of a given historical society” (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 42). The scientific analysis of any specific social formation depends on the correct grasping of its principle of articulation: the “fits” between different instances, different periods and epochs, indeed different periodicities, e.g., times, histories. The same principle is applied, not only synchronically, between instances and periodizations within any “moment” of a structure, but also, diachronically, between different “moments.” This connects with Althusser’s objections to the notion of a given and necessary sequence of stages, with a necessary progression built into them. He insists on the non-teleological reading of Marx, on the notion of “a discontinuous succession of modes of production” (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 204), whose combined succession—i.e., articulation through time—requires to be demonstrated. Indeed, “scientificity” itself is associated with “the problem of the forms of variation of the articulation” of the instances in every social structure (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 207). The same is said of the relations between the economic and the political and ideological forms of their appearance. This, too, is thought on the analogy of an articulation between structures which do not directly express or mirror each other. Hence, the classical problem for Marxism—the problem of determinacy of the structure, the “determination in the last instance by the economic” (which distinguishes Marxism from other types of social scientific explanation)—is itself redefined as a problem of “articulation.” What is “determined” is not the inner form and appearance of each level, but the mode of combination and the placing of each instance in an articulated relation to the other elements. It is this “articulation of the structure” as the global effect of the structure itself—or what has been called, by Balibar, “the matrix role of the mode of production”—which defines the Althusserian concept of determination as a structural causality (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 220). It is this conception, on the other hand, which has provided the basis for the critique by Hindess and Hirst (1975) of Althusser’s “determinacy of articulation by the structure” as, itself, an

“expressive totality”—a Spinozian eternity. Dealing with the example of the relation between feudal ground rent and the feudal relation of lordship and servitude, Balibar treats it as a reduced instance of the articulation of two different instances, an “economic” instance and a “political” instance. Likewise, Balibar defines the concept of mode of production as, itself, the result of a variant combination of elements (object of labor, means of labor, labor-power). What changes, in each epoch, are not the elements, which are invariant (in the definitional sense), but the way they are combined: their articulation. While it is not possible to “tell” the whole of the Althusserian intervention through the terms of a single concept, like articulation, it must be by now apparent that the concept has a wide and extensive reference in the works of the structuralist Marxists.

Though we cannot go into the theoretical and methodological background to the emergence of the concept, we can at least note in passing two pertinent provenances. The first is that of structuralist linguistics, which provided the master-model of a substantial part of the whole “structuralist” venture. Saussure, the “founder” of this school, who argued that language is not a reflection of the world but produces meaning through the articulation of linguistic systems upon real relations, insists that meaning is no mere “correlation between signifier and signified, but perhaps more essentially an act of simultaneously cutting out two amorphous masses, two ‘floating kingdoms’ . . . language is the domain of articulations” (Barthes 1967). More pertinent, perhaps, is the warrant which Althusser and others have found, in Marx’s most extensive “methodological” text—his “1857 Introduction” to the *Grundrisse*—for a theory of the social formation as what Marx himself calls an “articulated hierarchy” (*Gliederung*)—or, as Althusser translates him, “an organic hierarchized whole.” “In all forms of society,” Marx wrote, “it is a determinate production and its relations which assign every other production and its relations their rank and influence” (Marx 1973). If this represents a slender warrant for the construction of the whole structuralist edifice, it is certainly clear that, in that text, Marx was decisively opposing himself to any notion of a simple identity between the different relations of capital (production, circulation, exchange, consumption). He spoke, at length, of the complexity of determinations between these relations, the sum of whose articulations, nevertheless, provided him (in this text) with the object of his inquiry (adequately constructed in a theoretical sense); and, in *Capital*, with the key to the unraveling of the necessarily complex nature of the relations between the different circuits operating within the capitalist mode (see Hall

1973). This is the real burden of Marx's extensive criticisms in the "1857 Introduction" against treating the different relations which compose the capitalist mode as a "regular syllogism"—an "immediate identity." "To regard society as one single subject is . . . to look at it wrongly; speculatively." "The conclusion we reach is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality of distinctions within a unity" (Marx 1973). In the same way, there seems to be a clear warning issued against any simple notion of an evolutionary sequence or succession of stages in that development: "Their sequence is determined, rather, by their relation to one another in modern bourgeois society, which is precisely the opposite of that which seems to be their natural order or which corresponds to historical development. The point is not the historic position of the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society." This last point indicates what we would want to call (in addition to those already signaled) the third premise of Marx's method: the structural premise. It is, above all, the employment of the structural premise in the later, mature work of Marx, and the manner in which this has been appropriated and developed by Althusser and the structuralists, which produces, as one of its theoretical results, the extensive-intensive concept of articulation.

The term itself is by no means unproblematic, indicating here a certain approach, rather than providing in itself a theoretical resolution to the problems it indexes. It has been subjected to a searching critique. In itself, the term has an ambiguous meaning, for, in English, it can mean both "joining up" (as in the limbs of the body, or an anatomical structure) and "giving expression to" (Foster-Carter 1978). In Althusserian usage, it is primarily the first sense which is intended. There are, in any case, theoretical objections to the notion that one structure "gives expression to" another: since this would be tantamount to seeing the second structure as an epiphenomenon of the first (i.e., a reductionist conception), and would involve treating a social formation as an "expressive totality," precisely the object of Althusser's initial critique of Hegelianism. Some notion of an "expressive" link—say, between the economic and political structures of a society—remains, even in Althusserian usage, but this is elaborated by other terms which break up or break into any residual sense of a perfect and necessary "correspondence." Thus, in addition to insisting on the specificity, the non-reductiveness, the "relative autonomy," of each level of the society, Althusser always uses such terms as "displacement," "dislocation," "condensation," in order to demonstrate that the "unity" which these different relations form are not univocal, but mislead

through “over-determination.” Another criticism, then, is that the concept of “articulation” may simply leave two dissimilar things yoked together by a mere external or arbitrary connection: what Marx once called “independent, autonomous neighbours . . . not grasped in their unity” (Marx 1973: 90). Althusser attempts to overcome this “mere juxtaposition” by using the concept of “over-determination,” and by always speaking of “articulation” as involving hierarchical as well as lateral relations, i.e., relations of dominance and subordination. (Relevant in this regard is Marx’s discussion of money in different historical epochs, which does not “wade its way through all economic relations” but is defined by where it plays a “dominant” or a “subordinate” role.) This, however, leads on to other criticisms. The schema constructed around articulation has, often with justice, been described as too “formalist.” Thus, in the full-blown “structural causality” of Althusser and Balibar’s *Reading Capital*, the “economic” determines “in the last instance” not substantively but principally by “giving the index of effectivity” in the structure to one or another level: i.e., in a formal way—even though Althusser retreats from some of these more formalist excesses (Althusser 1976). While the whole attempt to develop such an analysis is predicated on the need for an approach which is not reductive, it has been criticized as giving rise to a conception of “structure” which—since it contains within itself all the conditions of its own functioning—is itself that “expressive totality” which Althusser seeks to avoid (Hindess and Hirst 1975; Hirst 1976). The framework is also open to the criticism that it leaves the internal elements of any “structural combination” unchanged with change or transition being limited to the variations (different articulations) through which the “invariant elements” are combined. This weakens the historicity of the approach—contravening what we have called the historical premise of Marx’s work. (Although again see Althusser 1976.) This notion of the variation between invariant elements has resulted in a formalist way of defining a “mode of production” (following, especially, Balibar): so that some of the real advances made in attempting to ground analysis in a more developed and sophisticated understanding of modes of production and their combination can easily be vitiated by a sort of formalist hunt for one, separate, “mode of production” after another. Nevertheless, we would continue to insist on the potentially generative value of the term and its cognate concepts, which give us a start in thinking the complex unity and differentiae specificae of social formations, without falling back on a naive or “vulgar materialist” reductionism, on the one hand, or a form of sociological pluralism on the other.

So far, I have been speaking, exclusively, of the application of the term “articulation” to the economic structure of complex social formations. But I have also said that the social formation itself can be analyzed as an “articulated hierarchy.” At the economic level, this may involve the articulation of a social formation around more than one mode of production. Some of the political and ideological features of such societies can then be explained with reference to this particular combination. But it is also possible to conceptualize the different levels of a social formation as an articulated hierarchy. Since we must assume no “necessary correspondence”—no perfect replication, homology of structures, expressive connection—between these different levels, but are nevertheless required to “think” the relations between them as an “ensemble of relations” (marked by what Marx in his “1857 Introduction,” when dealing with these issues, defined as the “law of uneven development”)—then it is, once more, to the nature of the articulations between them to which we must turn. The attention—of a more detailed and analytic kind—to the nature of modes of production helps to ground these other aspects of the social formation more adequately at the level of the economic structures (the materialist premise). However, we cannot thereby deduce a priori the relations and mechanisms of the political and ideological structures (where such features as racism make a decisive reappearance) exclusively from the level of the economic. The economic level is the necessary but not sufficient condition for explaining the operations at other levels of the society (the premise of non-reductionism). We cannot assume an express relation of “necessary correspondence” between them (the premise of historical specificity).

These are, as Marx put it, “a product of historical relations and possess their full validity only for and within these relations.” This is an important, indeed a critical qualification. It requires us to demonstrate—rather than to assume, a priori—what the nature and degree of “correspondence” is, in any specific historical case. Thus, through this opening, some of the criticisms which, as was noted earlier, are made from the perspective of “sociological” explanations—for example the requirement to be historically specific—begin to be met within the framework of this seminal revision.

Here, however, different positions within the general problematic of “articulation” can be identified. Some theorists argue that all we can do is to deal with each level, in terms of its own specificity, and of the “conditions of existence” which must be fulfilled for it to function (e.g., the economic relations of the capitalist mode require, as a condition of existence, some extra-economic, juridical framework, which secures the “contract” between

buyer and seller of labor-power). But, it is argued, the internal forms and specificities of the extra-economic levels can neither be prescribed nor identified from the economic level which “requires it,” as a formal necessity of its functioning. This is tantamount to a theory of the “autonomy” (not “relative autonomy”) of the different levels (Hirst 1976; Cutler et al. 1977). This, however, fails to deal with social formations as a “complex unity”: Marx’s “unity of many determinations.”

Other approaches recognize that there may well be “tendential combinations”: combinations which, while not prescribed in the fully determinist sense, are the “preferred” combinations, sedimented and solidified by real historical development over time. Thus, as is clear from, say, the Latin American case, there is no “necessary correspondence” between the development of a form of capitalism and the political forms of parliamentary democracy. Capitalism can arise on very different political foundations. Engels himself showed how capitalism can also harness and adapt very different legal systems to its functions. This does not prevent us from arguing that the advent of capitalism has frequently (tendentially) been accompanied by the formation of bourgeois parliamentary democratic regimes: or even from accepting Lenin’s percipient observation that parliamentary democracy provides “the ‘best possible’ political shell for capitalism.” We must, however, see these “combinations” as historically specific, rather than specified a priori: as “laws of tendency”—which can be countermanded by “counteracting tendencies.” To take a pertinent example: in Europe, the rise of capitalism is consequent upon the destruction of feudal ties and the formation of “free labor”—of labor-power as a commodity. It is hard to think of a capitalist formation in which there would be no form of labor-power available to capital in its “free” form. This, in turn, means that, whatever is the specific legal form with which capitalist development “corresponds,” it must be one in which the concept of the juridical “contract” between “free persons” appears, which can legally regulate the forms of contract which “free labor” require. This “requirement” is something more than a mere, empty, or formal “condition of existence.” However, this does not mean that the tendency to combine capitalism with “free labor” cannot, under specific historical conditions, be cross-cut or countermanded by a counteracting tendency: namely, the possibility of certain of the conditions of existence of capitalism being effectively secured by combining “free labor” with certain forms of “unfree” or “forced” labor. Once we move away from European to post-conquest or postcolonial societies, this combination—free and “unfree” labor, on the basis of a combination of

different modes of production—becomes more and more the paradigm case. This leaves almost everything of importance, still, to be done in developing a better understanding of the “laws of motion” of capitalist formations which are structured in this alternative manner. Naturally, it has consequences, then, for political and legal structures. In such “deviant” social formations (deviant only in the sense of departing from the European paradigm case), there will be political structures which combine (or may combine) forms of parliamentary democracy with other forms of political representation—or legal structures which elaborate more than one form of citizen status. The “articulation” of “free” and “forced” labor, the combination of “equal” and “restricted” franchises, the position of the chiefs and the Bantustan “internal colonies,” and the different legal statuses of “white” and “black” citizens, in the South African social formation, perfectly represent the elements of such a “variant” case—one which is in no sense “non-capitalist”; provided, that is, we read Marx’s “laws of development and motion” as laws of tendency (and countertendency) rather than as *a priori* laws of necessity.

Where, then, the relations between the different levels of a social formation are concerned, one needs additional concepts, *i.e.*, to supply further determinations, to those which have been mobilized for the analysis of the economic “mode of production” levels. And one needs to acknowledge that the economic level, alone, cannot prescribe what those levels will be like and how they will operate—even if their mechanisms are not fully specifiable without attending to the level of the economic. Here, the work of Althusser, and of the Althusserians—for example, Poulantzas’s work on the state—requires to be supplemented by the work of another Marxist theorist whose elaboration, at this level, constitutes a contribution to the development of a rigorously non-reductionist Marxism of the very first importance. This is the work of Gramsci. Gramsci’s work is more fragmentary (much of it written in prison, under the eyes of the censor, in one of Mussolini’s jails), far less “theorized” than that of Althusser. Gramsci has been formative for the development of Althusser’s problematic: though, since in certain respects Gramsci remained a “historicist,” the relationship between Althusser and Gramsci is a complex one. In a recent review of this relationship, we have expressed it in terms of Gramsci providing the “limit case” of historicity for Marxist structuralism (Hall et al. 1977).

We cannot elaborate in any depth, here, on Gramsci’s concepts (for a review, see Hall et al. 1977; Anderson 1977; Mouffe 1978). The central concept in his work is that of hegemony. Hegemony is that state of “total social au-

thority” which, at certain specific conjunctures, a specific class alliance wins, by a combination of “coercion” and “consent,” over the whole social formation, and its dominated classes: not only at the economic level, but also at the level of political and ideological leadership, in civil, intellectual, and moral life as well as at the material level: and over the terrain of civil society as well as in and through the condensed relations of the state. This “authority and leadership” is, for Gramsci, not a given a priori but a specific historical “moment”—one of unusual social authority. It represents the product of a certain mastery of the class struggle, certainly, but it is still subject to the class struggle and the “relations of social forces” in society, of which its “unstable equilibrium” is only one, provisional, outcome or result. Hegemony is a state of play in the class struggle which has, therefore, to be continually worked on and reconstructed in order to be maintained, and which remains a contradictory conjuncture. The important point, for Gramsci, is that, under hegemonic conditions, the organization of consent (by the dominated classes to the “leadership” of the dominant class alliance) takes precedence (though it does not obliterate) the exercise of domination through coercion. In such conditions, the class struggle tends to assume the form, not of a “frontal assault” on the bastions of the state (“war of maneuver”) but of a more protracted, strategic, and tactical struggle, exploiting and working on a number of different contradictions (Gramsci’s “war of position”). A state of hegemony enables the ruling class alliance to undertake the enormous task of modifying, harnessing, securing, and elaborating the “superstructure” of society in line with the long-term requirements of the development of the mode of production—e.g., capital accumulation on an expanded scale. It enables such a class alliance to undertake the educative and formative tasks of raising the whole social formation to what he calls a “new level of civilization,” favoring the expanded regime of capital. This is no immediate and direct imposition of the narrow, short-term, “corporate” class interests of a single class on society. It forges that unity between economic, political, and ideological objectives such that it can place “all the questions around which the struggle rages on a ‘universal’ not a corporative level, thereby creating a hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups.” This is what Gramsci calls the “educative and formative role of the State. . . . Its aim is always that of creating new and higher types of civilization; of adapting the ‘civilization’ and the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production”—the formation of a “national-popular will,” based on a particular relationship

between the dominant and dominated classes. This, then, depends, not on a presumed, necessary, or a priori correspondence between (economic) structure and (political and ideological) superstructures but precisely on those historically specific mechanisms—and the concrete analysis of those historical “moments”—through which such a normative relationship between structure and superstructures comes to be forged. For Gramsci, the object of analysis is always the specificity of this “structure-superstructure” complex—though as a historically concrete articulation. “It is the problem of the relations between structure and superstructure which must be accurately posed and resolved if the forces which are active in history . . . are to be correctly analysed.” This is a rigorously non-reductionist conception: “How then could the whole system of superstructures be understood as distinctions within politics, and the introduction of the concept of distinction into a philosophy of praxis hence be justified? But can one really speak of a dialectic of distincts, and how is the concept of a circle joining the levels of the superstructure to be understood? Concept of ‘historical bloc,’ i.e. . . . unity of opposites and distincts? Can one introduce the criterion of distinction into the structure too?” Gramsci, clearly, answers these questions in the affirmative. He is especially sharp against any form of vulgar economism: “It is therefore necessary to combat economism not only in the theory of historiography, but also and especially in the theory and practice of politics. In this field, the struggle can and must be carried on by developing the concept of hegemony.” (All the quotes are from two essays in Gramsci 1971.)

Gramsci’s theoretical contribution has only begun, recently, to be recognized—though his role as an outstanding militant in Italian politics in the 1920s and 1930s has long been acknowledged. His analysis bears, in a specially rich and productive way, on the analysis of the great bourgeois social formations of a developed capitalist type in Europe—Western Europe, where a reductionist economistic analysis, clearly, will not suffice to account for the depth of the transformations involved. Perhaps for this very reason, he has been thought of as, par excellence, the Marxist theorist of “Western capitalism.” His work has, therefore, hardly been applied or employed in the analysis of non-European formations. There are, however, very strong grounds for thinking that it may have particular relevance for non-European social formations, for three, separate reasons. First, Gramsci may help to counteract the overwhelming weight of economism (Marxist and non-Marxist) which has characterized the analysis of post-conquest and “colonial” societies. Perhaps because the weight of imperialist economic relations

has been so powerfully visible, these formations have virtually been held to be explainable by an application of “imperialism” as essentially a purely “economic” process. Second, these societies present problems as to the relation in the “structure-superstructure complex” equal in complexity to those about which Gramsci wrote. Naturally, no simple transfer of concepts would be advisable here: Gramsci would be the first to insist on historical specificity, on difference. Third, Gramsci viewed the problem of “hegemony” from within the specific history of the Italian social formation. This gave him a particular, and highly relevant, perspective on the problem. For long periods Italy was marked precisely by the absence of “hegemony”: by an alliance of ruling classes governing through domination rather than through hegemonic class leadership (direction). So his work is equally relevant for societies in which, according to the rhythm and punctuation of the class struggle, there have been significant movements into and out of a phase of “hegemonic direction.” Moreover, Italy was/is a society brutally marked by the law of uneven development: with massive industrial capitalist development to the north, massive underdevelopment to the south. This raises the question of how the contradictions of the Italian social formation are articulated through different modes of production (capitalist and feudal), and through class alliances which combine elements from different social orders. The problem of the state, and the question of strategic alliances between the industrial proletariat and the peasantry, the “play” of traditional and advanced ideologies, and the difficulties these provide in the formation of a “national-popular will” all make his analysis of Italy specially relevant to colonial societies.

Gramsci’s work has recently been taken up and developed in a structuralist manner—especially in Althusser’s essay on “Ideological State Apparatuses” (Althusser 1971). This seminal essay differs from Gramsci’s work, specifically, in posing the problem in terms of “reproduction.” But the concerns which underlie this approach are not all that distant from those of Gramsci. The economic relations of production must themselves be “reproduced.” This reproduction is not simply economic, but social, technical, and, above all, ideological. This is another way of putting Gramsci’s observation that, to achieve its full development, capitalist social relations require to be coupled with an elaborate development and elaboration at the “non-economic” levels of politics, civil society, and culture, through moral, intellectual, and ideological leadership. Althusser then shares with Gramsci a classical concern for the manner in which the “hegemony” of a ruling class alliance is secured, at these other levels, through a formative and educative class leadership or

authority over the social formation as a whole. Both of them argue that this enlarged or expanded hegemony is specific to the institutions, apparatuses, and relations of the so-called “superstructures” of the state and civil society. Both Althusser and Gramsci, then, insist that ideology, while itself a contradictory site and stake in the class struggle, has a specific function in securing the conditions for the expanded reproduction of capital. It is, therefore, a pertinent and distinctive level of struggle, where leadership is secured and contested: with mechanisms and sites of struggle “relatively autonomous.” Both also maintain that “ideology” is not a simple form of false consciousness, to be explained as a set of myths or simple false constructions in the head. All societies require specific ideologies, which provide those systems of meaning, concepts, categories, and representations which make sense of the world, and through which men come to “live” (albeit unconsciously, and through a series of “misrecognitions”), in an imaginary way, their relation to the real, material conditions of their existence (which are only representable to them, as modes of consciousness, in and through ideology). Althusser sometimes tends to represent ideology as rather too functionally secured to the rule of the dominant classes: as if all ideology is, by definition, operative within the horizon of the “dominance ideas” of the ruling class. For Gramsci, ideologies are thought of in a more contradictory way—really, as sites and stakes in the class struggle. What interests Gramsci is how the existing ideologies—the “common sense” of the fundamental classes—which are themselves the complex result of previous moments and resolutions in the ideological class struggle, can be actively worked upon so as to transform them into the basis of a more conscious struggle, and form of intervention in the historical process. Both insist, however, that ideologies are not simply “in the head,” but are material relations—what Lenin called “ideological social relations”—which shape social actions, function through concrete institutions and apparatuses, and are materialized through practices. Gramsci insists on the process which transforms these great “practical ideologies” of fundamental social classes. Althusser, for his part, adds that ideologies operate by constituting concrete individuals as the “social subjects” of ideological discourses—the process of what he calls “interpellating subjects.”

These propositions have recently been taken forward in a seminal intervention by Laclau (1977). In the essays on “Populism” and “Fascism,” he argues that the individual elements of these ideologies (e.g., nationalism, militarism, racism, “the people,” etc.) have, in themselves, no necessary class belonging, “no necessary class connotation.” We cannot assume, *a priori*,

that these elements necessarily “belong” to any specific class, or indeed that a class, as a single homogeneous entity, has a single unitary and uncontradictory “world view” which, as Poulantzas says, it carries around with it, through history, “like a number plate on its back” (Poulantzas 1973). Ideologies, as concrete discursive formations do exhibit a peculiar “unity” of their own. This unity arises, first, through what Laclau calls “condensation”: where each element “fulfils a role of condensation with respect to others. When a familial interpellation, for example, evokes a political interpellation, or an aesthetic interpellation, and when each of these isolated interpellations operates as a symbol of the others, we have a relatively unified ideological discourse.” (This has been defined as “ideological unity” through a process of connotative condensation. See O’Shea 1978.) Secondly, unity is secured through “the specific interpellation which forms the axis and organizing principle of all ideology. In trying to analyse the ideological level of a determinate social formation, our first task must be to reconstruct the interpellative structures which constitute it.” If separate ideological elements have no necessary class belonging, and classes do not have paradigmatic ideologies assigned or ascribed to them, what then is the relationship between classes and ideologies? As might be assumed, this relation is understood in terms of the way the class struggle articulates the various ideological discourses. “Articulation requires . . . the existence of non-class contents—interpellations and contradictions—which constitute the raw materials on which class ideological practices operate. The ideology of the dominant class, precisely because it is dominant, interpellates not only the members of that class but also members of the dominated class.” It succeeds to the extent that it articulates “different ideologies to its hegemonic project by an elimination of their antagonistic character.” Ideologies are therefore transformed “through the class struggle, which is carried out through the production of subjects and the articulation/disarticulation of discourses.” This follows Gramsci, who argued that ideologies cannot be reduced to the transparent, coherent “class interests” of their class-subjects, and that ideologies are transformed, not by one class imposing a unitary “world vision” upon all other classes, but by “a process of distinction and of change in the relative weight possessed by the elements of the old ideology . . . what was secondary or subordinate or even incidental becomes of primary importance, it becomes the nucleus of a new doctrinal and ideological ensemble” (Mouffe 1978; see also Mouffe for an important elaboration of this argument in relation to Gramsci).

There are problems with Laclau's tentative formulations: for example, what are "class practices" which can operate to transform ideologies but which are, themselves, presumably, without any specific ideological elements which "belong" to them? Despite these difficulties, these theorists begin to give us the tentative elements by means of which we can attempt to construct a non-reductionist theory of the superstructural or extra-economic aspects of social formations—once again, powered through the use of the concept of articulation.

What I have tried to do in this paper is to document the emergence of a new theoretical paradigm, which takes its fundamental orientation from the problematic of Marx, but which seeks, by various theoretical means, to overcome certain of the limitations—economism, reductionism, "a priorism," a lack of historical specificity—which have beset certain traditional appropriations of Marxism and which still disfigure the contributions to this field by otherwise distinguished writers, leaving Marxism vulnerable and exposed to effective criticism by many different variants of economic monism and sociological pluralism. This is a survey of an emergent field, not a comprehensive critical account. It must in no sense be assumed that the solutions attempted have been fully demonstrated, or that they are as yet adequately developed or without serious weaknesses and lacunae. With respect to those racially structured social formations, which form the principal objects of inquiry in this collection, the problematic has hardly begun to be applied. Thus all that I have been able to do is to indicate certain strategic points of departure in such a potential field of application, certain protocols of theoretical procedure. Specifically, there is as yet no adequate theory of racism which is capable of dealing with both the economic and the superstructural features of such societies, while at the same time giving a historically concrete and sociologically specific account of distinctive racial aspects. Such an account, sufficient to substitute those inadequate versions which continue to dominate the field, remains to be provided. Nevertheless, in the hope of sponsoring and promoting such a development, it might be useful to conclude with a brief outline of some of the theoretical protocols which—in my view, of necessity—must govern any such proposed investigation.

This would have to begin from a rigorous application of what I have called the premise of historical specificity. Racism is not dealt with as a general feature of human societies, but with historically specific racisms. Beginning with an assumption of difference, of specificity rather than of a unitary, trans-historical universal "structure." This is not to deny that there might well be

discovered to be certain common features to all those social systems to which one would wish to attribute the designation “racially structured.” But—as Marx remarked about the “chaotic” nature of all abstractions which proceed at the level of the “in-general” exclusively—such a general theory of racism is not the most favorable source for theoretical development and investigation: “even though the most developed languages have laws and characteristics in common with the least developed, nevertheless, just those things which determine their development, i.e. the elements which are not general and common, must be separated out . . . so that in their unity . . . their essential difference is not forgotten” (Marx 1973). Racism in general is a “rational abstraction” in so far as “it really brings out and fixes the common element and saves us repetition.” Thus it may help to distinguish those social features which fix the different positions of social groups and classes on the basis of racial ascription (biologically or socially defined) from other systems which have a similar social function. However, “some determinations belong to all epochs, others only to a few. Some will be shared by the most modern epoch and the most ancient.” This is a warning against extrapolating a common and universal structure to racism, which remains essentially the same, outside of its specific historical location. It is only as the different racisms are historically specified—in their difference—that they can be properly understood as “a product of historical relations and possess . . . full validity only for and within those relations.” It follows that there might be more to be learned from distinguishing what, in common sense, appear to be variants of the same thing: for example, the racism of the slave South from the racism of the insertion of blacks into the “free forms” of industrial capitalist development in the postbellum North; or the racism of Caribbean slave societies from that of the metropolitan societies like Britain, which have had to absorb black workers into industrial production in the twentieth century.

In part, this must be because one cannot explain racism in abstraction from other social relations—even if, alternatively, one cannot explain it by reducing it to those relations. It has been said that there are flourishing racisms in pre-capitalist social formations. This only means that, when dealing with more recent social formations, one is required to show how thoroughly racism is reorganized and re-articulated with the relations of new modes of production. Racism within plantation slave societies in the mercantilist phase of world capitalist development has a place and function, means and mechanisms of its specific effectivity, which are only superficially explained by translating it out from these specific historical contexts into totally different

ones (Finley 1969; Davis 1969 and 1966). Others have argued that, though slavery in the Ancient World was articulated through derogatory classifications which distinguished between the enslaved and enslaving peoples, it did not necessarily entail the use of specifically racial categories, while plantation slavery almost everywhere did. Thus, there can be no assumed, necessary coincidence between racism and slavery as such. Precisely the differences in the roles which slavery played in these very different epochs and social formations may point us to the necessary ground for specifying what this specific coincidence between slavery and racism might secure. Where this coincidence does in fact appear, the mechanisms and effectivity of its functioning—including its articulation with other relations—need to be demonstrated, not assumed.

Again, the common assumption that it was attitudes of racial superiority which precipitated the introduction of plantation slavery needs to be challenged. It might be better to start from the opposite end: by seeing how slavery (the product of specific problems of labor shortage and the organization of plantation agriculture, supplied, in the first instance, by non-black, indigenous labor, and then by white indentured labor) produced those forms of juridical racism which distinguish the epoch of plantation slavery. The elaboration of the juridical and property forms of slavery, as a set of enclaves within societies predicated on other legal and property forms, required specific and elaborate ideological work—as the history of slavery, and of its abolition, eloquently testifies. The same point may be made, in extenso, for all those explanations which ascribe racism-in-general to some universal functioning of individual psychology—the “racial itch,” the “race instinct”—or explain its appearance in terms of a general psychology of prejudice. The question is not whether men-in-general make perceptual distinctions between groups with different racial or ethnic characteristics, but rather, what are the specific conditions which make this form of distinction socially pertinent, historically active. What gives this abstract human potentiality its effectivity, as a concrete material force? It could be said, for example, that Britain’s long imperial hegemony, and the intimacy of the relationship between capitalist development at home and colonial conquest overseas, laid the trace of an active racism in British popular consciousness. Nevertheless, this alone cannot explain either the form and function which racism assumed, in the period of popular imperialism at the height of the imperialist rivalry toward the end of the nineteenth century, or the very different forms of indigenous racism, penetrating deep into the working class itself, which

has been an emergent feature of the contact between black and white workers in the conditions of postwar migration. The histories of these different racisms cannot be written as a “general history” (Hall 1977; Hall et al. 1978). Appeals to “human nature” are not explanations, they are an alibi.

One must start, then, from the concrete historical “work” which racism accomplishes under specific historical conditions—as a set of economic, political, and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation. These practices ascribe the positioning of different social groups in relation to one another with respect to the elementary structures of society; they fix and ascribe those positionings in ongoing social practices; they legitimate the positions so ascribed. In short, they are practices which secure the hegemony of a dominant group over a series of subordinate ones, in such a way as to dominate the whole social formation in a form favorable to the long-term development of the economic productive base. Though the economic aspects are critical, as a way of beginning, this form of hegemony cannot be understood as operating purely through economic coercion. Racism, so active at the level—“the economic nucleus”—where Gramsci insists hegemony must first be secured, will have to contract elaborate relations at other instances, in the political, cultural, and ideological levels. Yet even put in this way, the assertion is still too *a priori*. How specifically do these mechanisms operate? What further determinations need to be supplied? Racism is not present, in the same form or degree, in all capitalist formations: it is not necessary to the concrete functioning of all capitalisms. It needs to be shown how and why racism has been specifically overdetermined by and articulated with certain capitalisms at different stages of their development. Nor can it be assumed that this must take one, single form or follow one necessary path or logic, through a series of necessary stages.

This requires us, in turn, to show its articulation with the different structures of the social formation. For example, the position of the slave in pre-emancipation plantation society was not secured exclusively through race. It was predominantly secured by the quite specific and distinctive productive relations of slave-based agriculture, and through the distinctive property status of the slave (as a commodity) and of slave labor-power (as united with its exerciser, who was not however its “owner”), coupled with legal, political, and ideological systems which anchored this relation by racial ascription. This coupling may have provided the ready-made rationale and framework for those structures of “informal racism” which became operative when

“freed” black labor migrated northward in the United States or into the “free village” system in the post-emancipation Caribbean. Yet the “coupling” operated in new ways, and required their own ideological work—as in the Jim Crow legislation of the 1880s and 1890s (Woodward 1957). The reproduction of the low and ascribed status of black labor, as a specific fraction of the “free laboring” classes of industrial capitalism, was secured with the assistance of a transformed racism, to be sure: but also through other mechanisms, which accomplished their structured positioning with respect to new forms of capital in new ways. In the latter case, pertinent struggles have developed which exploited the gaps, or worked directly on the contradictions between racial ascription and the official ideologies of “equal opportunity” which were simply not available to black slaves under a plantation system (Myrdal 1962). We treat these differences as “essentially the same” at our peril. On the other hand, it does not follow that because developed capitalism here functions predominantly on the basis of “free labor” that the racial aspects of social relations can be assimilated, for all practical purposes, to its typical class relations—as does Cox (1970)—despite his many pertinent observations. Race continues to differentiate between the different fractions of the working classes with respect to capital, creating specific forms of fracturing and fractioning which are as important for the ways in which they intersect class relations (and divide the class struggle, internally) as they are mere “expressions” of some general form of the class struggle. Politically and culturally, these combined and uneven relations between class and race are historically more pertinent than their simple correspondence. At the economic level, it is clear that race must be given its distinctive and “relatively autonomous” effectivity, as a distinctive feature. This does not mean that the economic is sufficient to found an explanation of how these relations concretely function. One needs to know how different racial and ethnic groups were inserted historically, and the relations which have tended to erode and transform, or to preserve these distinctions through time—not simply as residues and traces of previous modes, but as active structuring principles of the present organization of society. Racial categories alone will not provide or explain these. What are the different forms and relations in which these racial fractions were combined under capital? Do they stand in significantly different relations to capital? Do they stand within an articulation of different modes of production? What are the relations of dissolution/conservation between them? How has race functioned to preserve and develop these articulations? What are the functions which the dominated modes of production perform

in the reproduction of the dominant mode? Are these linked to it through the domestic reproduction of labor-power “below its value,” the supply of cheap labor, the regulation of the “reserve army of labor,” the supply of raw materials, of subsistence agriculture, the hidden costs of social reproduction? The indigenous “natural economies” of Latin America and the forms of semi-domestic production characteristic of the Caribbean societies differ significantly, among and between them, in this respect. The same is true even where different ethnic fractions stand in the same sets of relations to capital. For example, the position of black labor in the industrial North of the United States and of black migration to postwar Britain show highly distinctive patternings along racial lines: yet these situations are not explicable without the concept of the “reserve army of labor.” Yet it is clear that blacks are not the only division within the “reserve army”: hence race is not the only mechanism through which its size and composition is regulated. In the United States, both white immigrants (e.g., European and Central American) and women, and in Britain, both women and the Irish have provided a significant alternative element (see Braverman 1975; Castles and Kosack 1973).

The either/or alternatives, surveyed in the opening parts of this paper, are therefore seriously disabling, at a theoretical level, whether it is “metropolitan” or “satellite” formations which are under discussion; and whether it is historical or contemporary forms which are under scrutiny. As I have recently argued (Hall et al. 1978), the structures through which black labor is reproduced—structures which may be general to capital at a certain stage of development, whatever the racial composition of labor—are not simply “colored” by race: they work through race. The relations of capitalism can be thought of as articulating classes in distinct ways at each of the levels or instances of the social formation—economic, political, ideological. These levels are the “effects” of the structures of modern capitalist production, with the necessary displacement of relative autonomy operating between them. Each level of the social formation requires its own independent “means of representation”—the means by which the class-structured mode of production appears, and acquires effectivity at the level of the economic, the political, the ideological class struggle. Race is intrinsic to the manner in which the black laboring classes are complexly constituted at each of these levels. It enters into the way black labor, male and female, is distributed as economic agents at the level of economic practices, and the class struggles which result from it; and into the way the fractions of the black laboring classes are reconstituted, through the means of political representation (parties, organizations,

community action centers, publications, and campaigns) as political forces in the “theatre of politics”—and the political struggles which result; and the manner in which the working class is articulated as the collective and individual “subjects” of emergent ideologies—and the struggles over ideology, culture, and consciousness which result. This gives the matter or dimension of race, and racism, a practical as well as theoretical centrality to all the relations which affect black labor. The constitution of this fraction as a class, and the class relations which ascribe it, function as race relations. Race is thus, also, the modality in which class is “lived,” the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and “fought through.” This has consequences for the whole class, not specifically for its “racially defined” segment. It has consequences in terms of the internal fractioning and division within the working class which, among other ways, are articulated in part through race. This is no mere racist conspiracy from above. For racism is also one of the dominant means of ideological representation through which the white fractions of the class come to “live” their relations to other fractions, and through them to capital itself. Those who seek, with effect, to disarticulate some of the existing syntaxes of class struggle (albeit of a corporatist or social-reformist kind) and to re-articulate class experience through the condensed interpellations of a racist ideological syntax are, of course, key agents in this work of ideological transformation. This is the ideological class struggle, pursued, precisely, through harnessing the dominated classes to capital by means of the articulation of the internal contradictions of class experience with racism. In Britain, this process has recently attained a rare and general pitch. But they succeed to the measure that they do, because they are practicing on real contradictions within and inside the class, working on real effects of the structure (however these may be “misrecognized” through racism)—not because they are clever at conjuring demons, or because they brandish swastikas and read *Mein Kampf*. Racism is, thus, not only a problem for blacks who are obliged to suffer it. Nor is it a problem only for those sections of the white working class and those organizations infected by its stain. Nor can it be overcome, as a general virus in the social body, by a heavy dose of liberal inoculation. Capital reproduces class relations, including their internal contradictions, as a whole, structured by race. It dominates the divided class, in part, through those internal divisions which have racism as one of its effects. It contains and disables representative class institutions, by neutralizing them, confining them to strategies and struggles which are race-specific, which do not surmount its limits, its barrier. Through racism,

it is able to defeat the attempts to construct alternative means of representation which could more adequately represent the class as a whole, or which are capable of effecting the unity of the class as a result: that is, those alternatives which would adequately represent the class as a whole—against capitalism, against racism. The sectional struggles, articulated through race, instead, continue to appear as the necessary defensive strategies of a class divided against itself, face-to-face with capital. They are, therefore, also the site of capital's continuing hegemony over it. This is certainly not to treat racism as, in any simply sense, the product of an ideological trick.

Nevertheless, such an analysis would need to be complemented by an analysis of the specific forms which racism assumes in its ideological functioning. Here, we would have to begin by investigating the different ways in which racist ideologies have been constructed and made operative under different historical conditions: the racisms of mercantilist theory and of chattel slavery; of conquest and colonialism; of trade and "high imperialism"; of popular imperialism and of so-called "post-imperialism." In each case, in specific social formations, racism as an ideological configuration has been reconstituted by the dominant class relations, and thoroughly reworked. If it has performed the function of that cementing ideology which secures a whole social formation under a dominant class, its pertinent differences from other such hegemonic ideologies require to be registered in detail. Here, racism is particularly powerful and its imprint on popular consciousness especially deep, because in such racial characteristics as color, ethnic origin, geographical position, etc., racism discovers what other ideologies have to construct: an apparently "natural" and universal basis in nature itself. Yet, despite this apparent grounding in biological givens, outside history racism, when it appears, has an effect on other ideological formations within the same society, and its development promotes a transformation of the whole ideological field in which it becomes operative. It can, in this way, harness other ideological discourses to itself—for example, it articulates securely with the us/them structure of corporate class consciousness—through the mechanism previously discussed of connotative condensation. Its effects are similar to other ideologies from which, on other grounds, it must be distinguished: racisms also dehistoricize—translating historically specific structures into the timeless language of nature; decomposing classes into individuals and recomposing those disaggregated individuals into the reconstructed unities, the great coherences, of new ideological "subjects": it translates "classes" into "blacks" and "whites," economic groups into "peoples," solid forces into

“races.” This is the process of constituting new “historical subjects” for ideological discourses—the mechanism we encountered earlier, of forming new interpellative structures. It produces, as the natural and given “authors” of a spontaneous form of racial perception, the naturalized “racist subject.” This is not an external function, operative only against those whom it disposes or disarticulates (renders silent). It is also pertinent for the dominated subjects—those subordinated ethnic groups or “races” which live their relation to their real conditions of existence, and to the domination of the dominant classes, in and through the imaginary representations of a racist interpellation, and who come to experience themselves as “the inferiors,” *les autres*. And yet these processes are themselves never exempted from the ideological class struggle. The racist interpellations can become themselves the sites and stake in the ideological struggle, occupied and redefined to become the elementary forms of an oppositional formation—as where “white racism” is vigorously contested through the symbolic inversions of “black power.” The ideologies of racism remain contradictory structures, which can function both as the vehicles for the imposition of dominant ideologies, and as the elementary forms for the cultures of resistance. Any attempt to delineate the politics and ideologies of racism which omit these continuing features of struggle and contradiction win an apparent adequacy of explanation only by operating a disabling reductionism.

In this field of inquiry, “sociological theory” has still to find its way, by a difficult effort of theoretical clarification, through the Scylla of a reductionism which must deny almost everything in order to explain something, and the Charybdis of a pluralism which is so mesmerized by “everything” that it cannot explain anything. To those willing to labor on, the vocation remains an open one.

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On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall by Larry Grossberg and Others

QUESTION: I would like to begin by asking how you would locate your interest in and relationship to the current explosion of work within what is called “postmodernism.” Perhaps, as a way of getting into this rather convoluted set of discourses, you could comment on how you would position yourself in the debate between Habermas and Lyotard.

STUART HALL: I am interested in it for a number of reasons. First I am fascinated by the degree to which postmodernism has taken off in America—its immediate success as a concept, compared with either post-Marxism or poststructuralism. “Postmodernism” is the biggest success story going. And since it is, in essence, such a devastating story—precisely about American culture, it seems a funny thing to be so popular. It’s like asking, how long can you live with the end of the world, how much of a bang can you get out of the big bang? And yet, apart from that, one has to come to terms with it. The concept poses key questions about the shape and tendency of contemporary culture. It is emerging in Europe as a central focus of debate, and there are very serious issues involved. Let me consider the specific question of the debate between Habermas and Lyotard.

Briefly, I don’t really agree with either of them. I think Habermas’s defense of the Enlightenment/modernist project is worthy and courageous, but I think it’s not sufficiently exposed to some of the deeply

contradictory tendencies in modern culture to which the postmodernist theories quite correctly draw our attention. But I think Lyotard, and Baudrillard in his celebratory mode, really have gone right through the sound barrier. They involved, not simply in identifying new trends or tendencies, new cultural configurations, but in learning to love them. I think they collapse these two steps—analysis and prescription—into one. It's a bit like that precursor-prophet of postmodernism, Marshall McLuhan. When Marshall McLuhan first began to write about the media, he had come down from Cambridge as a committed Leavisite critic. His first book, *The Mechanical Bride*, was highly critical of the new technologies. In fact, he referred to this book as “a civil defense against mass media fallout.” But the disillusionment soon turned into its opposite—celebration, and in his later work, he took a very different position, just lying back and letting the media roll over him; he celebrated the very things he had most bitterly attacked. I think something like that has happened among the postmodern ideologues. You can see, behind this celebration of the American age, the deep disillusionment of the Left-bank Parisian literary intelligentsia. So, in relation to the still-too-integrated positions enunciated in the critical theory of Habermas, postmodernists are quite correct to talk about the erosion of the Enlightenment project, the sharp changes taking place in modernism, etc. But I think the label “postmodernism,” especially in its American appropriation (and it is about how the world dreams itself to be “American”), carries two additional charges: it not only points to how things are going in modern culture, but it says, first, that there is nothing else of any significance—no contradictory forces, and no counter-tendencies; and second, that these changes are terrific, and all we have to do is to reconcile ourselves to them. It is, in my view, being deployed in an essentialist and uncritical way. And it is irrevocably Euro- or Western-centric in its whole episteme.

So we are caught between two unacceptable choices: Habermas's defensive position in relation to the old Enlightenment project and Lyotard's Euro-centered celebration of the postmodern collapse. To understand the reasons for this oversimplified binary choice is simple enough, if one starts back far enough. I don't think that there is any such thing as *the* modernist impulse, in the singular. Modernism itself was a decisively “Western” phenomenon. It was always composed of many different projects, which were not all integratable or homogeneous

with one another; they were often, in fact, in conflict. For example, consider Adorno and Benjamin: both were theorists of the modern and in some ways, very close together in formation. They are also bitterly, deeply, opposed to one another on some key questions. Now I know that shorthand terms like “modernism” can be useful in everyday exchanges but I don’t know, analytically, what the single project was which modernism might have been. And it’s very important to realize that, if modernism was never one project, then there have always been a series of different tendencies growing out of it as it has developed historically. I think this is similar to the argument behind Perry Anderson’s critique of Marshall Berman’s *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* in a recent *New Left Review*. While I like Berman’s book very much and think that there is a rather traditionalist view of modernism built into Perry Anderson’s response, I still agree with Anderson rather than Berman on the central argument about periodization. I don’t think that what Berman is describing is a new epoch but rather the accentuation of certain important tendencies in the culture of the overdeveloped “West” which, if we understand the complex histories of modernism properly, have been in play in a highly uneven way since modernism emerged.

Now we come to postmodernism and what I want to know is: is postmodernism a global or a “Western” phenomenon? Is postmodernism the word we give to the rearrangement, the new configuration, which many of the elements that went into the modernist project have now assumed? Or is it, as I think the postmodernist theorists want to suggest, a new kind of absolute rupture with the past, the beginning of a new global epoch altogether? This is not merely a formal question, of where to place the break. If you are within the same epoch—the one which opens with the age of imperialism, mass democracy, mass consumption, and mass culture from about 1880 to 1920—you have to expect that there will be continuities and transformations as well as ruptures and breaks.

Let’s take the postmodernist argument about the so-called collapse or implosion of “the real.” Three-quarters of the human race have not yet entered the era of what we are pleased to call “the real.” Furthermore, even within the West, ever since the development of modern mass media, and their introduction on a mass scale into cultural production, and their impact on the audiences for cultural products, we

have witnessed the undermining of the absolutism of “the real” of the great discourses of realism, and the familiar realist and rationalist guarantees, the dominance of certain types of representational form, etc. I don’t mean to argue that the new discourses and relationships between these things, which is in essence what we called “modernism,” are the same in 1980 as they were in 1900. But I don’t know that with “postmodernism” we are dealing with something totally and fundamentally different from that break at the turn of the century. I don’t mean to deny that we’ve gone through profound qualitative changes between then and now. There are, therefore, now some very perplexing features to contemporary culture that certainly tend to outrun the critical and theoretical concepts generated in the early modernist period. We have, in that sense, to constantly update our theories and to be dealing with new experiences. I also accept that these changes may constitute new subject-positions and social identities for people. But I don’t think there is any such absolutely novel and unified thing as *the* postmodern condition. It’s another version of that historical amnesia characteristic of American culture—the tyranny of the New.

I recognize, experientially or ideologically, what people mean when they point to this “condition.” But I see it much more as one emergent trend or tendency among others—and still not fully crystallized out. For example, there is a very interesting film called *Wetherby*, written by the English playwright David Hare, which is, formally, a very conventional film about a middle-aged woman (played by Vanessa Redgrave) who teaches in a provincial town. A student, who is in the town for reasons which are never fully explained, turns up at a dinner party she’s giving on her birthday. She thinks her friends have invited him, and they think she’s invited him, so he comes in, is accepted as a guest, takes part in the conversations, and so forth. In the middle of the party there is a fleeting and unsuccessful sexual encounter with the teacher. The next day, he shows up again at her house, he sits at the table, starts conversing, and then he shoots himself. And the rest of the film is “about” who this person is who comes from nowhere, and why does he kill himself there, and does it have any connection with any other part of her life. Now, the interesting thing about the film, and why I say it contains emergent “postmodernist” elements, as it were, is that there is no story in the old sense. He doesn’t come from anywhere; there is no whole story about him to tell. When his girlfriend turns up, she

doesn't quite know why she's there either. She just came to the funeral and stays on a few days. But she doesn't want to be made into the explanation for him. So while the film has a very conventional structure, at its center is what I would call a recognizably postmodernist experience. In some ways this note in the British cinema is qualitatively new. But it isn't *totally different* from that disintegration of whole experiences, or from that experience of the self as a whole person with an integrated history whose life makes sense from some fixed and stable position that's been "in trouble" since at least Freud, Picasso, James Joyce, Brecht, and surrealism.

So I would say postmodernism is the current name we give to how these old certainties began to run into trouble from the 1900s onward. In that sense, I don't refuse some of the new things the postmodernists point to. They are extremely important, and the traditional Habermasian defense won't do. But the attempt to gather them all under a singular sign—which suggests a kind of final rupture or break with the modern era—is the point at which the operation of postmodernism becomes ideological in a very specific way. What it says is: this is the end of the world. History stops with us and there is no place to go after this. But whenever it is said that *this* is the last thing that will ever happen in history, that is the sign of the functioning, in the narrow sense, of the ideological—what Marx called the "eternalizing" effect. Since most of the world has not yet properly entered the modern era, who is it who "has no future left"? And how long will this "no future" last into the future; if you'll excuse the paradox? If the *Titanic* is going down [a reference to the slogan "If you're sailing on the *Titanic*, go first class"—L.G.], how long is it going to take? If the bomb has already gone off, can it go on "going off" forever? You can't be another century constantly confronting the end of the world. You can live this as a metaphor, suggesting that certain contemporary positions and ideas are now deeply undermined, rendered increasingly fragile as it were, by having the fact of the world's end as one of their imminent possibilities. That is a radically new historical fact and, I think, it has decentered us all. In that sense love and human relationships in the postmodern period feel very different—more temporary, provisional, contingent. But what we are looking at here is the tempering and elongation of the very same profound cultural and historical tendencies which constructed that break with "the modern" which we call "mod-

ernism.” And I want to be able to retain the term “modernity” to refer to the long history—the *longue durée*—of those tendencies.

QUESTION: *One of the very distinctive features of the so-called post-modern theorists is their abandonment of issues of meaning, representation and signification, and ideology. How would you respond to this turn?*

SH: There is here a very sharp polarization. I don’t think it is possible to conceptualize language without meaning, whereas the postmodernists talk about the collapse or implosion of all meaning. I still talk about representation and signification, whereas Baudrillard says we are at the end of all representational and signifying practice. I still talk about ideology, whereas Foucault talks about the discursive which has no ideological dimension to it. Perhaps I am in these respects a dinosaur or a recidivist, but I find it very difficult to understand contemporary society and social practice giving up those orienting points. I am not convinced by the theoretical arguments that have been advanced against them.

First, let’s take Foucault’s argument for the discursive as against the ideological. What Foucault would talk about is the setting in place, through the institutionalization of a discursive regime, of a number of competing regimes of truth and, within these regimes, the operation of power through the practices he calls normalization, regulation, and surveillance. Now perhaps it’s just a sleight of hand, but the combination of regime of truth plus normalization/regulation/surveillance is not all that far from the notions of dominance in ideology that I’m trying to work with. So maybe Foucault’s point is really a polemical, not an analytic one, contesting one particular way of understanding those terms, within a much more linear kind of base/superstructure model. I think the movement from that old base/superstructure paradigm into the domain of the discursive is a very positive one. But, while I have learned a great deal from Foucault in this sense about the relation between knowledge and power, I don’t see how you can retain the notion of “resistance,” as he does, without facing questions about the constitution of dominance in ideology. Foucault’s evasion of the question is at the heart of his proto-anarchist position precisely because his resistance must be summoned up from nowhere. Nobody knows where it comes from. Fortunately, it goes on being there,

always guaranteed: in so far as there is power, there is resistance. But at any one moment, when you want to know how strong the power is, and how strong the resistance is, and what is the changing balance of forces, it's impossible to assess because such a field of force is not conceptualizable in this model. Why? Because there is no way of conceptualizing the balance of power between different regimes of truth without society conceptualized, not as unity, but as a "formation." If Foucault is to prevent the regime of truth from collapsing into a synonym for the dominant ideology, he has to recognize there are different regimes of truth in the social formation. And these are not simply "plural"—they define an ideological field. There are subordinated regimes of truth which make sense, which have plausibility, for subordinated subjects, while not being part of the dominant episteme. In other words, as soon as you begin to look at a discursive formation, not just a single discipline but as a *formation*, you have to talk about the relations of power which structure the inter-discursivity, or the intertextuality, of the field of knowledge. I don't much care what you call it: ideology or not. What matters is not the terminology but the conceptualization. The question of the relative power distribution of different regimes of truth and social formation at any one time—which have certain effects for the maintenance of power in the social order—that is what I call "the ideological effect." So I go on using the term "ideology" because it forces me to continue thinking about that problem. By abandoning the term, I think that Foucault has let himself off the hook of having to re-theorize it in a more radical way: he saves for himself "the political" with his insistence on power but he denies himself a politics because he has no idea of the "relations of force."

Let's take Baudrillard's argument about representation and the implosion of meaning. This seems to rest upon an assumption of the sheer facticity of things: things *are* just what is seen on the surface. They don't mean or signify anything. They cannot be "read." We are beyond reading, language, meaning. Again I agree with Baudrillard's attempt to contest the old manifest/latent type of hermeneutic analyses; this stands in his work as the base/superstructure does in Foucault's—that which has to be contested and displaced. Above- and underground is not a very useful way of thinking about appearance in relation to structural forces. Perhaps I ought to admit that some of the tendencies in Cultural Studies did go that way: phenomenal form/real relation,

despite all qualifications, did suggest that the surface of things was only important insofar as you penetrated it to the underlying rules and codes. So Baudrillard is quite right returning us to what there is, the facticity of life, the surface, the spectacle, et cetera. Politically, in England, it has come to connote a certain kind of “realism” on the Left which argues that you can’t always go behind what the masses manifestly think that what they really think: you also have to recognize the validity of how they do make sense of the world. But I think Baudrillard’s position has become a kind of super-realism, taken to the nth degree. It says that, in the process of recognizing the real, there is nothing except what is immediately there on the surface. Of course, in so-called postmodern society, we feel overwhelmed by the diversity, the plurality of surfaces which it is possible to produce, and we have to recognize the rich technological basis of modern cultural production which enables us endlessly to simulate, reproduce, reiterate, and recapitulate. But there is all difference in the world between the assertion that there is no one, final, absolute meaning—no ultimate signified, only the endlessly sliding chain of signification, and on the other hand, the assertion that meaning does not exist.

Benjamin reminded us quite a while ago that montage would destroy the aura of the unique and singular work of art forever. And once you destroy the aura of the singular work of art because it can be reiterated, you enter into a new era which cannot be approaching the same way, using the traditional theoretical concepts. You are going to have to operate your analysis of meaning without the solace of closure: more on the basis of the semantic raids Benjamin proposed—to find the fragments, to decipher their assembly and see how you can make the surgical cut into them, assembling and reassembling the means of instruments of cultural production. It is this that inaugurates the modern era. But although this breaks the one, true meaning into fragments and puts one in the universe of the infinite plurality of codes, it does not destroy the process of encoding, which always tells the imposition of an arbitrary “closure.” Indeed it actually enriches it, because we understand meaning not as a natural but as an arbitrary act—the intervention of ideology into language. Therefore I don’t agree with Baudrillard that representation is at an end because the cultural codes have become pluralized. I think we are in a period of the infinite multiplicity of codings, which is different. We have all become,

historically, fantastically, code-able. We are in the middle of this multiplicity of readings and discourses and that has produced new forms of self-consciousness and reflexivity. So, while the modes of cultural production and consumption have changed, qualitatively, fantastically, as the result of that expansion, it does not mean that representation itself has collapsed. Representation has become a more problematic process but it doesn't mean the end of representation. Again, it is exactly the term "postmodernism" itself which tells you of the tension of having to recognize what is new, and of struggling to mobilize some historical understanding of how it came to be produced. Postmodernism attends to the close of the past by saying that history is finished, therefore you needn't go back to it. There is only the present, and all you can do is be with it, immersed in it.

QUESTION: *To what extent would you then describe yourself as a modernist attempting to make sense of these postmodern tendencies? To what extent can the inherent critical categories of modernism analyze the current forms and conditions of cultural production and reception? To what extent can modernism make sense of MTV?*

SH: I think MTV is quite extraordinary. It takes fragmentation, the plurality of signification, to new heights. But I certainly couldn't say that it is unintelligible. Each so-called meaningless fragment seems to me rich with connotations. It seems perfectly clear where MTV comes from: indeed, it is almost too predictable in its "unpredictability." Unpredictability is its meta-message. We know enough about the tendencies of mass culture for the last hundred years to recognize that MTV does not come from outer space. Don't misunderstand me. I do appreciate the genuine "openness" of postmodernism before these new cultural trends and forces. But the extrapolations about the universe it makes from them are plainly wildly exaggerated and ideological, based on taking one's own metaphors literally, which is a stupid mistake to make. Not all of those tendencies are by any means progressive; many of them are very contradictory. For instance, modern mass phenomena like the mega-event—like Live Aid, Farm Aid, etc., or like Springsteen's current success—have many postmodern elements in them. But that doesn't mean they are to be seen as the unambiguous cultural expressions of an entirely new epoch. It seems to me that such events are, precisely, massively defined by their diversity, their contradictory

plurality. Springsteen is a phenomenon that can be read, with equal conviction, in at least two diametrically opposed ways. His audiences seem to be made up of people from five to fifty, busily reading him in different ways. The symbols are deeply American—populist in their ambiguity; he's both in the White House and On The Road. In the 1960s you had to be one or the other. Springsteen is somehow both at the same time. That's what I mean by fragmentation.

Now, if postmodernism wants to say that such processes of diversity and fragmentation, which modernism first tried to name, have gone much further, are technologically underpinned in new ways, and have penetrated more deeply into mass consciousness, I would agree. But that does not mean that this constitutes an entirely new epoch or that we don't have any tools to comprehend the main trends in contemporary culture, so all we can do is to lie back and love it. I don't feel that those things which people are pointing to in postmodernism so entirely outrun our critical theories as to render those theories irrelevant. The problem is that it is assumed that theory consists of a series of closed paradigms. If paradigms are closed, of course, new phenomena will be difficult to interpret because they depend on new historical conditions and incorporate novel discursive elements. But if we understand theorizing as an open horizon, moving within the magnetic field of some basic concepts, but constantly being applied afresh to what is genuinely original and novel in new forms of cultural practice, and recognizing the capacity of subjects to reposition themselves differently, then you needn't be so defeated. True, the great, discourses of classical Reason, and of the rationalist actor or subject are much weaker in their explanatory power now than they were before. So are the great evolutionary chains of explanation predicated on some teleological, progressive historical movement. But in the era of hi-tech, corporate, global communication networks, what does it mean to say—except as a metaphor exaggerated for affect—that the age of rationalism has ended. Only those who speak of “culture” abstracted from its material, technical, and economic conditions of existence could hold such a position.

I think a postmodernist would be likely to see my response as too complacent, and perhaps that's what you mean by characterizing me as a modernist. I admit to being a modernist, in the sense that I find the early stages of the modernist project—when it is breaking through,

historically, aesthetically, when it is all happening at once—the moment of Braque, Picasso, Joyce, Klee, the Bauhaus, Brecht, Heartfield, surrealism, and Dada to be one of the most fantastically exciting intellectual moments in twentieth-century history. Of course, I recognize that this movement was limited and did not directly engage with or transform the popular. How could it? How could culture, on its own, transcend the social, political, and economic terrain on which it operates? Certainly, failing in its radical promise, many modernist impulses were then pulled back into more elitist formations. Raymond Williams long ago explained how emergent movements are assimilated into the dominant. This does not diminish the radical break with the epistemes of the modern which modernism represented. Since then, the engagement between modernism and the popular has been following a rapid but uneven path. This articulation—far from being completed—is only now really beginning. It's not that I don't respond positively to many elements in postmodernism, but the many separate and diverse strands, which modernism tried to hold together in one framework, have once again separated out. So there's now an aesthetic postmodernism, an architectural postmodernism, postmodernist theory, postmodernist filmmaking, etc. Postmodern culture has become a set of disassociated specialisms. I suppose I am still very attracted by that highly contradictory point at the inception of modernism when an old paradigm is breaking up and a new one is being born. I'm drawn by the immediate intellectual excitement that is generated in the capacity to move from one thing to another, to make multiple cross-linkings, multi-accentualities, which was at the center of the modernist project. However, while my tastes tend toward the modernist, I don't know whether I would locate myself now within the modernist theoretical project.

QUESTION: *It seems to me that the most powerful challenge to your theory of articulation—and its political implications—is Baudrillard's description of the masses as an implosive force that "can no longer be spoken for, articulated and represented."*

SH: I think the whole collapse of the critical French intelligentsia during the Mitterrand era is inscribed in that statement. What raised my political hackles is the comfortable way in which French intellectuals now take it upon themselves to declare when and for whom history ends, how the masses can or cannot be represented, when they are or are not

a real historical force, when they can or cannot by mythically invoked in the French revolutionary tradition. French intellectuals always had a tendency to use “the masses” in the abstract to fuel or underpin their own intellectual positions. Now that the intellectuals have renounced critical thought, they feel no inhibition in renouncing it on behalf of the masses—whose destinies they have only shared abstractly. I find it ironic that the silent majority, whom the intellectuals only discovered yesterday, is fueling the postmodernist collapse. France, like all Western European societies, is in deep trouble. And, against the revolutionary myths which French intellectuals kept alive for so long, what we continue to confront in such developed Western industrial societies is the much more accurate—and continuing—problem of the insertion of the masses in subordinate positionalities within dominant cultural practices. The longer that history has gone on, the more popular culture has been represented as inevitably corrupt, and so on. It is critical intellectuals, locked into their own kind of cultural elitism, who have often succumbed to the temptation to give an account of the Other—the masses—in terms of false consciousness or the banalization of mass culture. So the recognition of the masses and of the mass media as significant historical elements is a useful corrective against that in postmodernism. But the politics which follows from saying that the masses are nothing but a passive reflection of the historical, economic, and political forces which have gone into the construction of modern industrial mass society seems to me historically incorrect and politically inadequate.

I would say quite the opposite. The silent majorities do think; if they do not speak, it may be because we have taken their speech away from them, deprived them of the means of enunciation, not because they have nothing to say. I would argue that, in spite of the fact that the popular masses have never been able to become in any complete sense the subject-authors of the cultural practices in the twentieth century, their continuing presence, as a kind of passive historical-cultural force, has constantly interrupted, limited, and disrupted everything else. It is as if the masses have kept a secret to themselves while the intellectuals keep running around in circles trying to make out what it is, what is going on.

That is what Benjamin meant by saying that it isn't only the new means of mechanical reproduction but the historical presence of the

masses which interrupts history. He didn't mean this as a guarantee that the masses are instantly going to take over the world and remake modern culture in their own image. He meant that they are now, irrevocably, on the historical stage and nothing can move any longer—including the dominant cultural industries—without taking that “presence” into account. Nothing can be constituted as high art without recognizing, in the existing distribution of educational practices, its relative divorce from the masses' experience. Nothing can become popular which does not negotiate the experiences, the codes of the popular masses.

For something to become popular entails a struggle; it is never a simple process, as Gramsci reminded us. It doesn't just happen. And that means there must be always some distance between the immediate practical consciousness or common sense of ordinary people, and what it is possible for them to become. I don't think that history is finished and the assertion that it is, which lies at the heart of postmodernism, betrays the inexcusable ethnocentrism—the Eurocentrism—of its high priests. It is their cultural dominance, in the West, across the globe, which is historically at an end. The masses are like an irritant, a point that you have to pass through. And I think that postmodernism has yet to go through that point; it has yet to actually think through and engage the question of the masses. I think Baudrillard needs to join the masses for a while, to be silent for two-thirds of a century, just to see what it feels like. So, it is precisely at the site of the question of the political possibilities of the masses that my political objections to, and contestations with, postmodernism come through most sharply.

QUESTION: Some postmodern theorists are concerned with what they call “articulation”; for example, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the articulation of desiring production. Could you describe your own theory of the articulation of ideology and ideological struggle?

SH: I always use the word “articulation,” though I don't know whether the meaning I attribute to it is perfectly understood. In England, the term has a nice double meaning because “articulate” means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an “articulated” lorry [truck]: a lorry where the front [cab] and back [trailer] can, but need not neces-

sarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances *can* a connection be forged or made? So the so-called “unity” of a discourse is, really, the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be re-articulated in different ways because they have no necessary “belongingness.” The “unity” which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. Thus, a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects. Let me put that the other way: the theory of articulation asks how an ideology discovers its subject rather than how the subject thinks the necessary and inevitable thoughts which belong to it; it enables us to think how an ideology empowers people, enabling them to begin to make some sense or intelligibility of their historical situation, without reducing those forms of intelligibility to their socioeconomic or class location or social position.

The theory of articulation, as I use it, has been developed by Ernesto Laclau, in his book *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. His argument is that the political connotation of ideological elements has no necessary belongingness, and thus, we need to think the contingent, the non-necessary, connection between different practices—between ideology and social forces, and between different elements within ideology, and between different social groups composing a social movement. He uses the notion of articulation to break with the necessitarian and reductionist logic which has dogged the classical Marxist theory of ideology.

For example: religion has no necessary political connotation. Anyone interested in the politics of contemporary culture has to recognize the continuing force in modern life of cultural forms which have a prehistory long predating that of our rational systems, and which sometimes constitute the only cultural resources which human beings

have to make sense of their world. This is not to deny that, in one historical-social formation after another, religion has been bound up in particular ways, wired up very directly as the cultural and ideological underpinning of a particular structure of power. That is certainly the case, historically; and in those societies, there are powerful, immensely strong what I would call “lines of tendential force” articulating that religious formation to political, economic, and ideological structures. So that if you move into that society it would be idiotic to think that you could easily detach religion from its historical embeddedness and simply put it in another place. Thus, when I say the connections are “not necessary,” I don’t mean religion is free-floating. It exists historically in a particular formation, anchored very directly in relation to a number of different forces. Nevertheless, it has no necessary, intrinsic, transhistorical belongingness. Its meaning—political and ideological—comes precisely from its position within a formation. It comes with what else it is articulated to. Since those articulations are not inevitable, not necessary, they can potentially be transformed, so that religion can be articulated in more than one way. I insist that, historically, it has been inserted into particular cultures in a particular way over a long period of time, and this constitutes the magnetic lines of tendency which are very difficult to disrupt. To use a geographical metaphor, to struggle around religion in a particular locale, you need to know the ideological terrain, the lay of the land. But that’s not to say, “that’s how it is, always will be so.” Of course, if you are going to try to break, contest, interrupt some of these tendential historical connections, you have to know when you are moving against the grain of historical formations. If you want to move religion, to re-articulate it in another way, you are going to come across all the grooves that have articulated it already.

Nevertheless, as we look across the modern and developing worlds, we see the extraordinary diversity of the roles which religious formations have actually played. We also see the extraordinary cultural and ideological vitality which religion has given to certain popular social movements. That is to say, in particular social formations, where religion has become the *valorized* ideological domain, the domain into which all the different cultural strands are obliged to enter, no political movement in that society can become popular without negotiating the religious terrain. Social movements have to transform it, buy into it,

inflect it, develop it, clarify it—but they must engage with it. You can't create a popular political movement in such social formations without getting into the religious question, because it is the arena in which this community has come to a certain kind of consciousness. This consciousness may be limited, it may not have successfully helped them to remake their history. But they have been “language[d]” by the discourse of popular religion. They have, for the first time, used religion to construct some narrative, however impoverished and impure, to connect the past and the present: where they came from with where they are and where they are going to, and why they are here.

In the case of the Rastafarians in Jamaica, Rasta was a curious language, borrowed from a text—the Bible—that did not belong to them; they had to turn the text upside down, to get a meaning which fitted their experience. But in turning the text upside down they remade themselves; they positioned themselves differently as new political subjects; they reconstructed themselves as blacks in the new world: they *became* what they are. And, positioning themselves in that way, they learned to speak a new language. And they spoke it with a vengeance. They learned to speak and sing. And in so doing, they did not assume that their only cultural resources lay in the past. They did not go back and try to recover some absolutely pure “folk culture,” untouched by history, as if that would be the only way they could learn to speak. No, they made use of the modern media to broadcast their message. “Don't tell us about tom-toms in the forest. We want to use the new means of articulation and production to make a new music, with a new message.” This is a cultural transformation. It is not something totally new. It is not something which has a straight, unbroken line of continuity from the past. It is transformation through a reorganization of the elements of a cultural practice, elements which do not in themselves have any necessary political connotations. It is not the individual elements of a discourse that have political or ideological connotations, it is the ways those elements are organized together in a new discursive formation.

Let me come to the question of social forces. This ideology, which transforms a people's consciousness and awareness of themselves and their historical situation, although it explodes culturally, does not constitute itself *directly* as a social and political force. It has its limits, as all religious forms of explanation do. But it does become articulated to

a social movement, a movement of people. And it functioned so as to harness or draw to it sectors of the population who have never been inside that historical bloc before. Is it a class? In the case of the Rastafarian movement, it has at its center the experiences, the position, the determinations of economic life in Jamaican society. It has at its heart a class formation. Is it only a class? No, it could not have become a historical or political force simply reduced to an already unified class. Indeed it never has been a unified class, with a unified ideology already in place. It is cross-cut, deeply intersected by, a variety of other determinations and ideologies. In fact, it only becomes a unified social force through the constitution of itself as a collective subject within a unifying ideology. It does not become a class or a unified social force until it begins to have forms of intelligibility which explain a shared collective situation. And even then, what determines the place and unity is nothing we can reduce to the terms of what we used to mean by an economic class. A variety of sectors of different social forces, in that moment, become articulated to and within this particular ideology. Therefore, it is not the case that the social forces, classes, groups, political movements are first constituted in their unity by objective economic conditions and then give rise to a unified ideology. The process is quite the reverse. One has to see the way in which a variety of different social groups enter into and constitute for a time a kind of political and social force, in part by seeing themselves reflected as a unified force in the ideology which constitutes them. The relationship between social forces and ideology is absolutely dialectical. As the ideological vision emerges, so does the group. The Rastafarians were, Marx would say, as a group in themselves, the poor. But they don't constitute a unified political force *because* they are poor. In fact, the dominant ideology makes sense of them, not as "the poor" but as the feckless, the layabouts, the underclass. They only constitute a political force, that is, they *become* a historical force in so far as they are constituted as new political subjects.

So it is the articulation, the non-necessary link, between a social force which is making itself, and the ideology or conceptions of the world which makes intelligible the process they are going through, which begins to bring onto the historical stage a new social position and political position, a new set of social and political subjects. In that sense, I don't refuse the connection between an ideology or cultural

force and a social force; indeed, I want to insist that the popular force of an organic ideology always depends upon the social groups that can be articulated to and by it. It is here that one must locate the articulating principle. But I want to think that connection, not as one *necessarily* given in socioeconomic structures or positions, but precisely as the result of *an articulation*.

QUESTION: *Given your obviously close connection with theories of discourse and discursive analysis—your theory of articulation seems to suggest that the elements of a social formation be thought of as operating like a language—I wonder how far you are willing to go into a kind of poststructuralist position that would argue that society itself can be analyzed as a series of competing languages. I’m thinking here particularly of Laclau and Mouffe’s latest book, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, and I wonder how you would make out the similarities and differences between their position and your own.*

SH: You are absolutely right in saying that I’ve gone a very long way along the route of rethinking practices as functioning discursively—i.e., like languages. That metaphor has been, I think, enormously generative for me and has powerfully penetrated my thinking. If I had to put my finger on the one thing which constitutes the theoretical revolution of our time, I think it lies in that metaphor—it’s gone in a thousand different directions but it has also reorganized our theoretical universe. It is not only the discovery of the importance of the discursive, and the utility of a particular kind of analysis; it is also the metaphorically generated capacity to reconceptualize other kinds of practices as operating, in some important ways, like a language. I think, for example, it’s possible to get a long way by talking about what is sometimes called the “economic” as operating discursively. The discursive perspective has also brought into play a very important insight, namely, the whole dimension of subjectivity, particularly in the ideological domain. I think Marxism and structuralism had already made a very significant break with the traditional notion of the empirical sociological subject. And probably, they had to go by way of what has been called the theory of “a history without subjects,” a language rather than speakers. But that was manifestly only a stopping point on the route to something else. It’s just not possible to make history without subjects in quite that absolute way. The discursive perspective has

required us to think about reintroducing, reintegrating the subjective dimension in a non-holistic, non-unitary way. From this point of view, one cannot ignore Laclau and Mouffe's seminal work on the constitution of political subjects and their deconstruction of the notion that political subjectivities do flow from the integrated ego, which is also the integrated speaker, the stable subject of enunciation. The discursive metaphor is thus extraordinarily rich and has massive political consequences. For instance, it enabled cultural theorists to realize that what we call "the self" is constituted out of and by difference, and remains contradictory, and that cultural forms are, similarly, in that way, never whole, never fully closed or "sutured."

The question is, can one, does one, follow that argument to the point that there is nothing to practice but its discursive aspect? I think that's what their recent book does. It is a sustained philosophical effort, really, to conceptualize *all* practices as nothing but discourses, and all historical agents as discursively constituted subjectivities, to talk about positionalities but never positions, and only to look at the way concrete individuals can be interpellated in different subject positionalities. The book is thus a bold attempt to discover what a politics of such a theory might be. All of that I think is important. I still prefer *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* over *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. (Perhaps I ought to say in parenthesis that I do find an alarming tendency in myself to prefer people's less complete works to their later, mature and complete ones. I prefer *The Eighteenth Brumaire* to volume 2 of *Capital*. I prefer Althusser's *For Marx* to *Reading Capital*. I like people's middle period a lot, where they have gotten over their adolescent idealism but their thought has not yet hardened into a system. And I like Laclau when he's struggling to find a way out of reductionism and beginning to reconceptualize Marxist categories in the discursive mode.) But in the last book, there is no reason why anything is or isn't potentially articulatable with anything. The critique of reductionism has apparently resulted in the notion of society as a totally open discursive field.

I would put it polemically in the following form: the last book thinks that the world, social practice, is language, whereas I want to say that the social operates *like* a language. While the metaphor of language is the best way of rethinking many fundamental questions,

there's a kind of slippage from acknowledging its utility and power to saying that that's really the way it is. There's a very powerful tendency which pushes people, as soon as they get to the first position, to make the theoretically logical move of going all the way. Theoretically, perhaps, they are much more consistent than I am. Logically, once you've opened the gate, it's reasonable to go through it and see what the world looks like on the other side. But I think that that often becomes its own kind of reductionism. I would say that the fully discursive position is a reductionism upward, rather than a reductionism downward, as economism was. What seems to happen is that, in the reaction against a crude materialism, the metaphor of x operates like y is reduced to $x = y$. There is a very dramatic condensation which, in its movement, reminds me of theoretical reductionism very strongly. You see it most clearly in something like the reworking of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

And at that point, I think it's theoretically wrong; in fact, what is left of the old materialist in me wants to say extremely crude things like "I'd like to make you eat your words." Let me put this another, more serious way. If you go back to the early formulations of historical materialism, what Marx always talks about is the way in which social and cultural structures overdetermine the natural ones. Marx is aware that we remain natural beings, that we remain in nature. What he's talking about is the elaborations of social and cultural organization which complete those natural structures. Our genetic constitution is extraordinarily open-ended and is thus a necessary but not sufficient way of becoming human. What is happening, historically, is the massive complexification of the social, the overdetermination of the natural by the social and cultural. So Nature can no longer stand as the ultimate guarantee of materialism. Already in the nineteenth century, Marx polemicalized against that kind of vulgar materialism but there was, and still is, a sense in which orthodox Marxists think that something is ultimately only real when you can put your hands on it in Nature. We can't be materialists in that way any longer. But I do think that we are still required to think about the way in which ideological/cultural/discursive practices continue to exist within the determining lines of force of material relations, and the expropriation of nature, which is a very different question. Material conditions are the necessary but not sufficient condition of all historical practice. Of course, we need

to think material conditions in their determinate discursive form, not as a fixed absolute. I think the discursive position is often in danger of losing its reference to material practice and historical conditions.

QUESTION: *There seem to be two separate questions involved in your description of that slippage. One is how politically and historically specific the analysis is, and the other is whether opening the discursive terrain necessarily takes you into reductionism. Is the slippage the result of excessive abstraction and idealization that loses touch with the political and historical limits on the ways in which particular discourses can be articulated to one another? If what is lost in making the social formation into an open field of discourse is a particular sense of historical necessity, of limits within which languages are juxtaposed with one another in a social formation, that is a much more limited kind of problem. One simple way of posing that for Laclau and Mouffe might be to say that their position doesn't have enough of a political inflection. That's not necessarily the same as saying that, because they've opened the door onto thinking of society as a discursive formation, they are necessarily pulled into reductionism.*

SH: I do not think that opening the door to the discursive field necessarily takes you in that direction. It doesn't take me there. So I would prefer your first formulation. In *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, Laclau contests the a priori insertion of classes, for instance, into Marxist analysis because there is no way to substantiate such a philosophical a priori. Yet he reintroduces class as a historical determinant. Now I find it very difficult to quarrel with that. I think the question of political inflection is a very real problem with a lot of people who have taken the full discursive route. But I don't think I would advance that critique against Laclau and Mouffe. The new book is quite striking in that it *does* try to constitute a new politics out of that position. In that sense, it's very responsible and original. It says, let's go through the discursive door but then, we still have to act politically. Their problem isn't politics but history. They have let slip the question of the historical forces which have produced the present, and which continue to function as constraints and determinations on discursive articulation.

QUESTION: *Is the difference between the two books then a matter of levels of abstraction?*

SH: I think they are quite heroic, in the new book, to say that until one can express these new positions in the form of a rigorously articulated general theory, one is still too bogged down in the pragmatics of local examples, conjunctural analysis, and so on. I don't operate well at that level, but I don't want to deny the importance of what is sometimes called "theoretical practice." It is not an autonomous practice, as some Althusserians have tried to talk about it, but it does have its own dynamic. At many important points, *Capital* is operating precisely at that level; it is a necessary level of abstraction. So the project itself is not wrong. But in carrying it out, they do tend to slip from the requirement to recognize the constraints of existing historical formations. While they are very responsible—whether you agree with them or not—about recognizing that their position does have political consequences, when they come down to particular political conjunctures, they don't reintegrate other levels of determination into the analysis. Instead, they take the abstractions which have been developed and elaborated, in a very rigorous and conceptual way at a high philosophical level, and insert them into the here and now. You don't see them adding, adding, adding, the different levels of determination; you see them producing the concrete philosophically, and somewhere in there is, I think, the king of analytic slippage I am talking about. That's not to say that it's theoretically impossible to develop a more adequate set of political positions within their theoretical framework, but somehow, the route they have taken allows them to avoid the pressure of doing so. The structuring force, the lines of tendency stemming from the implantation of capital, for example, simply disappears.

QUESTION: *Two other terms becoming common in cultural theory are "post-Marxism" and "poststructuralism." Both have, at various times, been used to describe your work. Can you describe your relation to these categories?*

SH: I am a "post-Marxist" only in the sense that I recognize the necessity to move beyond orthodox Marxism, beyond the notion of Marxism guaranteed by the laws of history. But I still operate somewhere within what I understand to be the discursive limits of a Marxist position. And I feel the same way about structuralism. My work is neither a refusal nor an apologia of Althusser's position. I refuse certain of those positions, but Althusser certainly has had an enormous influence

on my thinking, in many positive ways that I continue to acknowledge, even after he has gone out of fashion. So “post” means, for me, going on thinking on the ground of a set of established problems, a problematic. It doesn’t mean deserting that terrain but rather, using it as one’s reference point. So I am, only in that sense, a post-Marxist and a poststructuralist, because those are the two discourses I feel most constantly engaged with. They are central to my formation and I don’t believe in the endless, trendy recycling of one fashionable theorist after another, as if you can wear new theories like T-shirts.

QUESTION: *It is clear that Cultural Studies is enjoying a new measure of success in the United States. I wonder how you feel about these recent successes to institutionalize and codify Cultural Studies?*

SH: I would like to perhaps make a distinction between the two terms that you use. I am in favor of institutionalization because one needs to go through the organizational moment—the long march through the institutions—to get people together, to build some kind of collective intellectual project. But codification makes my hackles rise, even about the things I have been involved in. People talk about “the Birmingham school” [The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham] and all I can hear are the arguments we used to have in Birmingham that we never were one school; there may have been four or five but we were never able to unify it all, nor did we want to create that kind of orthodoxy. Now let me say something, perhaps controversial, about the American appropriation of all that was going on at Birmingham, and about Cultural Studies in general, for I see some interesting presences and absences. For instance, I find it interesting that in the US formal semiotics rapidly became a sort of alternative interpretive methodology, whereas I don’t think anybody in England ever really believed in it as a complete method. When we took on semiotics, we were taking on a methodological requirement: you had to show why and how you could say that that is what the meaning of any cultural form or practice is. That is the semiotic imperative: to demonstrate that what you were calling “the meaning” is textually constituted. But as a formal or elaborated *methodology*, that was not what semiotics was for us. In America, taking on semiotics seemed to entail taking on the entire ideological baggage of structuralism. Similarly, I notice there is now a very rapid assimilation of the

Althusserian moment into literary studies but without its Marxist connotations. And I notice the same thing about Gramsci's work. Suddenly, I see Gramsci quoted everywhere. Even more troubling, I see Gramscian concepts directly substituted for some of the very things we went to Gramsci to avoid. People talk about "hegemony" for instance as the equivalent of ideological domination. I have tried to fight against that interpretation of "hegemony" for twenty years.

Sometimes, I hear a similar kind of easy appropriation when people start talking about Cultural Studies. I see it establishing itself quite rapidly on the foundations of existing academic departments, existing intellectual divisions, and disciplinary curricula. It becomes a kind of "received knowledge," instead of having a real critical and deconstructive edge to it. But I don't know what you do about that; I don't know how you refuse success. I think that in America, Cultural Studies is sometimes used as just one more paradigm. You know, there are fifteen around, so this time I will say that I have a Cultural Studies approach . . . I understand why that happens because, in a sense, there *is* a perspective there, despite its eclecticism and relative openness. It has always been trying to integrate itself into a perspective. That's inevitable whenever you try to get people to do research collectively because they have to collaborate while trying to answer specific questions. So there is a thrust toward codification inevitably, as the project develops and generates work. Let me put it this way: you have to be sure about a position in order to teach a class, but you have to be open-ended enough to know that you are going to change your mind by the time you teach it next week. As a strategy, that means holding enough ground to be able to think a position but always putting it in a way which has a horizon toward open-ended theorization. Maintaining that is absolutely essential for Cultural Studies, at least if it is to remain a critical and deconstructive project. I mean that it is always self-reflectively deconstructing itself; it is always operating on the progressive/regressive movement of the need to go on theorizing. I am not interested in Theory, I am interested in going on theorizing. And that also means that Cultural Studies has to be open to external influences, for example, to the rise of new social movements, to psychoanalysis, to feminism, to cultural differences. Such influences are likely to have, and must be allowed to have, a strong impact on the content, the modes of thought and the theoretical problematics being

used. In that sense, Cultural Studies cannot possibly thrive by isolating itself in academic terms from those external influences. So in all those ways I think there are good reasons, not just personal predilections, for saying that it must remain open-ended. It is theorizing in the post-modern context, if you like, in the sense that it does not believe in the finality of a finished theoretical paradigm.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This article is drawn from interview sessions with Hall conducted by S. Elizabeth Bird, Marilyn Smith, Patrick O'Brien, and Kuan-Hsing Chen (on postmodernism) at the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication in September 1985, and by Cary Nelson, Lawrence Grossberg, and others (on articulation) at the University of Illinois Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory in August 1985. Transcriptions were made by Kuan-Hsing Chen and Michael Greer.

The encoding/decoding model has long been canonical within the field of media analysis and Cultural Studies. However, the specific form in which most people know it—as published in the *Culture, Media, Language* collection in 1980—is only a part of the original (1974) version printed here.¹ In the transition between the two, much was lost. While the later, better-known version focuses mainly on questions of decoding, the original also engages with questions of encoding in relation to literary and cinematic forms of textual analysis, as exemplified in Stuart's lengthy analysis of the codes governing the Western as a genre. Indeed, as he explains at length in a subsequent interview with Justin Lewis and his colleagues at the University of Massachusetts (1994), he was frustrated by the way in which the paper had subsequently come to be interpreted as simply bypassing the need for textual analysis in favor of empirical audience research.² In that interview, he flatly denies that he ever intended to suggest that texts are polysemic to the extent of being completely open to interpretation, and he militantly defends the necessity of serious textual analysis. In his view, this is essential as a method of identifying the internal structure of a text—through which its framing devices construct what he calls its “preferred reading” and its attempt (if only provisionally) to assert their hegemony over the audience. For him, the “preferred reading” is the point where power and discourse intersect in the text, and it is the responsibility of the analyst to determine this structure via careful study of the text itself. In all this, he draws here, much more heavily

than is sometimes realized, on his earlier literary training in close textual analysis.

In this path-clearing exercise (as he conceived his original intervention) he explains that his polemical intent was to “blow out of the water” not only the positivist tradition of conventional mass communications (representing “low flying forms of behaviorism”) but also the abstracted systems theory of Shannon and Weaver, and Norbert Wiener—all of which were quite innocent of the central issue that this paper raises, of *how* meanings are made on both sides of the communicative chain. The paper is best seen as a synthetic model derived from semiology, media theory, and sociology. The semiological influence leads to the emphasis on the key role of the (largely unconscious) linguistic, visual, and cultural codes that underlie the communications process. In a fundamentally transformative reversal, this emphasis shifts the question of misunderstanding from being a marginal kink in a communications process otherwise presumed to be smooth to a central place in the analysis—where differential understandings of any message are seen as the norm. However, the sociological analyses of Frank Parkin, Basil Bernstein, and Pierre Bourdieu, on which Stuart draws, allow him to go much further than to simply consider individual differences of understanding. He thus opens up the exploration of what has elsewhere been called the “systematically distorted” nature of communications, especially in societies where the senders and recipients of mediated messages characteristically come from very different sociocultural backgrounds.³ If the model’s central focus is on class differences in decoding, nonetheless (to return to the discussions in part II) the model of determination in play is a complex one and, following Bourdieu, class is seen principally as a mode of structuration of access to cultural capital—which can only have influence on decoding practices through this intermediate form of determination.

The model certainly has its limitations. It makes a variety of simplifying assumptions—such as that, in a class-structured society like the UK in the 1970s, the media as a whole will generally tend to produce programs structured by the dominant ideological discourse. To that extent it could be argued to conceive of the media as an overly homogenized entity without internal contradictions. Further, in focusing almost exclusively on class as a form of social division, the model fails to incorporate any comparable recognition of the significance of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion as factors that also influence decoding. Moreover, the paper was written in a period when Britain still had an almost exclusively national broadcasting

system and, in the context of today's forms of global media, needs to be supplemented by close attention to a more complex range of transnational and transcultural differences in decodings. However, as he makes clear in the interview already referred to, Stuart always regarded this paper as no more than a work in progress, which he intended to rewrite when time allowed, insisting that "it was never intended as some kind of grand model."⁴ Nonetheless, its importance lies in the way it remapped the terrain of media analysis, providing a generative framework that transformed the common sense of subsequent media studies. Nowadays, it is sometimes argued that, in the world of the new media, some form of "Media Studies 2.0" is required. However, such a presumption rests not only on a technologically determinist perspective but also on an overly simplistic binary divide between the so-called passive couch potatoes of the past (envisioned as slouched in front of their television screens) and today's heroically active and inventive prosumers (who are, conversely, imagined to be sitting attentively and uploading creatively at their computers).⁵ The assumption that nowadays "encoding/decoding" has less to offer us conceptually, simply by virtue of a change in the technologies by means of which messages are generated and consumed, seems eerily similar to the forms of low-flying behaviorism that the model was designed to dislodge.

To place these things in context, it should be noted that the limitations mentioned above concerning encoding/decoding's tendency to conceive of the media in an overly homogenous manner are more directly addressed in a series of Stuart's other papers from the same period, which offer a more differentiated model of the media industries and their relation to structures of economic and political power. For various circumstantial reasons, during the period when Stuart was working on these media-related questions, he was focusing most closely on television. Moreover, in that time in the UK, it was the BBC, rather than the independent commercial television companies, around which political contention clustered most strongly. This meant that, as much as Stuart was attempting to theorize the media, he was necessarily also having to theorize their relation to the state. To achieve this without falling into either a simple-minded Marxist model of the state as a "managing committee for the affairs of the bourgeoisie" or a flaccid liberal endorsement of the state as simply an organ for the expression of the popular will was the key objective. At the same time, as we saw in part II, he was arguing against any form of economic reductionism that would understand ideological superstructures (such as the media) as being mere "reflections"

of the dynamics of the economic base. Hence the key issue he faced was how to formulate a mode of analysis of the media as themselves the “site and stake” of ideological struggle with a relatively autonomous effectivity of their own and how to trace the convoluted contours of their ongoing enmeshments with (and resistances to) state power on different fronts.

The papers in which he develops this position include “External Influences on Broadcasting: The External/Internal Dialectic in Broadcasting—Television’s Double-Bind” (chapter 9 here), first presented at a Manchester University Broadcasting Symposium in 1972.⁶ The key problem these papers address is how to avoid a model of total control of the media by the state or monopoly capital while not falling into a presumption of media pluralism that evades the media’s relations to these structures of power. Stuart’s starting point here (as the chapter subtitle indicates) is to recognize that the very concept of these issues as constituting “external influences” on the media is quite inadequate, insofar as their inscription within a set of close involvements with powerful economic and political institutions is simply their “everyday working context.” Here, just as in his “Structured Communication” essay, Stuart attempts to flesh out what the abstract concept of relative autonomy means in practice, when applied to the institutions of the British media that he was concerned with in the 1970s. He defines the key issue of access in that essay as not so much a matter of better ensuring the occasional participation of minorities, but principally one of analyzing “the systematic over-accessing” of powerful groups and parties who are deemed to have the right to define the issues under debate. Here he talks about the “skewed structure of public access” to the media as a matter not only of which groups and spokespersons get to appear in the media but of who is deemed to have the legitimate power to define whose problems and who has their problems defined for them.

Thus media institutions are seen as neither completely state-controlled nor free and autonomous but inevitably “oriented within” the structures of power that set parameters for their modes of operation. However, he argues, the crucial issue is how to better comprehend “the specific areas of conjuncture and disjuncture” that arise between these different institutions, at particular times, concerning particular genres of programming, and in relation to different types of (more or less contentious) topics.⁷ He is concerned to develop a model of the media that allows us to understand how they can function in different circumstances, with different degrees of relative autonomy from political and economic control, so that the overdeterminations

of power nonetheless allow for the possibility of conflict and contradiction. In these papers he begins to develop a working model of British broadcasting of the period, based on his Gramscian premise that the orientation of broadcasting within a putatively hegemonic ideology will by no means be a “perfectly regulated, fully integrated one-dimensional system.” He insists that this means the media can thus only reproduce a dominant ideology “in all its contradictions,” just as in “Structured Communication” he argues that “contradictions of interest, outlook and interpretation” frequently arise in the complex relationships between media and political elites.⁸

As he notes, because controversy is topical and makes for lively broadcasting, the media are inevitably drawn to what the powerful may well regard as “danger zones.” Therefore, controversial broadcasting operates in the space opened up by the concept of “professional codes” (as deployed in the encoding/decoding paper), where political or economic elites have to concede to the imperatives of the media’s own logic, given that they are themselves dependent on these media, in order to reach a wider audience than they can address directly through their own channels of communication.⁹ We can see how the media regularly become the site of crucial ideological and discursive struggles, whose outcome is by no means always predetermined.

The final chapter in this part, “Culture, the Media, and the ‘Ideological Effect,’” first published in 1977, is a synthetic reflection that brings together the semiological concerns of “Encoding/Decoding” with the theorization of the relative autonomy of the media outlined in “External Influences,” as articulated within a Gramscian model of the processes through which ideological hegemony is constructed. The argument depends (as noted earlier) on the shift from the crude “base/superstructure” model of determination already discussed to a more complex formulation that considers the different levels of social formation as connected in particular ways within determinate historical conditions.

The contribution made by anthropological and structuralist approaches to the analysis of the forms of culture is introduced at an early stage in the argument, with reference to the question of exactly *how* systems of cultural representation work through language. This emphasis (as in the “Hinterland” essay, this volume, chapter 4) meshes closely with the Durkheimian perspective on the modes of classification that are fundamental to social life and to the general practice of signification in the construction of meanings. In its final sections, the paper returns to this question of how the media perform this critical mode of ideological work—in constructing the naturalized forms

of (what passes for) “common sense.” As is shown, this mode of thought—which presents itself as eternal, unchanging, and beyond question—is readily demonstrated to always be a particular historical construct with a changing set of ideological contents. The analysis of how exactly these limits are constructed in different periods is of crucial importance—because it is through this process that the social horizons of potential experience and knowledge are delimited. The emphasis of analysis thus changes from questions of bias in what is said in the media toward an emphasis on the significant absences and the unspoken presumptions constituting that which is deemed too obvious to ever need saying explicitly. This is the crucial ideological effect with which Stuart is ultimately concerned.

This analysis of the ways in which the media operate to disseminate particular connotative codes, classificatory schemes, and forms of representation that together constitute the dominant maps of meaning of a culture is then further developed through an exposition of a Gramscian approach to the construction of hegemony. For Stuart, Gramsci’s critical contribution is to recognize the dynamic quality of the ongoing struggle for hegemony as necessarily operating as a “continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria,” in which dominant social forces always strive to frame and subordinate other cultures and perspectives within their own horizons of thought but can never be certain of success. Thus, hegemony has to be actively secured in the face of both residual and emerging forms of dissent and disaffection. It is within this framework that the media perform their ideological labor in the selective construction of the cultural lexicon of a given age (or in another terminology, the “mythologies” that Roland Barthes anatomized). Thus Stuart is here concerned to establish the exact processes through which the media will tend, systematically, to draw on a limited range of explanatory repertoires and make “preferred” meanings within the framework of the dominant ideologies of the day. However, he conceptualizes the media’s predominant mode of ideological operation in a non-functionalist manner without presuming their ability to impose forms of “false consciousness” on their audiences.

It was during the mid- to late 1970s that Stuart’s concentration on the media as an object of analysis was at its most intense, although he did return to these topics on a variety of occasions, both at the level of methodology, in the magisterial “The Work of Representation,” and in relation to more specific topics.¹⁰ However, it is important to note that simultaneously with these analyses focusing directly on the processes of mediation themselves, Stuart

was also working on a set of analyses concerned specifically with representations of deviance—as manifested in his 1973 essay “Deviance, Politics and the Media.” These issues were further developed in his parallel work on the question of the mediated representation of subcultures.¹¹

One particular thread which connects this period of his work with that considered in the next two sections concerns the ideological centrality of mediated images of race to the rise of what, in his later analysis, he described as the culture of authoritarian populism. The project that later became known as the classic volume *Policing the Crisis* (published in 1978) started life in 1973 as a short pamphlet, *20 Years*, analyzing the media coverage of a series of incidents of street crime, in which the image of black youth and the new terminology of “mugging” gradually became melded together in public consciousness. As we shall see in the introduction to the next part, this cross-over point in Stuart’s work throws light on many of the critical aspects of his investment in interdisciplinarity.¹²

NOTES

- 1 In Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis, eds., *Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980); the original version was finally republished in 2007 in Ann Gray, Jon Campbell, Mark Erikson, Stuart Hanson, and Helen Wood, eds., *CCCS Selected Working Papers*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2007). For a discussion of the paper’s canonical/seminal status, see Michael Gurevitch and Paddy Scannell, “Canonisation Achieved: Stuart Hall’s Encoding/Decoding,” in *Canonic Texts in Media Research*, ed. Elihu Katz, John Peters, Tamar Liebes, and Avril Orloff (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).
- 2 Stuart Hall “Reflections on the Encoding/Decoding Model,” in *Reading/Viewing/Listening*, ed. Jon Cruz and Justin Lewis (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994). The influence of earlier literary and cinematic forms of textual analysis on Stuart’s work in this period (and particularly of “genre theory” as developed in the study of popular cinema) is manifest here. Indeed, what is noticeable is how very much the close-grained analysis of the Western genre that Stuart offers is dependent on exactly the kind of careful attention to the forms of cinematic culture demonstrated in Stuart and Paddy Whannel’s earlier book *The Popular Arts*. Here we see again the way in which a later paradigm often maintains remnants of previous perspectives within it, if in reworked and revitalized forms. In this case, these earlier forms of textual analysis were soon to be reworked in more systematized ways under the influence of semiology.
- 3 Jürgen Habermas, “Systematically Distorted Communications,” in *Recent Sociology No. 2: Patterns of Communicative Behaviour*, ed. Hans Dreitzel (London: Collier Macmillan, 1970).

On this point, concerning language's imbrication in systems of power, see Stuart Hall, "The Structured Communication of Events," in *Obstacles to Communication Symposium* (Paris: UNESCO, 1973), 2–3. In later years, this perspective came to be seen to be closely linked to the work of the Russian linguist Volosinov, on the way in which the "multi-accentuality" of the sign means that political struggles can take place in language itself, with different social forces at times fighting over the definition or meaning of a single word: V. N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Academic Press, 1973).

- 4 Hall, "Reflections on Encoding/Decoding." Although my own empirical work presented in *The Nationwide Audience* (London: British Film Institute, 1980) was developed as a way to operationalize the encoding/decoding model and to test it out in practice, Stuart notes in that same interview that the model itself was still based on what was only a provisional version of the necessary theoretical framework. For my own retrospective auto-critique of the limits of the *Nationwide Audience* research, see David Morley, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992), ch. 4.
- 5 For a militant version of the claim that media studies needs to start from "Year 0" of the digital age, see David Gauntlett, *Media Studies 2.0* (self-pub., Amazon Digital Services, 2017), Kindle. For a critique of idealistic images of new media users, see David Morley, *Media, Modernity and Technology* (London: Comedia/Routledge), ch. 8, "Rhetorics of the Technological Sublime." The term "prosumers" references a form of economic activity in which those who were initially understood merely as passive consumers of commodities come to be seen to take on a more participatory role in the process of production. This idea originates with Alvin Toffler in his influential book *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970), who sees manufacturers gradually increasing their reliance on market research and consumer feedback to the point where the lines between product design and consumption are increasingly blurred. The term was more recently popularized by Henry Jenkins, who applied it particularly to the media as a way of talking about phenomena such as fans of television series being invited by producers to suggest new plotlines for their favorite programs: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).
- 6 The other key papers by Stuart in this respect are "The Structured Communication of Events," Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Paper no. 5, Birmingham University, 1973, and "Television as a Medium and Its Relation to Culture," Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Paper no. 34, Birmingham University, 1975.
- 7 Stuart Hall, "External Influences on Broadcasting: The External/Internal Dialectic in Broadcasting—Television's Double-Bind," in *University of Manchester Broadcasting Symposium: Fourth Symposium on Broadcasting Policy*, ed. F. S. Bradley (University of Manchester, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, February 1972), 7.
- 8 Hall, "Structured Communication," 11–12, 15.

- 9 Evidently, this is a balance of forces that has shifted today, when a variety of media technologies, most notably perhaps Twitter, allow politicians to address the public more directly.
- 10 Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation" and "The Spectacle of the Other," in *Representation and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage/Open University Press, 1997); and Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," in *Silver Linings: Some Strategies for the Eighties*, ed. George Bridges and Rosalind Brunt (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981).
- 11 In Mary MacIntosh and Paul Rock, eds., *Deviance and Social Control* (London: Tavistock, 1973); and see too Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance through Rituals*, Working Papers in Cultural Studies, nos. 7–8 (1975); republished London: Hutchinson, 1976.
- 12 The pamphlet—by the Paul, Jimmy and Mustafa Support Group, *20 Years* (Handsworth, UK: Action Centre, 1973)—was produced in advance of the trial of three young men from Handsworth in Birmingham who had been accused of the newly defined crime of "mugging." For the more developed analysis: Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2013). See also the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Mugging Group, "Some Notes on the Relationship between the Societal Control Culture and the News Media: The Construction of a Law and Order Campaign," in Hall and Jefferson, *Resistance through Rituals*.

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Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse

Two themes have been cited for this colloquy on the significance of television: the highly focused theme concerning the nature of the “televisual language,” and the very general and diffused concern with “cultural policies and programs.” At first sight, these concerns seem to lead in opposite directions: the first toward formal, the second toward societal and policy questions. My aim, however, is to try to hold both concerns within a single framework. My purpose is to suggest that, in the analysis of culture, the interconnection between societal structures and processes and formal or symbolic structures is absolutely pivotal. I propose to organize my reflections around the question of the encoding/decoding moments in the communicative process: and, from this base, to argue that, in societies like ours, communication between the production elites in broadcasting and their audiences is necessarily a form of “systematically distorted communication.” This argument then has a direct bearing on cultural policies, especially those policies of education and so on which might be directed toward “helping the audience to receive the television communication better, more effectively.” I therefore want, for the moment, to retain a base in the semiotic/linguistic approach to “televisual language”: to suggest, however, that this perspective properly intersects, on one side, with social and economic structures, on the other side with what Umberto Eco has recently called “the logic of cultures.”¹ This means that, though I shall adopt a semiotic perspective, I do not regard this as indexing a closed, formal concern with the immanent organization of the television

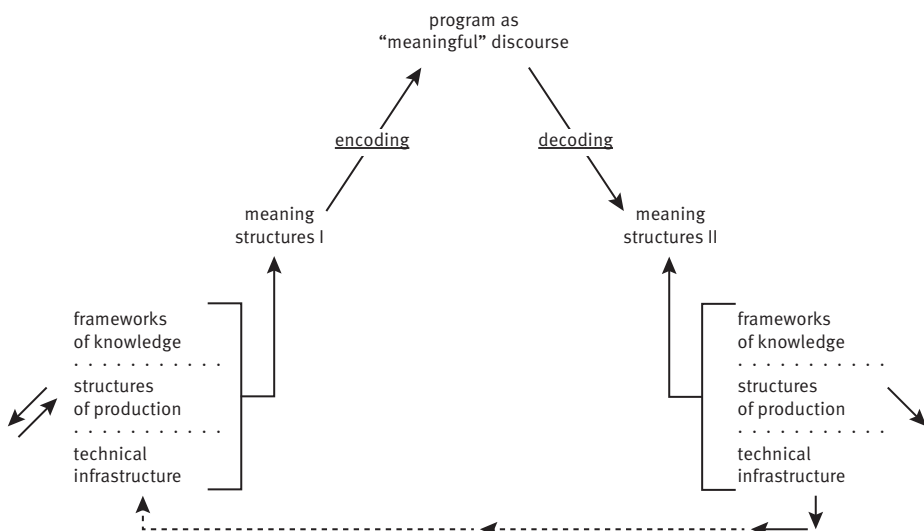
discourse alone. It must also include a concern with the “social relations” of the communicative process, and especially with the various kinds of “competences” (at the production and receiving end) in the use of that language.²

IN HIS PAPER Professor Halloran has properly raised the question of studying “the whole mass communication process,” from the structure of the production of the message at one end to audience perception and “use” at the other.³ This emphasis on “the whole communicative process” is a comprehensive, proper, and timely one. However, it is worth reminding ourselves that there is something distinctive about the product and the practices of production and circulation in communications which distinguishes this from other types of production. The “object” of production practices and structures in television is the production of a message: that is, a sign-vehicle, or rather sign-vehicles of a specific kind, organized, like any other form of communication or language, through the operation of codes, within the syntagmatic chains of a discourse. The apparatus and structures of production issue, at a certain moment, in the form of a symbolic vehicle constituted within the rules of “language.” It is in this “phenomenal form” that the circulation of the “product” takes place. Of course, even the transmission of this symbolic vehicle requires its material substratum: videotape, film, the transmitting and receiving apparatus, etc. It is also in this symbolic form that the reception of the “product,” and its distribution between different segments of the audience, take place. Once accomplished, the translation of that message into societal structures must be made again for the circuit to be completed. Thus, while in no way wanting to limit research “to following only those leads which emerge from content analysis,” we must recognize that the symbolic form of the message has a privileged position in the communicative exchange: and that the moments of “encoding” and “decoding,” though only “relatively autonomous” in relation to the communicative process as a whole, are determinate moments.⁴ The raw historical event cannot in that form be transmitted by, say, a television newscast. It can only be signified within the aural-visual forms of the televisual language. In the moment when the historical event passes under the sign of language, it is subject to all the complex formal “rules” by which language signifies. To put it paradoxically, the event must become a “story” before it can become a communicative event. In that moment, the formal sub-rules of language are “in dominance,” without, of course, subordinating out of existence the his-

torical event so signified, or the historical consequences of the event having been signified in this way. The “message-form” is the necessary form of the appearance of the event in its passage from source to receiver. Thus the transposition into and out of the “message-form” or the meaning-dimension (or mode of exchange of the message) is not a random “moment,” which we can take up or ignore for the sake of convenience or simplicity. The “message-form” is a determinate moment, though, at another level, it comprises the surface-movements of the communications system only, and requires, at another stage, to be integrated into the essential relations of communication of which it forms only a part.

From this general perspective, we may crudely characterize the communicative exchange as follows. The institutional structures of broadcasting, with their networks of production, their organized routines and technical infrastructures, are required to produce the program. Production, here, initiates the message: in one sense, then, the circuit begins here. Of course, the production process is framed throughout by meanings and ideas: knowledge-in-use concerning the routines of production, technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about audience, etc. frame the passage of the program through this production structure. However, though the production structures of television originate the television message, they do not constitute a closed system. They draw topics, treatments, agendas, events, personnel, images of the audience, “definitions of the situation” from the wider sociocultural political system of which they are only a differentiated part. Philip Elliott has expressed this point succinctly in his discussion of the way in which the audience is both the source and receiver of the television message.⁵ Thus circulation and reception are, indeed, “moments” of the production process in television, and are incorporated, via a number of skewed and structured “feed-backs,” back into the production process itself. The consumption or reception of the television message is thus itself a “moment” of the production process, though the latter is “predominant” because it is the “point of departure for the realization” of the message. Production and reception of the television message are, not, therefore, identical, but they are related: they are differentiated moments within the totality formed by the communicative process as a whole.

At a certain point, however, the broadcasting structures must yield an encoded message in the form of a meaningful discourse. The institution-societal relations of production must pass into and through the modes of a language for its product to be “realized.” This initiates a further differentiated



moment, in which the formal rules of discourse and language operate. Before this message can have an “effect” (however defined), or satisfy a “need” or be put to a “use,” it must first be perceived as a meaningful discourse and meaningfully decoded. It is this set of decoded meanings which “have an effect,” influence, entertain, instruct, or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological, or behavioral consequences. In a determinate moment, the structure employs a code and yields a “message”: at another determinate moment, the “message,” via its decodings, issues into a structure. We are now fully aware that this reentry into the structures of audience reception and “use” cannot be understood in simple behavioral terms. Effects, uses, “gratifications” are themselves framed by structures of understanding, as well as social and economic structures which shape its “realization” at the reception end of the chain, and which permit the meanings signified in language to be transposed into conduct or consciousness.

Clearly, what we have called Meanings I and Meanings II—as we see in the diagram above—may not be the same. They do not constitute an “immediate identity.” The codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical. The degrees of symmetry—that is, the degrees of “understanding” and “misunderstanding” in the communicative exchange depend both on the degrees of symmetry/a-symmetry between the position of encoder-producer and that of the decoder-receiver: and also on the degrees of identity/

non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly transmit, interrupt, or systematically distort what has been transmitted. The lack of “fit” between the codes has a great deal to do with the structural differences between broadcasters and audiences, but it also has something to do with the a-symmetry between source and receiver at the moment of transformation into and out of the “message-form.” What is called “distortion” or “misunderstandings” arise precisely from the lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange. Once again, this defines the “relative autonomy” but “determinateness” of the entry and exit of the message in its linguistic/meaning form.

The application of this rudimentary paradigm has already begun to transform our understanding of television “content”: and we are just beginning to see how it might also transform our understanding of audience reception and response as well. Beginnings and endings have been announced in communications research before, so we must be cautious. But there seems some ground for thinking that a new and exciting phase in audience research, of a quite new kind, may be opening up. At either end of the communicative chain, the use of the semiotic paradigm promises to dispel the lingering behaviorism which has dogged mass media research for so long. Though we know the television program is not a behavioral input, like a tap on the kneecap, it seems to have been almost impossible for researchers to conceptualize the communicative process without lapsing back into one or other variant of low-flying behaviorism. We know, as Gerbner has remarked, that representations of violence on the TV screen “are not violence but messages about violence”: but we have continued to research the question of violence as if we were unable to comprehend the epistemological distinction.⁶

Let us take an example from the drama-entertainment area in television and try to show how the recognition that television is a *discourse*, a communicative—not simply a behavioral—event, has an effect on one traditional research area, the television/violence relation.⁷ Take the simple-structure, early (and now children’s) TV Western, modeled on the early Hollywood B-feature *genre* Western: with its clear-cut, good/bad Manichaeian moral universe, its clear social and moral designation of villain and hero, the clarity of its narrative line and development, its iconographical features, its clearly registered climax in the violent shoot-out, chase, personal showdown, street or barroom duel. For long, on both British and American TV, this form constituted the predominant drama-entertainment genre. In quantitative terms, such films/programs contained a high ratio of violent

incidents, deaths, woundings. Whole gangs of men, whole troops of Indians, went down, nightly, to their deaths. Researchers, Hilde Himmelweit among others, have, however, suggested that the structure of the early TV/B-feature Western was so clear-cut, its action so conventionalized and stylized, that most children (boys rather earlier than girls, an interesting finding in itself) soon learned to recognize and “read” it like a “game”: a “cowboys-and-Injuns” game.⁸ It was therefore further hypothesized that Westerns with this clarified structure were less likely to trigger the aggressive imitation of violent behavior or other types of aggressive “acting-out” than other types of programs with a high violence ratio which were not so stylized. But it is worth asking what this recognition of the Western as a “symbolic game” means or implies.

It means that a set of extremely tightly coded rules exist whereby stories of a certain recognizable type, content, and structure can be easily encoded within the Western form. What is more, these “rules of encoding” were so diffused, so symmetrically shared as between producer and audience, that the “message” was likely to be decoded in a manner highly symmetrical to that in which it had been encoded. This reciprocity of codes is, indeed, precisely what is entailed in the notion of stylization or “conventionalization,” and the presence of such reciprocal codes is, of course, what defines or makes possible the existence of a genre. Such an account, then, takes the encoding/decoding moments properly into account, and the case appears an unproblematic one.

But let us take the argument a little further. Why and how do areas of conventionalization arise (and disappear)? The Western tale, of course, arose out of—though it quickly ceased to conform to—the real historical circumstances of the opening up of the American West. In part, what the production of the Western genre codes achieved was the transformation of a real historical West, selectively, into the symbolic or mythical “West.” But why did this transformation of history into myth, by the intervention of a stylized set of codes, occur, for our societies and times, in relation to just this historical situation? This process, whereby the rules of language and discourse intervene, at a certain moment, to transform and “naturalize” a specific set of historical circumstances, is one of the most important test cases for any semiology which seeks to ground itself in historical realities. We know, and can begin to sketch, the elements which defined the operation of codes on history. This is *the* archetypal American story, America of the frontier, of the expanding and unsettled West, the “virgin land” before law and society fully settle in, still closer to Nature than to Law and Order.

It is the land of *men*, of independent men, isolated in their confrontations with Nature or Evil: and thus stories of masculine prowess, skill, power, and destiny: of men “in the open air,” driven to their destinies by inner compulsion and by external necessity—by Fate, or by “the things a man just has to do”: and thus a land where morality is inner-centered, and clarified, i.e., fully objectivated not in speech but in the facticities of gesture, gait, dress, “gear,” appearance. A land where women are either subordinate (whether as “little home-bodies” or ladies from “back East”): or, if somewhat more liberated—e.g., good/bad saloon girls—destined to be inadvertently and conveniently shot or otherwise disposed of in the penultimate reel. If we wanted to make a strict semiological analysis, we could trace the specific codes which were used to signify these elements within the surface-structures of particular films, plots, programs. What is clear is that, from this deep-structured set of codes, extremely limited in its elements, a great number of surface events and transformations were accomplished: for a time, in film and television, this deep-structure provided the taken-for-granted story-of-all-stories, the paradigm action-narrative, the perfect myth.

In the semiotic perspective, of course, it is just this surface variety on the basis of limited transformations which would define the Western as an object of study. Nor would the transformations which we have witnessed since the early days be at all surprising. We can see and follow at least the basic methods which would be required for us to account for the transformation of this simple-structure Western into the psychological Western, the baroque Western (*The Left Handed Gun?*), the “end-of-the-West” Western, the comic Western, the “spaghetti” Western, even the Japanese and Hong Kong Western, the “parody” Western (*Butch Cassidy?*), paradoxically, the return-of-violence Western (*The Wild Bunch*), or the domestic, soap-opera Western (the TV series the *Virginian*), or the Latin American revolution Western. The opening sequence of a film like *Hud*—one of the moments when the “heroic” West begins to pass into the “decline of the West,” in which the “hero” appears driving through that familiar landscape in a Cadillac, or where the horse appears in the back of an Oldsmobile truck—far from indexing the breakup of the code, shows precisely how an opposite meaning can be achieved by the reversal of a limited number of “lexical items” in the code, in order to achieve a transformation in the meaning.

From this perspective, the prolonged preoccupation of mass media researchers with the issue of violence in relation to the Western film appears more and more arbitrary and bizarre. If we refuse, for a moment, to bracket

and isolate the issue of violence, or the violent episode from its matrix in the complex codes governing the genre, how many other, crucial kinds of meaning were in fact transmitted while researchers were busy counting the bodies? This is not to say that violence was not an element in the TV Western, nor to suggest that there were not quite complex codes regulating the ways in which violence could be signified. It is to insist that what audiences were receiving was not “violence” but messages about violence. Once this intervening term has been applied, certain consequences for research and analysis follow: ones which irrevocably break up the smooth line of continuity offering itself as a sort of “natural logic,” whereby connections could be traced between shoot-outs at the OK Corral and delinquents knocking over old ladies in the street in Scunthorpe.

The violent element in the narrative structure of the basic Western—shoot-out, brawl, ambush, bank raid, fistfight, wounding, duel, or massacre—like any other semantic unit in a structured discourse cannot signify anything on its own. It can only signify in terms of the structured meanings of the message as a whole. Further, its signification depends on its relation—or the sum of the relations of similarity and difference—with other elements or units. Olivier Burgelin has long ago, and definitively, reminded us that the violent or wicked acts of a villain only mean something in relation to the presence/absence of good acts:

We clearly cannot draw any valid inferences from a simple enumeration of his vicious acts (it makes no difference whether there are ten or twenty of them) for the crux of the matter obviously is: what meaning is conferred on the vicious acts by the fact of their juxtaposition with the single good action? . . . One could say that the meaning of what is frequent is only revealed by opposition to what is rare. . . . The whole problem is therefore to identify this rare or missing item. Structural analysis provides a way of approaching this problem which traditional content analysis does not.⁹

Indeed, so tightly constructed was the rule-governed moral economy of the simple-structure Western that one good act by a “villain” not only could, but apparently *had to*, lead to some modification or transformation of his end. Thus, the presence of numerous bad-violent acts (marked)/absence of any good-redeeming act (unmarked) = unrepentant villain; this in turns means that he can be shot down, without excuse, in the final episode and makes a brief and “bad” or undistinguished death, provided that the

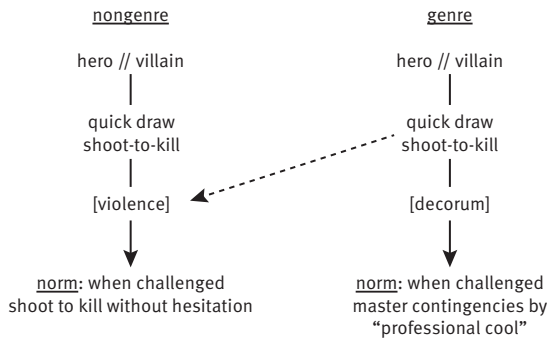
hero does not shoot the villain in the back, or unawares, and does not draw first. *But*, the presence of bad-violent acts (marked)/presence of single good-redeeming act (marked) also can = possible salvation or regeneration of the villain, deathbed reconciliation with hero or former cronies, restitution to wronged community, at the very least, lingering and “good” death. What, we may now ask, is the meaning of “violence” when it only appears and signifies anything within the tightly organized moral economy of the Western?

We have been arguing (a) the violent act or episode in a Western cannot signify in isolation, outside the structured field of meanings which is the film or program; (b) it signifies only in relation to the other elements, and in terms of the rules and conventions which govern their combination. We must now add (c) that the meaning of such a violent act or episode cannot be fixed, single, and unalterable but must be capable of signifying different values depending on how and with what it is articulated. As the signifying element, among other elements, in a discourse, it remains polysemic. Indeed, the way it is structured in its combination with other elements serves to delimit its meanings within that specified field, and effects a “closure,” so that a preferred meaning is suggested. There can never be only one, single, univocal, and determined meaning for such a lexical item, but, depending on how its integration within the code has been accomplished, its possible meanings will be organized within a scale which runs from dominant to subordinate. And this of course has consequences for the other, the reception end of the communicative chain: there can be no law to ensure that the receiver will take the preferred or dominant meaning of an episode of violence in precisely the way in which it has been encoded by the producer.

Typically, the isolation of the “violent” elements from the Western by researchers was made on the presumption that all the other elements—setting, action, characters, iconography, movement, conduct and appearance, moral structure, and so on—were present as so many inert supports for the violence: in order to warrant or endorse the violent act. It is now perfectly clear that the violence might be present only in order to warrant or endorse the character. We can thus sketch out more than one possible path of meaning through the way in which the so-called “content” is organized by the codes. Take that ubiquitous semantic item of the simple Western: hero draws his gun, faster than anyone else (he seems always to have known how), and shoots the villain with bull’s-eye aim. To use Gerbner’s term, what norm, proposition, or cultural signification is here signified?¹⁰ It is possible to

decode this item thus: “The hero figure knows how to draw his gun faster, and shoot better than his enemy: when confronted by the villain, he shoots him dead with a single shot.” This might be called a “behavioral” or “instrumental” interpretation. But—research suggests—this directly behavioral “message” has been stylized and conventionalized by the intervention of a highly organized set of codes and genre-conventions (a code-of-codes, or meta-code). The intervention of the codes appears to have the effect of neutralizing one set of meanings, while setting another in motion. Or, to put it better, the codes effect a transformation and displacement of the same denotative content-unit from one reference-code to another, thereby effecting a transformation in the signification. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann have argued that “habitualization” or “sedimentation” serves to routinize certain actions or meanings, so as to free the foreground for new, innovative meanings.¹¹ Turner and others have shown how ritual conventions redistribute the focus of ritual performances from one domain (e.g., the emotional or personal) to another (e.g., the cognitive, cosmological, or social) domain.¹² Freud, both in his analysis of ritualization in symptom-formation and in the dreamwork, has shown the pivotal position of condensation and displacement in the encoding of latent materials and meanings through manifest symbolizations.¹³ Bearing this in mind, we may speculatively formulate an alternative connotative “reading” for the item. “To be a certain kind of man (hero) means the ability to master all contingencies by the demonstration of a practiced and professional ‘cool.’” This reading transposes the same (denotative) content from its instrumental-behavioral connotative reference to that of decorum, conduct, the idiom and style of (masculine) action. The “message” or the “proposition,” now, would be understood, not as a message about “violence” but as a message about conduct, or even about professionalism, or perhaps even about the relation of professionalism to character. And here we recall Robert Warshow’s intuitive observation that, fundamentally, the Western is not “about” violence but about codes of conduct.¹⁴

I have been trying to suggest—without being able to take the example very far—how an attention to the symbolic/linguistic/coded nature of communications, far from boxing us into the closed and formal universe of signs, precisely opens out into the area where cultural content, of the most resonant but “latent” kind, is transmitted: and especially the manner in which the interplay of codes and content serves to displace meanings from one frame to another, and thus to bring to the surface in “disguised” forms the repressed content of a culture. It is worth, in this connection, bearing in



mind Eco's observation that "semiology shows us the universe of ideologies arranged in codes and sub-codes within the universe of 'signs.'"¹⁵ My own view is that, if the insights won by the advances in a semiotic perspective are not to be lost within a new kind of formalism, it is increasingly in this direction that it must be pushed.¹⁶

Let us turn, now, to a different area of programming, and a different aspect of the operation of codes. The televisual sign is a peculiarly complex one, as we know. It is a visual sign with strong, supplementary aural-verbal support. It is one of the iconic signs, in Peirce's sense, that, whereas the form of the written sign is arbitrary in relation to its signified, the iconic sign reproduces certain elements of the signified in the form of the signifier. As Peirce says, it "possesses some of the properties of the thing or object represented."¹⁷ Actually, since the iconic sign translates a three-dimensional world into two representational planes, its "naturalism" with respect to the referent lies not so much at the encoding side of the chain, but rather in terms of the learned perceptions with which the viewer decodes the sign. Thus, as Eco has convincingly argued, iconic signs "look like objects in the real world," to put it crudely (e.g., the photograph or drawing of a cow, and the animal cow), because they "reproduce the conditions of perception in the receiver."¹⁸ These conditions of "recognition" in the viewer constitute some of the most fundamental perceptual codes which all culture-members share. How? Because these perceptual codes are so widely shared, denotative visual signs probably give rise to fewer "misunderstandings" than linguistic ones. A lexical inventory of the English language would throw up thousands of words which the ordinary speaker could not denotatively comprehend: but provided enough "information" is given, culture-members would be able or

competent to decode, denotatively, a much wider range of visual signifiers. In this sense, and at the denotative level, the visual sign is probably a more universal one than the linguistic sign. Whereas, in societies like ours, linguistic competence is very unequally distributed as between different classes and segments of the population (predominantly, by the family and the education system): what we might call “visual competence,” at the denotative level, is more universally diffused. (It is worth reminding ourselves of course, that it is not, in fact, “universal,” and that we are dealing with a spectrum: there are kinds of visual representation, short of the “purely abstract,” which create all kinds of visual puzzles for ordinary viewers: e.g., cartoons, certain kinds of diagrammatic representation, representations which employ unfamiliar conventions, types of photographic or cinematic cutting and editing, etc.) It is also true that the iconic sign may support “mis-readings” simply because it is so “natural,” so “transparent.” Mistakes may arise here, not because we as viewers cannot literally decode the sign (it is perfectly obvious what it is a picture of), but because we are tempted, by its very “naturalization” to “misread” the image for the thing it signifies.¹⁹ With this important proviso, however, we would be surprised to find that the majority of the television audience had much difficulty in literally or denotatively identifying what the visual signs they see on the screen refer to or signify. Whereas most people require a lengthy process of education in order to become relatively competent users of the language of their speech community, they seem to pick up its visual-perceptual codes at a very early age, without formal training, and are quickly competent in its use.

The visual sign is, however, also a connotative sign. And it is so preeminently within the discourses of modern mass communication. The level of connotation of the visual sign, of its contextual reference, of its position in the various associative fields of meanings, is, precisely the point where the denoted sign intersects with the deep semantic structures of a culture, and takes on an ideological dimension. In the advertising discourse, for example, we might say that there is almost no “purely denotative” communication. Every visual sign in advertising “connotes” a quality: a situation, value, or inference which is present as an implication or implied meaning, depending on the connotational reference. We are all probably familiar with Barthes’s example of the sweater, which, in the rhetoric of advertising and fashion, always connotes, at least, “a warm garment” or “keeping warm,” and thus by farther elaboration, “the coming of winter” or “a cold day.” In the specialized sub-codes of fashion, sweater may connote “a fashionable style of *haute*

couture” or, alternatively, “an informal style of dress.” But set against the right background, and positioned in the romantic sub-code, it may connote “long autumn walk in the woods.”²⁰ Connotational codes of this order are, clearly, structured enough to signify, but they are more “open” or “open-ended” than denotative codes. What is more, they clearly contract relations with the universe of ideologies in a culture, and with history and ethnography. These connotative codes are the “linguistic” means by which the domains of social life—the segmentations of culture, power, and ideology—are made to signify. They refer to the “maps of meaning” into which any culture is organized, and those “maps of social reality” have the whole range of social meanings, practices and usages, power and interest, “written in” to them. Connotted signifiers, Barthes has reminded us, “have a close communication with culture, knowledge and history; and it is through them, so to speak, that the environmental world invades the linguistic and semantic system. They are, if you like, the ‘fragments of ideology.’”²¹

The denotative level of the televisual sign may be bounded within certain, very complex but limited or “closed” codes. But its connotative level, though bounded, remains open, subject to the formation, transformation, and decay of history and fundamentally polysemic: any such sign is potentially mappable into more than one connotative configuration. “Polysemy” must not, however, be confused with pluralism. Connotative codes are not equal among themselves. Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its segmentations, its classifications of the social, cultural, and political world, upon its members. There remains a *dominant cultural order*, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested. This question of the “structure of dominance” in a culture is an absolutely crucial point. We may say, then, that the different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into connotative domains of *dominant or preferred meanings*. New, problematic, or troubling things and events, which breach our expectancies and run counter to our “common-sense constructs,” to our “taken-for-granted” knowledge of social structures, must be assigned to their connotational domains before they can be said to “make sense”: and the most common way of “mapping them” is to assign the new within some domain or other of the existing “maps of problematic social reality.” We say “dominant,” not “determined,” because it is always possible to order, classify, assign, and decode an event within more than one “mapping.” But we say “dominant” because there exists a pattern of “preferred readings,” and these mappings both have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized.²² The

domains of “preferred mappings” have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings: practices and beliefs, the everyday knowledge of social structures, of “how things work for all practical purposes in this culture,” the rank order of power and interest, and a structure of legitimations and sanctions. Thus, to clarify a “misunderstanding” at the denotative level, we need primarily to refer to the immanent world of the sign and its codes. But to clarify and resolve “misunderstandings” at the level of connotation, we must refer, *through* the codes, to the rules of social life, of history and life situation, or of economic and political power, and, ultimately, of ideology. Further, since these connotational mappings are “structured in dominance” but not closed, the communicative process consists, not in the unproblematic assignment of every visual item to its position within a set of prearranged codes, but in *performative rules*: rules of competence and use, of logics-in-use, which seek to *enforce* or *prefer* one semantic domain over another; and which rule items into and out of their appropriate meaning-sets. Formal semiology has too often neglected this level of interpretive work, though this forms in fact the deep-structure of a great deal of broadcast time in television, especially in the political and other “sensitive areas” of programming. In speaking of dominant meanings, then, we are not simply talking about a one-sided process, which governs how any event will be signified. (We might think, for example, of the recent coup in Chile.) It also consists of the “work” required to enforce, win plausibility for, and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the dominant definition in which it has been connotatively signified. Dr. Terni remarked, in his paper, that “by the word reading we mean not only the capacity to identify and decode a certain number of signs, but also the subjective capacity to put them into a creative relation between themselves and with other signs: a capacity which is, by itself, the condition for a complete awareness of one’s total environment.”²³

Our only quarrel here is with the notion of “subjective capacity,” as if the denotative reference of the televisual sign is an objective process, but the connotational and connective level is an individualized and private matter. Quite the opposite seems to us to be the case. The televisual process takes “objective” (i.e., systemic) responsibility precisely for the relations which disparate signs contract with one another, and thus continually delimits and prescribes into what “awareness of one’s total environment” these items are arranged.

This brings us, then, to the key question of “misunderstandings” between the encoders and decoders of the television message: and thus, by a long but

necessary detour, to the matter of “cultural policies” designed to “facilitate better communication,” to “make communication more effective.” Television producers or “encoders,” who find their message failing to “get across,” are frequently concerned to straighten out the kinks in the communicative chain, and thus to facilitate the “effectiveness” of their messages. A great deal of research has been devoted to trying to discover how much of the message the audience retains or recalls. At the denotative level (if we can make the analytic distinction for the moment), there is no doubt that some “misunderstandings” exist, though we have no real idea how widespread this is. And we can see possible explanations for it. The viewer does not “speak the language,” figuratively if not literally: he or she cannot follow the complex logic of argument or exposition; or the concepts are too alien; or the editing (which arranges items within an expository logic or “narrative,” and thus in itself proposes connections between discrete things) is too swift, truncated, or sophisticated, etc. And so on. At another level, encoders also mean that their audience has “made sense” of the message in a way different from that intended. What they really mean is that viewers are not operating within the dominant or preferred code. This ideally is the perfectly transparent communication. Instead, what they have to confront is the fact of “systematically distorted communication.”

In recent years, discrepancies of this kind are usually accounted for in terms of individually “aberrant” readings, attributed to “selective perception.” “Selective perception” is the door via which, in recent research, a residual pluralism is reserved within the sphere of a highly structured, a-symmetrical cultural operation. Of course, there will always be individual, private, variant readings. But my own tentative view is that “selective perception” is almost never as selective, random, or privatized as the concept suggests. The patterns exhibit more structuring and clustering than is normally assumed. Any new approach to audience studies via the concept of “decoding” would have to begin with a critique of “selective perception” theory.

Umberto Eco has recently pointed to another, intermediary, level of structuration, between competence in the dominant code and “aberrant” individual readings: that level provided by subcultural formations. But, since subcultures are, by definition, differentiated articulations within a culture, it is more useful to specify this mediation within a somewhat different framework.²⁴

The very general typology sketched below is an attempt to reinterpret the notion of “misunderstandings” (which we find inadequate) in terms of certain broadly defined societal perspectives which audiences might adopt

toward the televisual message. It attempts to apply Gramsci's work on "hegemonic" and "corporate" ideological formations and Frank Parkin's recent work on types of meaning systems.²⁵ I should like now (adapting Parkin's schema) to put into discussion four "ideal-type" positions from which decodings of mass communications by the audience can be made; and thus to re-present the commonsense notion of "misunderstandings" in terms of a theory of "systematically distorted communications."²⁶

Literal or denotative "errors" are relatively unproblematic. They represent a kind of noise in the channel. But "misreadings" of a message at the connotative or contextual level are a different matter. They have, fundamentally, a societal, not a communicative, basis. They signify, at the "message" level the structural conflicts, contradictions, and negotiations of economic, political, and cultural life.

The first position we want to identify is that of the dominant or hegemonic code. (There are, of course, many different codes and sub-codes required to produce an event within the dominant code.) When the viewer takes the connoted meaning from, say, a television newscast or current affairs program, full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference-code in which it has been coded, we might say that the viewer is operating inside the dominant code. This is the ideal-typical case of "perfectly transparent communication," or as close as we are likely to come to it for all practical purposes.

Next (here we are amplifying Parkin's model), we would want to identify the professional code. This is the code (or set of codes, for we are here dealing with what might be better called meta-codes) which the professional broadcasters employ when transmitting a message which has already been signified in a hegemonic manner. The professional code is "relatively independent" of the dominant code, in that it applies criteria and operations of its own, especially those of a technico-practical nature. The professional code, however, operates within the "hegemony" of the dominant code. Indeed, it serves to reproduce the dominant definitions precisely by bracketing the hegemonic quality, and operating with professional codings which relate to such questions as visual quality, news and presentational values, televisual quality, "professionalism," etc. The hegemonic interpretation of the politics of Northern Ireland, or the Chilean coup, or the Industrial Relations Bill are given by political elites: the particular choice of presentational occasions and formats, the selection of personnel, the choice of images, the "staging" of debates, etc. are selected by the operation of the professional code.²⁷ How the

broadcasting professionals are able both to operate with “relatively autonomous” codes of their own, while acting in such a way as to reproduce (not without contradiction) the hegemonic signification of events is a complex matter which cannot be further spelled out here. It must suffice to say that the professionals are linked with the defining elites not only by the institutional position of broadcasting itself as an “ideological apparatus,” but more intimately by the structure of *access* (i.e., the systematic “over-accessing” of elite personnel and “definitions of the situation” in television).²⁸ It may even be said that the professional codes serve to reproduce hegemonic definitions specifically by not overtly biasing their operations in their direction: ideological reproduction therefore takes place here inadvertently, unconsciously, “behind men’s backs.” Of course, conflicts, contradictions, and even “misunderstandings” regularly take place between the dominant and the professional significations and their signifying agencies.

The third position we would identify is that of the *negotiated code* or position. Majority audiences probably understand quite adequately what has been dominantly defined and professionally signified. The dominant definitions, however, are hegemonic precisely because they represent definitions situations and events which are “in dominance,” and which are *global*. Dominant definitions connect events, implicitly or explicitly, to grand totalizations, to the great syntagmatic views-of-the-world: they take “large views” of issues; they relate events to “the national interest” or to the level of geopolitics, even if they make these connections in truncated, inverted, or mystified ways. The definition of a “hegemonic” viewpoint is (a) that it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe of possible meanings of a whole society or culture; and (b) that it carries with it the stamp of legitimacy—it appears coterminous with what is “natural,” “inevitable,” and “taken for granted” about the social order. Decoding within the *negotiated version* contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations, while, at a more restricted, situational level, it makes its own ground rules, operating with “exceptions” to the rule. It accords the privileged position to the dominant definition of events, while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to “local conditions,” to its own more *corporate* positions. This negotiated version of the dominant ideology is thus shot through with contradictions, though these are only on certain occasions brought to full visibility. Negotiated codes operate through what we might call particular or situated logics: and these logics arise from the differential position of

those who occupy this position in the spectrum, and from their differential and unequal relation to power. The simplest example of a negotiated code is that which governs the response of a worker to the notion of an Industrial Relations Bill limiting the right to strike, or to arguments for a wages freeze. At the level of the national-interest economic debate, he may adopt the hegemonic definition, agreeing that “we must all pay ourselves less in order to combat inflation,” etc. This, however, may have little or no relation to his willingness to go on strike for better pay and conditions, or to oppose the Industrial Relations Bill at the level of his shop floor or union organization. We suspect that the great majority of so-called “misunderstandings” arise from the disjunctures between hegemonic-dominant encodings and negotiated-corporate decodings. It is just these mismatches in the levels which most provoke defining elites and professionals to identify a “failure in communications.”

Finally, it is possible for a viewer perfectly to understand both the literal and connotative inflection given to an event, but to determine to decode the message in a globally contrary way. He detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference. This is the case of viewer who listens to a debate on the need to limit wages, but who “reads” every mention of “the national interest” as “class interest.” He is operating with what we must call an *oppositional code*. One of the most significant political moments (they also coincide with crisis-points within the broadcasting organizations themselves for obvious reasons) is the point when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading.

The question of cultural policies now falls, awkwardly, into place. When dealing with social communications, it is extremely difficult to identify as a neutral, educational goal the task of “improving communications” or of “making communications more effective,” at any rate once one has passed beyond the strictly denotative level of the message. The educator or cultural policy maker is performing one of his most partisan acts when he colludes with the re-signification of real conflicts and contradictions as if they were simply kinks in the communicative chain. Denotative mistakes are not structurally significant. But connotative and contextual “misunderstandings” are, or can be, of the highest significance. To interpret what are in fact essential elements in the systematic distortions of a socio-communications system as if they are technical faults in transmission is to misread a deep-structure process for a surface phenomenon. The decision to intervene in

order to make the hegemonic codes of dominant elites more effective and transparent for the majority audience is not a technically neutral but a political one. To “misread” a political choice as a technical one represents a type of unconscious collusion with the dominant interests, a form of collusion to which social science researchers are all too prone. Though the sources of such mystification are both social and structural, the actual process is greatly facilitated by the operation of discrepant codes. It would not be the first time that scientific researchers had “unconsciously” played a part in the reproduction of hegemony, not by openly submitting to it, but simply by operating the “professional bracket.”

NOTES

- 1 Umberto Eco, “Does the Public Harm Television?,” paper for Italia Prize Seminar, Venice, 1973.
- 2 See Dell Hymes’s critique of transformational approaches to language, via concepts of “performance” and “competence”: “On Communicative Competence,” in *Sociolinguistics*, ed. J. B. Pride and Janet Holmes (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972).
- 3 J. D. Halloran, “Understanding Television,” paper for the Council of Europe Colloquy on “Understanding Television,” University of Leicester, 1973.
- 4 Halloran, “Understanding Television.”
- 5 Philip Elliott, “Uses and Gratifications: A Critique and a Sociological Alternative,” unpublished paper, Centre for Mass Communications Research, University of Leicester, 1973.
- 6 George Gerbner et al., *Violence in Drama: A Study of Trends and Symbolic Functions* (Philadelphia: Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 1970).
- 7 This example is more fully discussed in part 2, Alan Shuttleworth, Marina Carmargo, Angela Lloyd, and Stuart Hall, “New Approaches to Content,” in *Violence in the TV Drama-Series*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: Report to Home Office Inquiry into TV Violence, forthcoming.
- 8 Hilde Himmelweit, “TV and the Child,” *Universities and Left Review* 6 (1959).
- 9 Olivier Burgelin, “Structural Analysis and Mass Communications,” *Studies in Broadcasting* [Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai] 6 (1968).
- 10 For “proposition-analysis,” George Gerbner, “Ideological Perspectives and Political Tendencies in News Reporting,” *Journalism Quarterly* 41 (1964); Evelyne Sullerot, “Etude de Presse . . .,” *Les Temps modernes* 20, no. 226 (1965); and for “norm-analysis,” George Gerbner in *Violence Mass the Media*, Task Force Report to Eisenhower Commission on Causes and Prevention of Violence, US Printing Office, 1969.
- 11 Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1971).

- 12 V. W. Turner, *The Ritual Process* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).
- 13 Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 4, *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)* (London: Hogarth Press, 1952).
- 14 Robert Warshow, *Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre and Other Aspects of Popular Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1962).
- 15 Umberto Eco, "Articulations of the Cinematic Code," *Cinemantics* 1 (1970).
- 16 For developments of this argument, Stuart Hall, "Determinations of News Photographs," *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 3 (1972); and Hall, "Open and Closed Uses of Structuralism," Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Occasional Paper, 1973.
- 17 C. S. Peirce, *Speculative Grammar*, bk. 2, vol. 3 of Peirce's *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1932).
- 18 Eco, "Articulations of the Cinematic Code."
- 19 Hall, "Determinations of News Photographs."
- 20 Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 1 (1971).
- 21 Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967).
- 22 Hall, "Determinations of News Photographs," and more generally Stuart Hall, "Deviance, Politics and the Media," in Mary McIntosh and Paul Rock (eds.), *Deviance and Social Control* (London: Tavistock, 1974).
- 23 P. Terni, "Memorandum," Council of Europe Colloquy on "Understanding Television," University of Leicester, 1973.
- 24 Eco, "Does the Public Harm Television?"
- 25 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971); and Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order* (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1971).
- 26 See Jürgen Habermas, "Systematically Distorted Communications," in *Recent Sociology* 2, ed. H. P. Dretzel (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1970).
- 27 "External Influences on Broadcasting: The External/Internal Dialectic in Broadcasting—Television's Double-Bind," in this volume.
- 28 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in his *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971).

External Influences on Broadcasting: The External/Internal Dialectic in Broadcasting— Television's Double-Bind

In this paper, I try to expand a proposition which seems to me obvious and true, but which is widely neglected and repressed. In Britain, the broadcasting institutions have a great deal of formal autonomy from the state and government: but their ultimate authority to broadcast derives from the state and, in the last instance, it is to the state that they are responsible. That part of the proposition is probably not contentious: but what I consider its necessary corollary probably is. The broadcasting institutions exercise a wide measure of editorial autonomy in their programs: but ultimately they operate within the mode of reality of the state, and their program content is, in the last instance, governed by the dominant ideological perspective and is oriented within its hegemony. What are usually understood as “external influences on broadcasting” constitute in fact the everyday working context for broadcasting: the study of such specific “influences” therefore provides a quite inadequate model for examining the mediations between broadcasting and power. In recent months the play of influences upon broadcasting has become more overt. But this has more to do with a shift in the context within which the broadcasters operate, and the shifting visibility of broadcasting as a social problem, than with a basic change in the status and position of broadcasting.

Where controversial issues are concerned, there are always distinct patterns and swings in the structure of public attention. This is the “social visibility” or “social history” of social problems. Broadcasting, like the other mass media, exhibits this pattern to a striking degree. The issue was first

focused in the setting of Germany in the 1930s. It concerned the use of propaganda to legitimate and win consent for fascism among the German people. The radio/fascism debate was reproduced with respect to the cinema, and has been repeated in television. In each phase, issues of the widest social and political significance have been focused through—and displaced on to—the debate about the media. In essence, the “German” debate was about the fragmentation of social institutions under the impact of fascism: that was a debate about fascism and “mass society.” In the forties and fifties, media research was colonized within American social science. It concentrated on short-term effects, measurable behavioral influences of media on social life, employing a reduced model of “influence”: in theory, positivistic, in method, quantitative. But its significant findings about the role of “personal influence” or of “cosmopolitans” and “locals” were also penetrated by a larger issue: was America a “pluralist” society, and in so-called pluralist societies did regional, familial, neighborhood, and small-group networks provide effective “countervailing forces” against the impact of the media? The broad tendency of this phase of research was to return an answer to this question in the form of a cautious “yes.” That phase, too, is passing. With the breakup of the pluralist consensus, and the resumption of open societal conflict, the media have once again—in the United States, and increasingly elsewhere—been placed squarely in the center of controversy. Social scientific research has done something to refine our notions about the media’s relation to society, but it has neither pacified public anxiety nor adequately put the problems which that relationship posed. The ambience of “value-neutral” research has provided an opportunity for disguised ideological debate in non-ideological societies—but only at the cost of fatally repressing the intrinsic political dimension of the problem.

Events have thus placed the media once more on the agenda. We are in the middle of yet another cycle of public discontent. The impact of this controversy on the position and morale of the broadcasters is all too visible. But the reasons for its re-emergence are not often clearly defined. I therefore offer a brief summary of the forces and trends, as I see them, which are transforming broadcasting’s working context, and which have rendered the hidden constraints on broadcasting visible.

1. There is the highly *monopolistic structure* of modern communications systems, whether state, semi-state, or commercial in form.
2. The *bureaucratic character* of the broadcasting institutions. Their size, complexity, self-recruiting features, and institutional motives appear “closed.”

Especially where, as in Britain, the lines of executive influence are mediated by intervening “buffer-state” organizations like the BBC or the Independent Television Authority, with widely autonomous powers; these institutions appear “irresponsible.” Their relative autonomy veils and mystifies the structure of constraints. The “logics” by which such institutions function are therefore only partly visible in their programs and day-to-day operations.

3. The *unilateral* nature of modern broadcasting. Radio and television are essentially forms of one-way transmission, in which small professional elites speak to widely dispersed and heterogeneous audiences. Feedback (by complaints or switching off) is weak and ineffective. The favored types of “feedback”—audience research, viewing figures, and *Talkback*-style programs—serve the interests of broadcasters, not audiences. They enable the broadcasters to “win consent” more effectively for their products in the public arena.

4. The growing anxiety about the media’s power to *influence opinion, to form attitudes, and to undermine orthodoxies*. A good deal of “scapegoating” of the media is in evidence here. If Britain is indeed becoming morally more “permissive,” television may have played a part in selectively accelerating this process but cannot itself be primarily responsible for such a shift in moral climate. Yet by giving instant visibility to such deeply structured trends, broadcasting draws the fire of critics on all sides to itself. Traditional research is of little help here. It measures short-term, direct influences, swift changes of hearts and minds. The public is concerned with real but more tangible processes: the media’s role in shaping the secondary environment and in providing the essential contextual knowledge about the situations in which social action and conflict unfold, their influence on the *ethos* in which public opinion crystallizes and policy decisions are taken, their power to establish and sustain a limited range of prevailing definitions of problematic events: their capacity to transmit “pictures of the world,” action-images, scenarios of conflict. In highly segregated, socially differentiated societies, there can be little doubt that broadcasting does crucially transmit the essential knowledge about unfamiliar situations and events to people who have literally no alternative access to them. What the general public knows about Ulster or Bangladesh it knows essentially from the media. What the public suspects is that such knowledge is not “neutral”—as Kenneth Burke has said, it is virtually impossible in social communication to identify social actors and name an action without also nominating an attitude toward them.

5. The special interest, and the discretionary power, of the elites—politicians, government, experts, institutional spokesmen, interest groups—to “*corner the market in favorable communications*.” The growing practice of news management, the spread of the public relations or “impression-management” industries, and the role of the image makers in politics are aspects of the same phenomenon.

6. The fear that the media are *undermining social and moral conventions*. This fear appears in the very moment of a widespread and rapid polarization in the moral-social consensus. There is a hidden political dimension to this so-called “moral” argument: the emergence of the underground, the moral backlash it engendered, and the accompanying mobilization of legal sanctions and social control are directly related to politics and the defense of the social order. In this domain, the media are assailed by both sides—by the moral entrepreneurs, who believe that they erode public authority and moral deference, and by the libertarians who believe the media provide the last bastion of bourgeois philistinism.

7. The pivotal role of the media in *defining issues* of national significance on which opinion is divided. This includes such issues as the position of blacks in a white society and the fighting of unpopular wars. We leave aside for the moment the question of whether the media have helped to make such wars unpopular in the first place.

8. The *skewed structure of public access* to the media. Access and visibility in the media exhibit a clearly defined social structure. The media favors power groups, accredited elite witnesses, institutional spokesmen, experts, as against “out-groups”—the socially dispossessed or disorganized, the deviant, ethnic minorities, working-class groups, etc. When the latter groups appear they systematically tend to have their problems defined *for them*. They are always carefully “balanced out.”

9. The special sensitivity of the media when such groupings become *politically organized and articulate*. It is in the handling of student radicalism and protest, mass demonstrations, “Black Power” groups, urban insurgency, radical community action, claimant unions, women’s and “gay” liberation, unofficial strikes, etc. that the ideological structure of the media is most clearly delineated.

10. The media’s role in *providing contextual knowledge* of events outside our own society. In complex societies, groups depend more on the media for images and stereotypes of the life situation of “others.” Similarly, we depend on the fitful coverage and ethno-centered “eye” of the media for our knowl-

edge about all non-Western European and non-North American societies. Our deep ignorance about the context of Latin American or Chinese societies are two obvious examples.

In short, the specific charges of influence on and bias in the media have crystallized within a rapidly changing context. There has been a steady polarization in the political and moral consensus. The regulated political conflict between the institutionalized parties of “Right” and “Left” (whether Conservative/Labour, Christian Democrat/Social Democrat, or Republican/Democrat) has been challenged and “transcended” by the emergence of extra-parliamentary oppositional politics. Such groupings challenge, not the allocation of “goods” (economic, social, moral) within the system, but the “rules of the game” itself. In moral and social attitudes, the gentle argument between the conventional (Southend-on-Sea) and the sophisticates (London NW3) has been eroded by a sustained moral-social libertarianism, expressed in the formation of youth culture, the flowering of “deviant” subcultures, the articulation of a distinctive underground with its counter-societies. Internationally, the armed truce of the postwar period, watched over by the East-West nuclear stalemate, has been ruptured by the resumption of militant, often armed, liberation struggles. These emergent forces have whittled away the framework of consensual institutions, values, and beliefs which sustains the social order, and challenged the taken-for-granted “rules” which neutralized social conflict and made the political-moral order legitimate. Underneath this, there is the amorphous but persistent groundswell, crystallizing in the form of a growth in the demand for greater participation and control over the decisions which affect their lives by groups with little or no access to power. In short, the debate about broadcasting arises as a product of these seismic shifts in its taken-for-granted *context*. This debate provides *the prism* for a much more general social crisis whose character and lines of conflict remain confused and indistinct. The shift in the location of conflict and the erosion of the consensus may certainly have made the direct pressures on broadcasting more visible and overt. But, in my view, what above all it has revealed—by making it problematic—is the contexts of constraints within which, regularly, day-by-day, broadcasting functions in our society.

My argument is that the visible play of “external influences” on broadcasting only becomes overt when the underlying structure of ideological and institutional constraints within which broadcasting operates has fragmented. So long as the sphere of political reality, for example, is defined within the boundaries of a regulated conflict between the two major political parties,

the nature of “controversy” in broadcasting remains unproblematic. The point is clearly demonstrated in Mr. Julian Critchley’s recent Conservative Political Centre pamphlet *Counsel for Broadcasting*. Replying to the argument put forward by Mr. Denis Forman, the managing director of *Granada*, that “television must give full voice to those who wish to change the constitutional basis of the country as well as those who defend it,” Mr. Critchley commented, “The problem is not one of striking a balance between the Conservative and Labour Parties, it is one of self-defence in the face of an attack upon the liberal consensus itself.” The broadcasting institutions are clearly not committed to either of the two parties. Indeed, they would come under direct fire if they did not exhibit a strict balance in the distribution of access between the parties. But in Mr. Critchley’s view, and I believe rightly, broadcasting *is* understood to be, and understands itself to be, committed to “the liberal consensus itself.” Similarly, though I hold no brief for her point of view, Mrs. Whitehouse and the other moral entrepreneurs seem to me quite correct to pose the questions—by what right of legitimacy, if not by God, Queen, Country, and the established moral conventions, is broadcasting held in place?

Again, broadcasting may hold no specific views on the question of premarital sex, but it has up to the present been committed to some vaguely defined “moral consensus itself” on such issues, and its powers and license to deviate from this commitment can ultimately only be sanctioned by referring outside of itself—by its judgment that, indeed, the moral consensus on such matters *is* changing. It seems that external pressures, whether from government, politicians, the state, vested interest groups, moral entrepreneurs, emerge openly and with rampant force—and the broadcasters are especially vulnerable to them—precisely because the “invisible hand” of consensus on these issues no longer provides a framework of legitimacy, a routinized structure of constraints and limits, for the broadcaster. It is thus in moments of polarization and conflict that broadcasting most openly reveals what otherwise is covert, tacit, taken-for-granted: its hidden but pervasive symbiotic relation to power and to the dominant ideologies. We say “power and the dominant ideologies” rather than money and the profit motive because, although television has, since the ending of monopoly, provided a “frontier province” for the crudest commercial calculations, the role of broadcasting in reproducing the power relations and ideological structure of society appears to me far more central an issue than its incidental financial kickback. The fact that the moral entrepreneurs have directed their at-

tacks almost exclusively at the BBC is a sign, not only that certain forms of moral righteousness cohabit more easily with the open commercial imperatives of ITV than it does with the disintegrating paternalism of the BBC, but also of the absolute centrality of the power-ideology-broadcasting nexus in the current situation.

If this argument is correct, then the question of “external influences” is a thoroughly inadequate way of framing the problem. It is predicated on a model of broadcasting which takes at face value its form and editorial autonomy: external influences are then seen as illegitimately encroaching upon this area of freedom. I do not mean to deny the escalation in the specific instances of pressure, influence, and censorship to which the broadcasters have been subject in recent months. Nor do I mean to deny the “relative autonomy” of broadcasting in its day-to-day practice. Nevertheless, the real relationship between broadcasting, power, and ideology is thoroughly mystified by such a model. One difficulty—it is the product of “the liberal ideology itself”—is that we have few ways of understanding how power and influence flow, how relative institutional integration is accomplished, in societies which are of the formal democratic type. Institutions are conceived, either as state controlled and dominated, in which case they clearly belong within the complex of power: or they are free and autonomous, and are subject to illegitimate pressure and influence from extrinsic sources. Neither view seems to me tenable. We cannot from such a model predict or comprehend the specific areas of conjuncture and disjuncture which arise between different institutions in civil society. Thus, we would find it impossible to account for the fact that, on a series of specific occasions in recent months, the broadcasters have correctly asserted their editorial independence against clear political pressure (*Yesterday's Men* and *The Question of Ulster* are two instances): and yet at the same time account for the mutual adjustments, the reciprocity of interests and definitions, occurring from day-to-day in all the central domains of broadcasting, between broadcasting and the institutions of power. One might put the question in a sharp, concrete form. Clearly the recent coverage of affairs in Northern Ireland has been subject to massive internal watchfulness and external constraint. Specifically, this has operated with respect to the broadcasters' right to interview representative spokesmen of the IRA (the Irish Republican Army). Here, clearly, the broadcaster has been subject *both* to “external influence and pressure” *and* to widespread internal institutional self-censorship. But, had no specific representations on the issue been made to the broadcasters, can one envisage a situation in which, systematically, the

broadcasters of their own “free” accord gave precedence in their current affairs coverage to the “definition of the Northern Ireland situation” proposed by the IRA and its sympathizers? There seems to me only one distant but just conceivable contingency in which such a practice could ever become widespread within the organizations: that is (as at the time of the Suez war in 1956) if opinion were to crystallize so powerfully against government policies that the broadcasters could legitimate their deviant practices by referring to some external authority alternative to that of the state itself: namely, “public opinion.” Otherwise, whether the state intervenes directly to censor broadcasting’s coverage of Ulster or not, the prevailing tendency of the organizations has been to orient themselves within the dominant definition of the situation. The broadcasters’ decision not to interview IRA spokesmen is the “free” reproduction, within the symbolic content of their programs, of the state’s definition of the IRA as an “illegal organization”; it is a mirror reflection and amplification of the decision, to which at present both political parties subscribe, that the IRA do not constitute a legitimate political agency in the Ulster situation—they are not within the definition of “parties” from which a bargain or settlement might emerge.

To account for such a fact we require, neither a simple “conspiracy theory” nor a simple “freedom-and-pressures” model, but rather the model of a society and its major institutions as a “complex formation structured in dominance”; a model which identifies the specificity of the different institutions within the complex of power and ideology, locates their “relative autonomy,” includes the possibility of conflict and contradictory movements between them, while retaining the notion of central areas of convergence, of conjuncture—the “overdeterminations” of power.

In what follows I propose to elaborate this model seriously, against simpler, but more misleading models, now frequently advanced both by the Right and the Left. Thus Mr. Critchley, in the pamphlet previously quoted, tries to account for what he calls “this taste for *agit-prop*” in the media, in part, in terms of “the recruitment of people dissatisfied with society as they find it.” “‘Television man’ has always been of the Left—in a trendy if not in an ideological sense.” It is common to find much the same proposition, in reverse, advanced by critics of broadcasting from the Left. I do not believe them. Television certainly recruits from an extremely narrow social band, and such men are powerfully socialized into the ethos and morale of the broadcasting institutions. But I do not believe that television’s built-in biases can be accounted for in terms of the overt political inclinations—to Left or

Right—of its individual practitioners. Indeed, what is far more significant is the way quite different kinds and conditions of men are systematically constrained to handle the variety of news and accounts which they process daily within the framework of a limited set of interpretations. Nor do I believe that the broadcasters are systematically censored and pressured from extrinsic sources except in limited and largely exceptional cases. Just as it is impossible to “net” the influence of advertising in the press in terms of the number of times advertisers have explicitly threatened editors with the withdrawal of their custom, so it is impossible to “net” the real structure of interests in television or radio in terms of direct representations by ministers to the Director-General. Certainly there are issues and areas where the system of scrutiny is very precise—and it is important to identify where and what these are. But the “relative autonomy” of the broadcasting institutions is *not* a mere “cover”: it is, I believe, central to the way power and ideology are mediated in societies like ours.

The most sensitive area precisely arises where the social order itself is called into question. Where issues of “public order,” “national security,” “law and order,” or “overriding national interest” are concerned, especially if linked with tactics defined as “violent,” “confrontationist,” or “illegal,” the constraints on broadcasting operate more tightly. There will be more specific instances of pressure, censorship, and influence exerted in this area, because these represent the outer limits of tolerance in the system itself. Here, the rules of the game are being called into question. Thus the pattern of external pressure on the broadcasters with respect to Ulster has steadily increased as the political situation there moved from one of “civil rights” (tolerable-borderline) to civil insurrection (intolerable). Broadcasting here is no different from other institutions in the state where open social control and repressive action is taken only as a last resort, when the institutionalized mechanisms for containing and restraining conflict have broken down. But over the whole range of issues and topics, broadcasting operates its own limits and constraints, within the state’s overall definition of sociopolitical reality, as semiautonomous, self-regulating institutions.

Broadcasting accommodates itself to the power-ideology nexus by way of a number of crucial intervening concepts. These concepts mediate the relationship of the broadcasters to power. They provide the structure of legitimations which permit the broadcasters to exercise a substantial measure of editorial and day-to-day control without contravening the overall hegemony. At the same time, it is essential to recognize that this orientation

of broadcasting within the hegemonic ideology is *not* a perfectly regulated, fully integrated one-dimensional system. Modern systems of broadcasting, as Hans Magnus Enzensberger has recently argued, are of necessity “leaky systems.” (See “Constituents of a Theory of the Media,” *New Left Review* I/64, 1977.) They are subject to the overall determinations of power, but their day-to-day operations cannot be fully prescribed. For one thing, the broadcasting institutions are both too powerful and too complex to be marshaled in this way.

“The possibility of total control of such a system at a central point [Enzensberger notes] belongs not to the future but to the past. . . . Interference can penetrate the leaky nexus of the media, spreading and multiplying there with the utmost speed by resonance.” This is not simply because the operation of day-to-day surveillance is too difficult to mount. The media are by nature oriented to the news: they are drawn to events which are dramatic, controversial, atypical. Their commitment to communication in a competitive news market makes them extremely sensitive to underlying trends and movements which have not yet fully crystallized but which might contain portents for the future. There are, thus, many reasons intrinsic to the nature of mass communications systems as such which draw them, inexorably, into the danger zones, which encourage them to worry away at movements and issues which disrupt the even tenor of social life, in which the seeds of future controversy and discontents are sown. For this, and other reasons which we shall come to presently, the media, whose sphere of operations is crucially that of *ideology*, do not simply reproduce the hegemonic ideology, they reproduce the ruling ideology precisely *in all its contradictions*. The ruling classes which hold power in the state and other institutions of civil society can act directly, by law, decree, and ultimately force, in the domain of power and social control, but they can only act indirectly, via the diffused institutions of consensus, in the ideological sphere. In situations where the forces of conflict are rapidly polarizing, the institutions which operate in the sphere of ideology thus themselves become what Althusser has called “not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle.”

We come now to the central concepts which mediate broadcasting’s relationship to the power-ideology complex. They are: balance, impartiality, objectivity, professionalism, and consensus.

BALANCE: Both broadcasting institutions are required to operate a system of “balance” between conflicting interests and viewpoints. Until recently,

producers were expected to provide “balance” within single programs—and whenever a topic is controversial this ground rule is more strictly applied. Elsewhere, it has come to be more liberally interpreted—“balance over a reasonable period of time.” The broadcasters are thus *required to recognize* that conflicts of interest and opinion exist. Indeed, because controversy is topical and makes “good, lively broadcasting,” controversial programs flood the screen. They always contain more than one viewpoint. Thus broadcasting appears as the very reverse of monolithic or univocal—as precisely, open, democratic, and controversial. Yet “balance” is crucially exercised within an overall framework of assumptions about the distribution of political power: the conflict here is scrupulously regulated. A debate between Labour and Conservative spokesmen—an area of “balance” subject both to executive and informal sanctions—is itself framed by agreements, set elsewhere but reproduced in the studio, in television’s presentational devices and in its very discourse. Political “balance” operates essentially between the legitimate mass parties in the parliamentary system. “Balance” becomes trickier when groups outside the consensus participate, since the grounds of conflict then become the terrain of political legitimacy itself—an issue on which Labour and Conservative spokesmen stand together, against the others. In this way television does *not* favor one point of view, but it *does* favor—and reproduce—one definition of politics: by definition it excludes, represses, or neutralizes other definitions. We can now better understand what one news commentator meant when he observed, apropos the withdrawal of opposition MPs from Stormont, that both Whitehall and Stormont were anxious to bring them “back into politics.” The rent strikes, civil defense marches, and other actions were in that instant *delegitimated* as political acts. Television and radio do not, therefore, offer “only one point of view.” But by operating balance *within a given structure*, television tacitly maintains the prevailing definition of the political order. That is, in one and the same moment, it expresses and contains conflict. It reproduces unwittingly the structure of institutionalized class conflict on which the system depends. It thereby legitimates the prevailing structure of interests, while scrupulously observing “balance between the parties.” It also, incidentally, offers a favorable image of the system as a system, precisely, “open to conflict” and to alternative “points of view.” It is this last twist which keeps the structure flexible and credible.

IMPARTIALITY: Impartiality defines the way broadcasters negotiate situations of conflict from within. Broadcasters are not supposed to express personal

opinions on controversial issues: they are committed to a rigorous impartiality between the conflicting parties. Experienced interviewers know precisely the angle at which they must lean downwind for Mr. Heath, upwind for Mr. Wilson, in order to construct an impression of fierce impartiality: the art of political management of the studio situation is one of the current affairs broadcaster's first professional skills. In practice, of course, all broadcasters have views. The working compromise is to insist that the broadcaster must be the last person, if at all, to express a view. But as all good producers know, there is more than one way of cutting a program. Producers have become extremely skilled at producing "balanced" studio teams—the infinite calculations as to how many Bernadette Devlins make an Ian Paisley is one of those editorial acts which all producers are skilled at intuiting. Yet the practice of impartiality has several inescapable consequences.

(1) It leads broadcasting into the impasse of a false symmetry of issues. All controversial questions *must* have two sides, and the two sides are usually given a rough equality in weight. Responsibility is shared out between the parties: each side receives a measure of praise or censure. This symmetry of oppositions is a formal balance: it has little or no relevance to the quite unequal relative weights of the case for each side in the real world. If the workman asserts that he is being poisoned by the effluence from a noxious plant, the chairman must be wheeled in to say that all possible precautions are now being taken. . . . This symmetrical alignment of arguments may ensure the broadcaster's impartiality, but it hardly advances the truth. Opposition has been neutralized in this maneuver: the political level and the class content of the conflict have been suppressed.

(2) Impartiality as a practice gives the broadcaster/presenter a built-in interest in compromise, in conflict-resolution. It commits him to the pragmatic view of politics. His only way of intervening actively in a controversy is to act, in the studio, the shadow-role of the compromiser, the middleman. His only legitimate interventions can be to salvage some "lowest common denominator" of a "package" or bargain from the deeply held, but opposing positions before him. All conflicts thus become translated into the language of "compromise": all failures to compromise are signs either of "intransigence," "extremism," or "failures in communication." The other way of neutralizing conflict is to assert some "overriding" interest which subordinates the conflicting parties. Thus all broadcasters are safe in asserting that Britain's perilous economic position overrides all industrial conflict, even if the strikers have "a good case." The program presenter, face-to-face with a group of angry

Ulster Protestants, can put a “Catholic” case—but it will not be a Catholic “civil rights” or IRA case; it will be one which asks for some “gesture of reconciliation” so as to enable Catholic representatives to “come to the bargaining table.”

(3) This stake of the broadcaster in conflict-resolution has the function of legitimating those elements in a conflict which are “realistic”—which can be abstracted from a general case and built in to a “package.” The case which is intrinsically not amenable to this process is, clearly, “unrealistic”—and hence “unreasonable.” Thus the three wise men in *The Question of Ulster* could not deal with Bernadette Devlin’s evidence, since it was inserted into a class analysis of the Northern Ireland situation, and defied trivialization in terms of producing the elements for a “workable compromise.”

(4) Via impartiality, broadcasting is thus raised above the conflicts which it treats. It seems to stand outside the real play of interests on which it reports and comments. The men and women who produce programs are real social individuals in the midst of the conflicts which they report. But this “subjective” dimension is repressed in the “objectivity” of the program. The programs they produce are outside those conflicts—they reflect on and judge them, but they do not participate in them. As a recent pamphlet on *Television and the State* observes, “the identifications contained in programmes gain a mysterious validity as they are put forward as being the product of an analytical rationality from outside the society and separate from society and class conflict rather than as the product of a dialectic rationality which includes an understanding and knowledge of the involvements from where the ‘truth’ of the programme is created.”¹

This tendency of broadcasting to stand above conflict and judge it impartially is especially damaging for the viewer, who is encouraged to identify with the presenter, and who thus comes to see himself as a neutral and dispassionate party to a partisan and impassioned struggle: the disinvolved spectator before the spectacle of conflict.

OBJECTIVITY: If the broadcaster is required to be impartial between witnesses, he is also enjoined to be “objective” before “the facts.” But objectivity, like impartiality, is an operational fiction. All filming and editing is the manipulation of raw data: selectively perceived, interpreted, signified. Television cannot capture “the whole” of any event: the idea that it offers a “pure” transcription of reality, a neutrality of the camera before the facts, is an illusion, a utopia. All filmed accounts of reality are selective. All edited or manipulated

symbolic reality is impregnated with values, viewpoints, implicit theorizings, commonsense assumptions. The choice to film *this* aspect of an event rather than *that* is subject to criteria other than those embedded in “the material itself”: *this* aspect rather than *that* is significant, shows something special, out-of-the-ordinary, unexpected, typical. . . . Each of those notions are operating against a taken-for-granted set of understandings and only have meaning within that context. Each decision to link this piece of film with that, to create a discourse out of the disparate fragments of edited material, makes sense only within a *logic of exposition*. The identifications of social actors, their projects in the world, are accomplished against the prevailing schemes of interpretation which we regularly but tacitly employ for the recognition and decoding of social scenes: they partake of the stock of social knowledge at hand which men employ to make sense of their world and events in it. Such a stock of knowledge is not a “neutral structure”—it is shot through with previously sedimented social meanings. The illusion of “reality,” of verisimilitude, indeed, *depends* on such contexts of meaning, such background schemes of recognition and interpretation, for its construction. How “objective” is a clip from a miner’s picket line used in a news actuality or current affairs documentary program? The images we see are real enough: and no one doubts that the cameraman and reporter were here, saw it happen, are trying to show it “as it is.” Yet the brief extract of this foreground event (denoted) is an enormously compressed item of information, rich in connotations. It only has meaning for us within its multiple contexts: the picket (from the viewpoint of the strikers) as an index of their power to hold the line while the strike continues; the picket (from the viewpoint of the Coal Board) as an index of the strength and effectiveness of rank-and-file resistance; the picket (from the viewpoint of the government) as an element which might contribute to the defeat of their wages policy; the picket (from the political viewpoint) as an index of escalating class conflict; the picket (from the viewpoint of the police) as a problem in the policing of class conflict, and so on. Whether the item is accompanied by commentary or not, whether it provides the “actuality” basis for a studio discussion or not, its meaning lies in its *indexical* significance within the relevant context of meanings: and we *decode* its significance—it cannot literally be “read off” the denoted images themselves—in terms of these contexts of awareness, in terms of the connotative power of the “message.” The different logics of interpretation within which this objectively presented item *makes sense* in a public discourse are not neutral networks of meaning, and no broadcast

program can offer such an item without situating it within one or other of those logics.

PROFESSIONALISM: All professionals generate their own distinctive ideologies and routines. But the growth of professionalism in broadcasting seems to have another function—essentially that of a defensive barrier which insulates the broadcaster from the contending forces which play across any progressive-making in a sensitive area. It is often a species of professional retreatism, a technique of neutralization. By converting issues of substance into a technical idiom, and by making himself responsible primarily for the technical competence with which the program is executed, the producer raises himself above the problematic content of the issues he presents. What concerns him is identifying the elements of “good television”: cutting and editing with professional finish; the smooth management of transitions within the studio or between the program elements; “good pictures,” full of incident and drama, etc. Such a semi-technical language insulates the producer and the program from the overall editorial decisions, from the calculations of balance, from the disputed issues at hand. He relies on them, as an intervening structure of routines, to enable him to “get on with the job of broadcasting.” The most pervasive of these semi-technical structures is that of *news values* itself. The media journalist, like his counterpart in the press, “knows a good news story when he smells one”: but few can define what criteria are integrated within this notion. “News values” are, however, a man-made, value-loaded system of relevancies. Such a system has great practical use, since it enables the editor to get his work done, under the condition of heavily pressured schedules, without reference back to first principles. But the idea that such sedimented social knowledge is neutral—a set of technical protocols only—is an illusion.

CONSENSUS: Consensus may be defined as the “lowest common denominator” in the values and beliefs which are widely shared among the population of a society. It provides the basis of continuity and fundamental agreement in common social life. “The consensus” is the structure of commonsense ideology and beliefs in the public at large. In formal democracies, a great deal of what holds the social order together consists of those tacit, shared agreements about fundamental issues embedded at the level of “commonsense ideology,” rather than what is formally written down in constitutional protocols and documents. “The consensus” on any specific issue is however

extremely fluid, and difficult to define. The opinions of very few individuals will coincide exactly with it. Yet, without the notion that *some* shared bargain or compromise has been reached on fundamentals, it would be difficult either to govern or to broadcast in formal democratic societies. The “consensus” is what defends us against Hobbes’s “war of all against all.” Perhaps its most important element is the consensus that a consensus exists. In modern, complex bureaucratic class-societies, consensus plays the role which “public opinion” was cast for in ideal democratic theory. In practice, since the majority have little real, day-to-day access to decisions and information, commonsense ideologies are usually a composite reflection of the dominant ideologies, operating at a passive and diffused level in society, for all practical purposes, such modern democracies recognize that the coalition of classes which wields power, crucially forms and structures, but it activates the whole mental environment in which decisions are made and from which policies flow. Yet ultimately, in formal democracies, the system is legitimated as one operating by “consent” rather than by force or violence because it is, in some intangible way, responsible to “public opinion”—the consensus.

Though “the consensus” is extremely difficult to locate, its existence also underwrites and guarantees the broadcaster in his day-to-day functions. His sense of “the state of play” in public opinion provides a sort of warrant for his performance. It offers him a rough-and-ready way of referring himself to “what people in general are thinking and feeling about an issue.” He is not obliged to reproduce the consensus, as he understands it perfectly, and indeed, since groups which differ in class position and in power and status occupy different ends of this nebulous construct and define it differently, he cannot help but infringe “the consensus” somewhere every time he broadcasts. Still the consensus provides him with an outer horizon, a set of boundaries to “what is normal, expected, understood, taken-for-granted,” which he systematically offends against at his peril. In formal democracies, though power is in fact centralized within the elites, the elites gain legitimacy by this continuous process of “mentally referring themselves” to the public at large. It is my impression that in their everyday professional practice, broadcasters are *more consistently* regulated by their sense of their audience than by any single other source. In many areas of broadcasting, though the outer limits of public acceptability are impossible to define, the structure of “shared agreements” which the broadcaster can posit for himself is flexible enough to authenticate his practice. When real conflicts of interest arise, the

broadcasting institutions will often employ a reference to the consensus—to changing public feeling on an issue, to what “the great mass of the British public feels”—as an alternative source of legitimacy, an alternative court of appeal, to that of the established sources.

But, as we have noted, the consensus is in fact an extremely fluid and ambivalent structure, at best, in practice; the agencies of government and control, while responsible in some formal sense to the people/the electorate/public opinion/the audience, are, for that very reason, driven to treat the area of consensus as an arena in which they *win* consent for or assent to their actions and policies, their definitions and outlooks. In class societies which are also formal democracies, the structures of democratic representation and opinion are structures to be negotiated in the interest of power. The elites are in a powerful position to win assent in this way: (a) because they play a dominant role in crystallizing issues, (b) because they provide the material and information which support their preferred interpretations, (c) because they can rely on the disorganized state of public knowledge and feeling to provide, by inertia, a sort of tacit agreement to let the existing state of affairs continue. We are thus in the highly paradoxical situation, whereby the elites of power constantly *invoke*, as a legitimation for their actions, a consensus which they themselves have powerfully pre-structured. Thus the process of opinion formation and attitude crystallization is, like so many of the other processes we have been discussing, a process “structured in dominance.” We can now understand why broadcasting itself stands in such a pivotal and ambiguous position. For, in such complex bureaucratic class-societies, the media and the dominant institutions of communication and consciousness-formation are themselves the primary *source* of attitudes and knowledge within which public opinion crystallizes, and the primary *channels* between the hegemonic classes and the audience. At the same time, as the rift in the moral-political consensus in the society widens, the consensus ceases to provide the broadcaster with a built-in ideological compass, an alternative source of legitimation. The ruling elites thus have a direct interest in monopolizing the channels for consensus-formation for their preferred accounts and interpretations, thereby extending their hegemony: they also have a vested interest in ensuring that, when left to their own devices, the media will themselves reproduce, on their behalf, the tentative structure of agreement which favors their hegemony. In such moments, the media themselves become the *site* for the elaboration of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic ideologies and the *terrain* of societal and class conflict at the ideological level. Both of television’s functions are locked

into this process: those occasions when it elaborates interpretations and accounts of the world on its own behalf, and those many occasions when, via the skewed structures of access, it is obliged to reproduce and validate the status or accredited witnesses, whose views it is obliged to attend and defer to, and whose statements “in other places” (in Parliament, in conferences, in boardrooms, in the courts, etc.) it is required to transmit. The media cannot long retain their credibility with the public without giving some access to witnesses and accounts which lie outside the consensus: it would not have dared to broadcast to the nation on the eve of the Newry march without at least one interview with Kevin Boyle, the civil rights organizer. But the moment it does so, it immediately endangers itself with its critics, who attack broadcasting for unwittingly “tipping the balance of public feeling” against the political order. It opens itself to the strategies of both sides which are struggling to win a hearing for their interpretation in order to redefine the situations in which they are acting in a more favorable way. This is broadcasting’s vicious double-bind.

Appendix

These notes deal briefly with some points not fully covered in the paper, raised in discussion at the Manchester University graduate/staff seminar.

Note I: Institutional Motives

The paper deals too briefly with the institutional motives of the broadcasting institutions to *survive*, as a source of constraints. This is neglected partly because it is more fully dealt with in Anthony Smith’s paper, though I think he accords this level too high a position, but the application of internal editorial and “controller” constraints clearly does reflect the interest which the institutions have—the BBC especially—in their own survival. They must be seen to be able to control their own mavericks in order to substantiate their claims to editorial autonomy. This is partly because broadcasting is itself a “power in the land,” and seeks to preserve this position. It is partly because all complex organizations regulate themselves internally. But it is of special importance in broadcasting because of the tricky political climate in which they operate. Thus the BBC knows it has many enemies in government; it has had to struggle to convince its political masters that it is in competition with ITV, a *majority* communications channel: it needs to retain its political credibility and its informal access to political circles: it needs to defend

its general reputation in order to secure the license fee, get more money for its own operations, and, when the charter is reviewed, make sure that no further inroads are made into its province. The creation of the “Three Wise Men” as a court of appeal, set up by the BBC itself, is a way of forestalling, from inside, what might be a more dangerous form of scrutiny if imposed by legislation in 1976 or earlier. Thus, many editorial constraints are managed by the BBC, and passed down the hierarchy, in defense, ultimately, of the position of the institution as such. They are *diplomatic* decisions. Similarly, producers and controllers know that, generally, the BBC is undergoing a difficult patch, and don’t want to endanger the corporation by promoting yet another public row. Thus they censor themselves, steer away from tricky subjects, find alternative ways of handling the subject, “for the sake of the corp.” Anthony Smith’s paper is particularly good on the way producers and staff generally are sensitive to these “pervasive moods” and to the “climate” at the center of the organizational web. The renewal of contracts serves the same function for ITV.

Note II: “Reproducing the Dominant Ideology with All Its Contradictions”

We argue that broadcasting does not simply “reproduce the dominant ideology” but reproduces that ideology and its contradictions. We suggest some pragmatic reasons for this—the media are “leaky systems,” *some* alternatives do get through, “balance” commits them to “more than one point of view,” their news orientations predisposes them to go to the danger zones, etc. But, theoretically, why is this process one of “reproduction in its contradictions”? Are the contradictions reproduced inherent *within* the dominant ideology? Not necessarily. But something within the dominant ideology promotes this “reproduction in contradiction.” This is because the dominant ideology itself is (a) a *liberal* ideology and (b) in a system which is formally democratic. Thus, officially, there are many individuals and groups contending for power and interest, and these must, by definition, be *plural*: this opens the door to “more than one point of view”—the idea of “balance” is a decidedly liberal notion. Also, since the ultimate result must be legitimated by “public consent” (however vague), the liberal ideology operates *via the consensus*, which is to broadcasting and administration what the electorate and the vote is to the parliamentary system. The “democratic component” is an implicit element of contradiction within the dominant (liberal) ideology. But just as in the liberal-political ideology there is, ideally, “one man one vote,” but in reality a continuation of class hegemony: so, in the ideological sphere, there is, formally,

“balance” and “impartiality”; but in reality the dominance of “prevailing definitions and interpretations.” It is important to say that this contradiction within the dominant ideology represents, at the ideological level, real previously won *concessions*—the price the dominant ideology pays for its continuing hegemony: the vote, universal suffrage, parliamentary representation, the legalization of unions and the right to strike, the ending of monarchical or aristocratic rule, the welfare state, etc. The “liberal ideology” is the consensus philosophy of a society, not without conflict, but with conflict regulated by norms which do not disturb the fundamental agreements. A society of regulated conflicts (and ideologies), “structured in dominance.”

Note III: The Level of Signification

If the reproduction of the dominant ideology were free and uncontested—if nothing else “got through”—then the study of the style, technique, forms, studio presentations, etc. would be simply a study, at the micro-level, of the dominant structures. But if, as argued above, the reproduction is of an ideology and its contradictions, then the level of significations (i.e., style, technique, forms, content, etc.) is a *crucial level of analysis*, with a “relative autonomy” of its own, since, in any instance, the outcome of an encounter in which several contestants are present cannot be fully predicted: in this area, significant battles to win a hearing for alternative points of view can, sometimes, be won: the management of such conflictful situations has to be done in situ, and presenters can lose their grip on the situation, though they rarely do (because they have the ultimate signifying power of defining the events, and are the principal managers of the encounters): and there are also crucial areas where the definitions and identifications *have to be negotiated*. This seems to be the distinction between an ethnomethodological and a radical symbolic interactionist approach, at the level of the micro-study of television. For ethnomethodology takes the overall social order for granted: each encounter is thus a reproduction, at the level of meaning construction and the situation, of a given social order, which remains essentially unaffected by these transactions. (Thus a strict Garfinkel analysis of a TV program can be squared with a Parsonian view of the integrated social order.) Erving Goffman seems to hold a position close to this, though there are many more “discrepancies” allowed for between the level of “social order” and the level of the “construction of social order in face-to-face situations.” Howard Becker and others, however, can be pushed toward a position where the outcome of transactions (interactional, symbolic) at the situational level can affect the ongoing reproduction

of society at the “social order” level. Hence situations, while “structured in dominance” (i.e., showing a systematic tendency to reproduce the hegemony of dominant definitions of the situation), are not *determined* by it. Conflict and contradiction, therefore, as well as consensus and social order, can be produced at the micro-level. Each encounter, therefore, puts the “structure in dominance” to the test: and the differing definitions of situation must struggle for dominance, win assent for their outlook against others, try to amplify definitions so as to favor the dominant perspective, etc. The level of signification, is, therefore, a privileged level with “relative autonomy” but it is neither fully determined by larger structures, nor free of them. The techniques which permit a broadcaster to define an ambiguous situation (e.g., sit-in) as “violent,” and thus win the consensus (which is against violence), are a critical area of “negotiation of symbolic reality.”

EDITOR'S NOTE

- 1 This has proved difficult to locate. It could have emanated from the Free Communications Group.

Culture, the Media, and the “Ideological Effect”

Culture has its roots in what Marx, in *The German Ideology*, called man’s “double relation”: to nature and to other men. Men, Marx argued, intervene in nature and, with the help of certain instruments and tools, use nature to reproduce the material conditions of their existence. But, from a very early point in the history of human development, this intervention in nature through labor is *socially* organized. Men collaborate with one another—at first, through the collective use of simple tools, the rudimentary division of labor, and the exchange of goods—for the more effective reproduction of their material conditions. This is the beginning of social organization, and of human history. From this point forward, man’s relation to nature becomes socially mediated. The reproduction of human society, in increasingly complex and extended forms, and the reproduction of material existence are fundamentally linked: in effect, the adaptation of nature to man’s material needs is effected only through the forms which his social collaboration with other men assumes. Men, then, reproduce themselves as “social individuals” through the social forms which their material production assumes. No matter how infinitely complex and extended are the social forms which men then successively develop, the relations surrounding the material reproduction of their existence forms the determining instance of all these other structures. From this given matrix—the forces and relations of production, and the manner in which they are socially organized, in different historical epochs—arise all the more elaborate forms of social structure, the division of labor,

the development of the distinction between different types of society, new ways of applying human skill and knowledge to the modification of material circumstances, the forms of civil and political association, the different types of family and the state, men's beliefs, ideas, and theoretical constructions, and the types of social consciousness appropriate to or "corresponding to" them. This is the basis for a *materialist* understanding of social development and human history; it must also be the basis of any materialist or non-idealist definition of culture. Marx, in fact, argued that there is no "labor" or production in *general* (Marx, *Grundrisse*). Production always assumes specific historical forms, under determinate conditions. The types of society, social relationship, and human culture which arise under these specific historical conditions will also assume a determinate form. One type of production differs fundamentally from another: and since each stage in the development of material production will give rise to different forms of social cooperation, a distinct type of technical and material production, and different kinds of political and civil organization, human history is divided, through the developing modes of production, into distinctive and historically specific *stages* or *epochs*. Once material production and its corresponding forms of social organization reach a complex stage of development, it will require considerable analysis to establish precisely how the relationship between these levels can be conceptualized. Precisely *how* to think this relationship between material and social production and the rest of a developed social formation constitutes perhaps the most difficult aspect of a materialist theory. We shall return to this question in a moment. But a materialist account must, by definition, encompass some concrete way of thinking this relationship originating (normally referred to, within Marxist analyses, by way of the metaphor of "base" and "the superstructures") if it is not to desert the ground of its premise emphasizing that the foundation of human culture lies in labor and material production. Marx's "materialism" adds to this premise at least one other requirement: that the relationship must be thought within determinate historical conditions. It must be made *historically specific*. It is this second requirement which distinguishes a historical materialist theory of human society and culture from, say, a materialism grounded in the simple fact of man's physical nature (a "vulgar," or as Marx calls it, an undialectical materialism) or one which gives the determining instance to technological development alone. What Karl Korsch, among others, has called "the principle of historical specificity" in Marx's materialism is clearly enunciated in *The German Ideology* (where Marx's theory becomes, for the first time, fully "historical")

and afterward in his mature work. “The fact is . . . that *definite* individuals who are productively active in a *definite* way enter into these *definite* social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production” (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*; our emphasis). To this basis, or “anatomy,” Marx also relates “the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness”—the sphere of “mental production.” For Marx, the relations which govern the social organization of material production are specific—“definite”—for each phase or stage: each constitutes its own “mode.” The social and cultural superstructures which “correspond” to each mode of production will, likewise, be historically specific. For Marx, each of the major modes of production in human history to date has been based fundamentally on one type of the exploitation of the labor of some by others. Modes of production—however complex, developed, and productive they become—are therefore founded on a root antagonistic contradiction. But this contradiction, the social forms in which it is institutionalized, the theoretical laws which “explain” it, and the forms of “consciousness” in which the antagonism is lived and experienced, is worked out in, again, definite and historically specific ways. Most of Marx and Engels’s work was devoted to analyzing the historically determinate “laws and tendencies” governing the *capitalist* mode of production: and in analyzing the different superstructural and ideological forms appropriate to this stage in society’s material development. It was consonant with their theory that this mode, and the corresponding social forms, exhibited its own specific laws and tendencies; that these were founded on a specific type of contradiction, between how labor was expended and goods produced, and the way the value of labor was expropriated; and that this dynamic, expansive phase of material development was historically finite—destined to evolve and expand through a series of transformations, reach the outer limits of its potential development, and be superseded by another stage in human history—impelled, not by external force but by “inner connection” (Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I). Indeed, Marx saw each mode of production as driven to develop, through its higher stages, precisely by the “overcoming” of the contradictions intrinsic to its lower stages; reproducing these antagonisms on a more advanced level; and hence destined to disappear through this development of contradictions. This analysis, worked out at the level of economic forms and processes, constituted the subject matter of *Capital*.

Now, since each mode of material and social organization was historically specific, so the forms of social life corresponding to it was bound to assume a “definite” and historically distinct shape and form. “This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather, it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce it” (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*). The social and material forms of production, the way labor was organized and combined with tools to produce, the level of technical development, the institutions through which goods circulated and value was realized, the types of civil association, of family life and of the state appropriate to it—this ensemble of relations and structures exhibited an identifiable configuration, a pattern, a “mode of living” for the social individuals and groups within it. This patterning was, so to speak, the result of the interconnections between the different levels of social practice. The pattern also expressed how the combined result of these interconnecting levels was “lived,” as a totality, by its “bearers.” This seems to be the best way of grasping, within a materialist theory (in which the term itself plays no insignificant part), where precisely *culture* arises. To put it metaphorically, “culture” refers us to the arrangement—the *forms*—assumed by social existence under determinate historical conditions. Provided the metaphor is understood as of heuristic value only, we might say that if the term “social” refers to the *content* of the relationships into which men involuntarily enter in any social formation, then “culture” refers to the forms which those relationships assume. (The form/content distinction is not, however, one which we can push very far. It should also be borne in mind that Marx, who gives considerable attention to the *forms* which value assumes in the capitalist mode of production, uses the term differently from the way it has been employed above.) At the risk of conflating two divergent theoretical discourses, we might bear in mind here a point which Roger Poole makes of Lévi-Strauss in the introduction to the latter’s work on *Totemism*. “Instead of asking for the hundredth time ‘What is totemism,’ he asks us for the first time . . . ‘How are totemic phenomena arranged?’ The move from ‘what’ to ‘how,’ from the substantive to the adjectival attitude, is the first radically different thing, the first ‘structural’ thing, to notice about the work before us.” “Culture,” in this sense, does not refer to something

substantively different from “social”: it refers to a different *aspect* of essentially the same phenomena.

Culture, in this meaning of the term, is the objectivated design to human existence when “definite men under definite conditions” “appropriate nature’s productions in a form adapted to his own wants” and “stamps that labour as exclusively human.” This is very close to what we might call the “anthropological” definition of culture. (In their different ways, the theoretical work of Raymond Williams [*The Long Revolution*], the modification of Williams by Thompson, and, in the very different context provided by its basic functionalism, the studies of “material culture and social structure” of primitive or colonial peoples by social anthropologists belong to this tradition.)

However, Marx and, more especially, Engels rarely use “culture” or its cognates in this simply descriptive sense. They use it more dynamically and more developmentally—as a decisive material or *productive force*. Human culture is the result and the record of man’s developing mastery over nature, his capacity to modify nature to his use. This is a form of human knowledge, perfected through social labor, which forms the basis for every new stage in man’s productive and historical life. This is not a “knowledge” which is abstractly stored in the head. It is materialized in production, embodied in social organization, advanced through the development of practical as well as theoretical technique, above all, preserved in and transmitted through *language*. In *The German Ideology* Marx speaks of “a material result, a sum of productive forces, a historically created relation of individuals to nature and to one another, which is handed down to each generation from its predecessor . . . is, indeed, modified by the new generation, but also . . . prescribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a definite development, a specific character.” It is this which distinguishes men from the animal kingdom. Engels (in his “Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man”) accords the dynamic elements in this process “first” to “labour, after it and then with it, speech. . . . The reaction on labour and speech of the development of the brain and its attendant senses, of the increasing clarity of consciousness, power of abstraction and of judgement, gave both labour and speech an ever-renewed impulse to further development.” Marx in a famous passage in the first volume of *Capital*, compares favorably “the worst of architects” with the “best of bees” in this: “that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. . . . He not only effects a change of form . . . but he also realizes a purpose of his own that gives the law to his *modus operandi*.” Earlier, Marx and Engels had identified language, the principal me-

dium through which this knowledge of man's appropriation and adaptation of nature is elaborated, stored, transmitted, and applied, as a form of "practical consciousness" arising "from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other men" (*The German Ideology*). Later, Marx describes how this accumulated knowledge can be expropriated from the practical labor and skill of the worker, applied as a distinct productive force to modern industry for its further development, and thus pressed "into the service of capital" (*Capital*, Vol. I). Here, *culture* is the accumulated growth of man's power over nature, materialized in the instruments and practice of labor and in the medium of signs, thought, knowledge, and language through which it is passed on from generation to generation as man's "second nature."

Now *The German Ideology*—on which many of these seminal formulations depend—is the text in which Marx and Engels insist that history cannot be read as the sum of the consciousness of mankind. Ideas, conceptions, etc. arise "in thought" but must be explained in terms of material practice, not the other way around. This is perfectly consistent with the general proposition that culture, knowledge, and language have their basis in social and material life and are not independent or autonomous of it. Generally speaking, however, Marx and Engels in this text saw material needs fairly straightforwardly and transparently reflected in the sphere of thought, ideas, and language; the latter changing when, and in keeping with how, their "basis" changes. A social formation is not thought of as consisting of a set of "relatively autonomous" practices, but as an expressive totality; in which the "needs" or tendencies of the determining base are mediated in a homologous way at the other levels; and where everything stems from "real, active men" and their "active life process," their historical *praxis* "under definite material limits, presupposes and conditions independent of their will." In a related but slightly different formulation, we would then expect each of the practices concerned to reveal "surprising correspondences," each being understood as so many forms of "human energy." (As in Williams's *The Long Revolution*.)

The problem is how to account for the fact that, in the realm of ideas, meaning, value, conceptions, and consciousness, men can "experience" themselves in ways which do not fully correspond with their real situation. How can men be said to have a "false" consciousness of how they stand or relate to the real conditions of their life and production? Can language, the medium through which human culture in the "anthropological sense" is transmitted, *also* become the instrument through which it is "distorted"? (See Thompson's response to *The Long Revolution*.) Can language become the instrument by

which men elaborate accounts and explanations, make sense of and become conscious of their “world,” which also binds and fetters, rather than frees them? How can thought conceal aspects of their real conditions rather than clarify them? In short, how can we account for the fact that “in all ideology,” men (who are the “producers of their consciousness, ideas, etc.”) and their circumstances are mystified, “appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*”? The reason, fundamentally, is offered in the second half of the same sentence from *The German Ideology*: it is essentially because these men are “conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these.” It is because men are, so to speak, *decentered* by the determinate conditions under which they live and produce, and depend on circumstances and conditions which are not of their making and which they enter involuntarily, that they cannot, in any full and uncontradictory sense, be the collective *authors* of their actions. Their practice cannot “un-mediatedly” realize their goals and intentions. Hence the terms through which men “make sense” of their world, experience their objective situation as a subjective experience, and “come to consciousness” of who and what they are, are not in their own keeping and will not, consequently, transparently reflect their situation. Hence the fundamental *determinacy* of what Marx called “the superstructures”—the fact that practices in these domains are conditioned elsewhere, experienced and realized only in *ideology*.

The radically limiting concept of *ideology* has a decentering and displacing effect on the freely developing processes of “human culture.” It opens up the need to “think” the radical and systematic disjunctives between the different levels of any social formation: between the material relations of production, the social practices in which class and other social relations are constituted (here Marx locates “the superstructures”—civil society, the family, the juridico-political forms, the state), and the level of “ideological forms”—ideas, meanings, conceptions, theories, beliefs, etc., and the forms of consciousness which are appropriate to them. (See at this point the formulation in Marx’s famous “Preface” of 1859 collected in Bottomore and Rubel.) In *The German Ideology*—specifically devoted to the third “level” which, in German thought, had achieved a positively stratospheric autonomy from material life and, at the same time, in the form of Hegel’s Absolute Spirit, had been installed as the very motor of the whole system—Marx and Engels offer a more detailed account of how these disjunctures arise. With the advancing division of labor (on which expanding material production depends) the distinction between mental and manual labor appears: each is installed in distinct

spheres, in different practices and institutions, indeed in different social strata (e.g., the rise of the intelligentsia, the professional ideologues): mental labor appears as wholly autonomous from its material and social base and is projected into an absolute realm, “emancipating itself from the real.” But also, under the conditions of capitalist production, the means of mental labor are expropriated by the ruling classes. Hence we come, not simply to “ideology” as a necessary level of any capitalist social formation, but to the concept of *dominant* ideology—of “ruling ideas.” “The class which is the ruling material force is at the same time [the] ruling intellectual force. . . . [It] has control over the means of mental production so that, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. . . . The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships.” Those who rule are “the producer[s] of ideas”; they “regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age” (*The German Ideology*).

In what follows I shall be concentrating specifically on this ideological dimension. But it should be said at once that the term “culture” continues to have an ambiguous and unspecified relation to the model outlined here. There appears to be a theoretical discontinuity between the problematic in which the term “culture” has been developed and the terms of classical Marxist theory. The ambiguity arises because, if we transpose it into a Marxist framework, “culture” now appears to refer to at least *two* levels, which are closely related but which, considered under the single rubric, “culture,” tend to be uneasily collapsed. The capitalist mode of production depends upon the “combination” of those who own the means of production and those who have only their labor to sell, together with the tools and instruments of production. In this relation (“relations of/forces of production”) labor is *the* commodity which has the capacity to produce a value greater than the materials on which it works; and that surplus which is left over when the laborer is paid his upkeep (wages) is expropriated by those who own the means of production, and realized through commodity exchange on the market. This relation, at the level of the mode of production, then produces the constituted classes of capitalism in the field of class practice and relations (“the superstructures”); and through its own peculiar mechanisms and effects, in the field of ideologies and consciousness. Now the conditions under which the working class lives its social practice will exhibit a distinctive shape; and that practice will, to some extent, be shaped by that class (in practice and struggle with other classes)—and these shapes can be said to constitute the ways they

organize themselves socially: the forms of working class *culture*. (Works like Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* and Robert Roberts's *Classic Slum* point to some of the ways in which the "culture" of the working class, in particular periods, registers its peculiar modes of material and social existence.)

These social class practices and relations will embody certain characteristic values and meanings of the class, so that its "culture" is *lived*. But there is also the distinct area in which classes "experience" their own practice, make a certain kind of sense of it, give accounts of it and use ideas to bring to it a certain imaginary coherence—the level of what we might call *ideology proper*. Its principal medium of elaboration is the practice of language and consciousness, for it is through language that meaning is given. These "meanings" which we attribute to our relations and by means of which we grasp, in consciousness, how we live and what we practice, are not simply the theoretical and ideological projections of individuals. To "give sense" in this way is, fundamentally, to locate oneself and one's experience, one's conditions, in the already objectivated ideological *discourses*, the sets of ready-made and pre-constituted "experiencings" displayed and arranged through language which fill out the ideological sphere. And this domain of ideology and consciousness is frequently, and confusingly, *also* called "culture": though, as we have already seen, we may find either an accurate or a distorted reflection of practice in ideology, and there is no necessary correspondence of transparency between them. Marx himself has partly contributed to this conflation by calling both the spheres of social class practices and the field of ideologies by single terms—"the superstructures," and, even more confusingly, "the ideological forms." But how can both the lived practices of class relations and the mental representations, images, and themes which render them intelligible, ideologically, be both "ideological forms"? This question is made even more obscure because we now commonly, and mistakenly, interpret the term "ideology" to mean *false*—imaginary conceits, phantom beliefs about things which appear to exist but are not real. The ideas we have about our conditions *may* be "unreal"; but how can social practices be "unreal"? To clarify the question, let us rephrase it on the basis of a different aspect of Marx's theory: one which contains the germ, the outline, of that more developed theory of ideology which succeeds the one we have been outlining (Mepham, "The Theory of Ideology in *Capital*"; and Geras, "Marx and the Critique of Political Economy"). For Marx, capitalism is the most dynamic and rapidly expanding mode of production so far to be seen in human history. One consequence of its dynamic but antagonistic movement is that, within its logic, production comes pro-

gressively to depend on the increasing “socialization” or interdependence of labor. At this level, capitalism contributes to the further development and transformation of man’s productive powers. But this continuing all-sided interdependence of labor in the sphere of production is, at every moment under capitalism, realized in and organized through *the market*. And in the market, men’s all-sided interdependence, the basis of their “sociality,” is experienced as “something alien and objective, confronting the individual, not as their relation to one another, but as their subordination to relations which subsist independently of them, and which arise out of collisions between mutually indifferent individuals” (*Grundrisse*). So the progressively social character of production appears as a condition of mutual unconnectedness and indifference. Thus *both* the “socialization” of labor and its opposite—the sale of labor as an individual commodity, the private appropriation of its products, its fragmentation through the market and commodity exchange—are true: that is, the contradictory nature, and the structurally antagonistic character of its production under the determinate conditions of capitalism. We must begin to grasp the fundamentally antagonistic nature of culture under capitalist conditions in an analogous way.

We can discover a number of critical points about how this might be done by following for a moment the way Marx handles this contradiction between the social character of labor and the individual nature of its realization under capitalism. What accomplishes this dislocation, from social production to individual realization, is commodity exchange in the market. The market of course, *really exists*. It is not the figment of anyone’s imagination. It is a *mediation* which enables one kind of relation (social) to appear (i.e., *really* to appear) as another kind of relation (individual) (*Grundrisse*). This second relation is not “false” in the sense that it does not exist: but it is “false” in the sense that, within its limits, it cannot express and embody the full social relation on which the system ultimately rests. The market re-presents a system which requires both production and exchange as if it consisted of exchange only. That of course was the key premise of much of political economy. It therefore has the function, at one and the same time, of: (a) transforming one relation into its opposite—the “*camera obscura*”; (b) making the latter, which is *part of* the relations of production and exchange under capitalism, appear as, or *stand for*, the whole—this is the theory of *fetishism*, developed in the first chapter of the first volume of *Capital*; (c) and also making the latter—the real foundations of capitalist society, in production—*disappear from view*, the effect of *concealment*. Hence, we can only “see” that labor

and production are realized through the market: we can no longer “see” that it is in production that labor is exploited and the surplus value extracted. These three “functions” make market relationships under capitalism, simultaneously, “real” and *ideological*. They are ideological, not because they are a fantasy, but because there is a structural dislocation between what Marx calls the levels of “real relations,” where capitalism conducts its business, and the form of appearance, the ideological structures and relations—what he calls the “phenomenal forms”—through which that business is accomplished. This distinction between “real relations” and *how they appear* is the absolute pivot of the “theory of ideology” which is contained—but in an implicit and untheorized manner—in Marx’s later and more mature work. It can be seen that, far from there being a *homologous* relationship between the material basis of practice, in capitalism, and how it *appears*, these now have to be thought, rigorously, as two related but systematically dislocated articulations of a capitalist social formation. They relate, but through their systematic differences—through a necessary series of *transformations*. The level of ideology, of consciousness, and of experiencing must be thought in terms of this decentering of material practice *through* ideological forms and relations. There must be distinct levels of practice corresponding to these two sites of the social formation. To understand the role of ideology, we must also be able to account for the mechanisms which consistently sustain, in reality, a set of representations which are not so much false to, as a *false inflection* of, the “real relations” on which, in fact, they depend. (Let us remember that, since the market does exist and people buy and sell things, market *ideologies* are materialized in market practices.)

We can take this one step further. For not only does socially interdependent labor *appear*, in the sphere of the market, as a set of mutually independent and indifferent relations: but this second level of ideological relations gives rise to a whole set of theories, images, representations, and discourses which *fill it out*. The various discourses of wages, and prices, of the “individual buyer and seller,” of the “consumer,” of “the labor contract”; or the elaborate contract theories of property enshrined in the legal system; or the theories of possessive individualism, of individual “rights and duties,” of “free agents,” of the “rights of man” and of “representative democracy”—in short, the whole enormously complex sphere of legal, political, economic, and philosophical discourses which compose the dense ideological complex of a modern capitalist society, all stem from or are rooted in the same premises

upon which the market and the ideas of a “market society” and of “market rationality” are founded. Marx makes this connection clear in a telling passage in *Capital* where he takes leave of “this noisy sphere where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men,” and follows the capitalist process into “the hidden abode of production.” The latter sphere—the sphere of exchange—he remarks, “is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom because both buyer and seller of a commodity . . . are [i.e., appear to be] constrained by their own free will. . . . Equality because each enters [appears to enter] into relation with the other as with a simple owner of commodities. . . . Property because each disposes [appears to dispose] only of what is his own. . . . And Bentham because each looks [appears to look] only to himself. . . . Each looks to himself only, and no one troubles himself about the rest, and just because they do so, do they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence, work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all” (*Capital*, Vol. I; and *Grundrisse*, for various clarifications). It is crucial to the whole force of this ironic passage that the discourses both of everyday life and of high political, economic, or legal theory arise from, not the ideological relation of the market exchange only, but (to put it clumsily but necessarily) from the way the real relations of production are *made to appear* in the form of the ideological or “imaginary” relations of market exchange. It is also crucial that “ideology” is now understood not as what is hidden and concealed, but precisely as what is most open, apparent, manifest—what “takes place on the surface and in view of all men.” What is hidden, repressed, or inflected out of sight are its real foundations. This is the source or site of its *unconsciousness*.

This point is of the utmost importance: but it is not easy to grasp. For how can the realm in which we think, talk, reason, explain, and experience ourselves—the activities of consciousness—be unconscious? We may think here of the most obvious and “transparent” forms of consciousness which operate in our everyday experience and ordinary language: common sense. What passes for “common sense” in our society—the residue of absolutely basic and commonly agreed, consensual wisdoms—helps us to classify the world in simple but meaningful terms. Precisely, common sense does not require reasoning, argument, logic, thought: it is spontaneously available, thoroughly recognizable, widely shared. It *feels*, indeed, as if it has always been there, the sedimented, bedrock wisdom of “the race,” a form of “natural”

wisdom, the content of which has changed hardly at all with time. However, common sense does have a *content*, and a history. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith reminds us (“Common Sense”), when Robinson Crusoe was left entirely on his own in his natural state on a desert island, what he “spontaneously” developed was not universally common ideas but a distinctly “primitive capitalist” mentality. In the same way, contemporary forms of common sense are shot through with the debris and traces of previous, more developed ideological systems; and their reference point is to what passes, without exception, as the wisdom of *our* particular age and society, overcast with the glow of traditionalism. It is precisely its “spontaneous” quality, its transparency, its “naturalness,” its refusal to be made to examine the premises on which it is founded, its resistance to change or to correction, its effect of instant recognition, and the closed circle in which it moves which makes common sense, at one and the same time, “spontaneous,” ideological, and *unconscious*. You cannot learn, through common sense, *how things are*: you can only discover *where they fit* into the existing scheme of things. In this way, its very taken-for-grantedness is what establishes it as a medium in which its own premises and presuppositions are being rendered *invisible* by its apparent transparency. (See Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*.) It was in this general sense that Marx talked about the ideological forms in which men “become conscious”—treating the process of *becoming conscious* (in either an active, revolutionary or a passive, commonsense way) as a distinct process, with its own logic, mechanisms, and “effects”; not to be condensed or collapsed into other social practices. It is also in this general sense that Althusser speaks of ideology as “that new form of specific unconsciousness called ‘consciousness’” (“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”). Althusser argues that, though ideologies usually consist of systems of representations, images, and concepts, “it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men. They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men via a process that escapes them.” Ideologies are, therefore, the sphere of the *lived*—the sphere of *experiencing*, rather than of “thinking.”

In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence [e.g., the socialization of labor under capitalism] but *the way* they “live” the relation between them and their conditions of existence [i.e., the way we live, through market relationships, the real conditions of capitalist production] . . . the expression of the relation between men and their “world” . . . the (overdetermined) unity of the real

relation and the imaginary relation between them and the real conditions of existence. (“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”)

This is a crucial reformulation.

We can see that this way of conceptualizing culture and ideology implies a very different way of “thinking” the relationship between the material basis and the complex superstructures than that which seems to lie at the heart of *The German Ideology*. Althusser and his “school” have been principally responsible for criticizing the “humanist-historicist” manner in which the different levels of social practice are conceptualized and related in that text, and in subsequent theorists which follow on from it. He calls it “Hegelian,” because, though society is seen as full of contradictions, mediations, and dialectical movement, the social formation is nevertheless, in the end, reducible to a *simple* structure, with “one principle of internal unity,” which “unrolls” evenly throughout all the different levels. This is the conception of a social formation as an “expressive totality.” When this manner of thinking a society is brought within the scope of Marx’s “determination in the last instance by the economic,” then every other level of the social formation—civil life, the forms of the state, political, ideological, and theoretical practices—are all, ultimately, “expressive of, and therefore reducible to, a single contradiction.” They are “moved by the simple play of a principle of *simple* contradiction” (“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”).

From this “base,” cultural and ideological forms appear simply as so many reflexive objectifications of a single, undifferentiated, *human praxis*—which, under conditions of capitalist production, becomes reified and alienated: its “one principle of internal unity is itself only possible on the absolute condition of taking the whole concrete life of a people for the externalization-alienation of an internal spiritual principle.” As against this, Althusser proposes that we must understand a social formation as “an ever pre-given structured complex whole.” There is no simple essence, underlying or predating this structured complexity, to which any single practice—e.g., the production of ideology—can be effectively reduced. As Marx himself argued at length, “The simplest economic category . . . can only ever exist as the unilateral and abstract relation of a pre-given, living concrete whole” (*Grundrisse*). We must therefore “think” a society or social formation as ever and always constituted by a set of complex practices; each with its own specificity, its own modes of articulation; standing in an “uneven development” to other, related practices. Any relation within this structured

complexity will have its registration, its “effects,” at all the other levels of the totality—economic, social, political, ideological; none can be reduced to or collapsed into the other. If, nevertheless, this social formation—now conceptualized not as an “economic basis” and its “reflexive superstructures” but rather as a structure-superstructure complex—is not to be conceptualized as a series of totally independent, autonomous, and unrelated practices, then this relatedness must be “thought” *through* the different mechanisms and articulations which connect one with another within the “whole”—articulations which do not proceed in an inevitable tandem, but which are linked through their *differences*, through the dislocations between them, rather than through their similarity, correspondence, or identity. (See Hall, “A ‘Reading’ of the ‘1857 Introduction.’”) The principle of determinacy—which, as we saw, is fundamental to any materialist theory—must therefore be thought, not as the simple determination of one level (e.g., the economic) over all the others, but as the structured sum of the different determinations, the structure of their overall effects. Althusser gives to this double way of conceiving the “relative autonomy” of practices *and* their “determination in the last instance” the term *overdetermination*. When there is a fusion or “ruptural conjuncture” between all the different levels, this is not because the “economic” (“His Majesty, The Economy”) has detached itself and “appeared” on its own as a naked principle of determination, but because the contradictions at the different levels have all *accumulated* within a single conjuncture. That conjuncture is then overdetermined by all the other instances and effects: it is “structured in dominance” (Althusser, *For Marx*).

We can now attempt to “cash” this distinctive way of thinking the interplay of practices and relations within a social formation by considering the level of “ideological practice” and its principal mediator—language. The production of various kinds of social knowledge takes place through the instrumentality of thinking, conceptualization, and symbolization. It operates primarily and principally through language—that set of objective signs and discourses which materially embody the processes of thought and mediate the communication of thought in society. Language is, as Saussure insisted, fundamentally *social*. The individual can only think and speak by first situating himself within the language system. That system is socially constructed and sustained: it cannot be elaborated from the individual speaker alone. Hence speech and the other discourses—including what Volosinov calls “inner speech”—constitute systems of signs which objectivate and intermediate “thinking”: they *speak us* as much as we speak in and through them.

To express ourselves within this objectivated system of signs we must have access to the rules and conventions which govern speech and articulation; to the various *codes*—the precise number and disposition of the codes will vary from one linguistic and cultural community to another—through which social life is *classified out* in our culture.

Now in so far as all social life, every facet of social practice, is mediated by language (conceived as a system of signs and representations, arranged by codes and articulated through various discourses), it enters fully into material and social practice. Its distribution and usages will be fundamentally structured by all the other relations of the social formation which employ it. Volosinov observes that “the forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate condition of their interaction.” Lev Vygotsky, working in a similar field to Volosinov at the time, insisted that language, like all other social phenomena, is “subject to all the premises of historical materialism.” Its usage will therefore reflect the class structuring of capitalist social relations. It will be dependent on the nature of the social relations in which it is embedded, the manner in which its users are socially organized together, the social and material contexts in which it is employed. At the same time, this “world of signs” and discourses has its own internal laws, rules, codes, and conventions, its own modes and mechanisms. The principal element in the articulation of language is the *sign*. Signs are the material registration of meaning. Signs communicate, not simply because they are social phenomena and are part of material reality, but because of the specific function which they have of *refracting* that reality of which they are a part. As the structural linguists have shown, a sign does not carry meaning by unilaterally standing for an object or event in the “real world.” There is no such transparent, one-to-one relationship between sign, the thing to which it refers, and what that thing “means.” Signs communicate meaning because of the way they are internally organized together within a specific language system or set of codes, articulating the way things are related together in the objective social world. “Signs,” Barthes in *Elements of Semiology*, argues, “cut at one and the same time into two floating kingdoms.” Thus, events and relations in the “real” world do not have a single natural, necessary and unambiguous meaning which is simply projected, through signs, into language. The same set of social relations can be differently organized to *have a meaning* within different linguistic and cultural systems. (Even at the simplest level, we know that the Eskimos have several different terms for what we call “snow.”) And this disjuncture between the

different ways of classifying a domain of social life in different cultures is even more striking, when we move from the denotation of natural objects to the signification of complex social relations. Certain ideological domains will be fully inscribed ideologically in one social formation, thoroughly articulated in a complex field of ideological signs, while others will remain relatively “empty” and undeveloped. Rather than speaking of such relations as “having a meaning” we must think of language as *enabling things to mean*. This is the social practice of *signification*: the practice through which the “labor” of cultural and ideological representation is accomplished. It follows that the ways in which men come to understand their relation to their real conditions of existence, under capitalism, are subject to the *relay of language*. And it is this which makes possible ideological displacement or inflection, whereby the “real” relations can be culturally signified and ideologically inflected as a set of “imaginary lived relations.” As Volosinov puts it:

A sign does not simply exist as a part of reality—it reflects and refracts another reality. Therefore it may distort that reality or be true to it, or may perceive it from a special point of view, and so forth. Every sign is subject to the criteria of ideological evaluation. . . . The domain of ideology coincides with the domain of signs. They equate with one another. Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present too. Everything ideological possesses a semiotic value.

Volosinov recognizes that this sphere will, in any social formation, be organized into a complex *ideological field of discourses*, whose purpose is to endow the social relations which are grasped as “intelligible” within that particular field as having a certain, a “definite” *kind* of intelligibility:

the domain of the artistic image, the religious symbol, the scientific formula and the judicial ruling, etc. Each field of ideological creativity has its own kind of orientation towards reality and each refracts reality in its own way. Each field commands its own special function within the unity of social life. But it is their semiotic character that places all ideological phenomena under the same general condition.

Nicos Poulantzas has recently attempted to lay out the various *regions* into which the dominant ideologies under capitalism are organized. He argues that, under capitalism, the *juridico-political* region of ideology will play a dominant role; its function being, in part, to hide or “mask” the determinant role which the level of the economic plays in this mode of production—so that “every-

thing takes place as if the centre of the dominant ideology is never in the place where real knowledge is to be sought"; and that other ideological regions—philosophic, religious, and moral ideologies—will tend to “borrow notions” from that instance which plays the dominant role (Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*). Whether we accept this particular résumé or not, it is of critical importance to understand that ideologies are not simply the “false understandings” of individuals; nor can the individual subject be conceptualized as the source or author of ideology. (We insist on this point, since one of the recent developments in materialist theory, which seeks to combine Marxism with Freudian psychoanalysis, sees the fundamental moment at which the individual subject “positions” himself or herself in ideology as occurring as an unconscious, individual, and trans-cultural process, at the moment when, via the Oedipus complex, men “enter culture.”) Important as this line of theorizing is in accounting for the subjective moment of the entry into ideology, it is of critical importance to stress that ideology as a *social practice* consists of the “subject” positioning himself in the specific complex, the objectivated field of discourses and codes which are available to him in language and culture at a particular historical conjuncture—what C. Wright Mills calls “situated actions” and “vocabularies of motives” (Mills, *Power, Politics and People*).

As Umberto Eco has observed, “Semiology shows us the universe of ideologies arranged in codes and sub-codes within the universe of signs” (“Articulations of the Cinematic Code”). It is principally the nature of signs and the arrangement of signs into their various codes and sub-codes, ensembles and sub-ensembles, and what has been called the “intertextuality” of codes, which enable this “work” of cultural signification to be ceaselessly accomplished in societies. Connotative codes, above all, which enable a sign to “reference” a wide domain of social meanings, relations, and associations, are the means by which the widely distributed forms of social knowledge, social practices, the taken-for-granted knowledge which society’s members possess of its institutions, beliefs, ideas, and legitimations are “brought within the horizon” of language and culture. These codes constitute the crisscrossing frames of reference, the sedimentations of meaning and connotation, which cover the face of social life and render it classifiable, intelligible, meaningful. (See Hall, “External/Internal Dialectic in Broadcasting”; and Hall, “Deviancy, Politics and the Media.”) They constitute the “maps of meaning” of a culture. Barthes calls them “fragments of ideology.” “These signifieds,” he goes on, “have a very close communication with culture, knowledge and history and it is through them, so to speak, that the environmental world

invades the system [of language].” To each of these cultural lexicons “there corresponds . . . a corpus of practices and techniques; these collections imply on the part of system consumers . . . different degrees of knowledge (according to differences in their ‘culture’) which explains how the same lexis . . . can be deciphered differently according to the individual concerned without ceasing to belong to a given ‘language’” (*Elements of Semiology*). The different areas of social life, the different levels and kinds of relation and practice, appear to be “held together” in social intelligibility by this web of preferred meanings. These networks are clustered into *domains*, which appear to *link*, naturally, certain things to certain other things, within a context, and to exclude others. These domains of meaning, then, have the whole social order and social practice refracted within their classifying schemes.

Marx however insisted, not merely that men live their relations to their real conditions of existence “in ideology,” but that, in the capitalist mode of production, they will “think” those conditions, in general, within the limits of a *dominant* ideology; and that, generally, this will tend to be the ideology of the *dominant classes*. The fact that the proletariat “lives” the collective socialization of labor, under capitalism, through the fragmenting form of *the market*, and thinks this condition of its material life within the discourses which organize market practices ideologically (or that, under capitalism the proletariat “lives” the expropriation of surplus value in the “ideological form” of *wages*—a form giving rise to its own ideological discourses: wage bargaining, economism, what Lenin called “trade-union consciousness,” “a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work,” etc.) is not, for Marx, simply a *descriptive* feature of capitalism. These ideological inflections perform a pivotal role in the maintenance of capitalist relations and in their continuing domination within the social formation. Before, then, considering what role the mass media play in relation to these processes, we must briefly examine *how* this notion of dominant ideology is to be understood. What relation does a dominant ideology have to the “dominant,” and to the “dominated” classes? What functions does it perform for capital and for the continuation of capitalist relations? What are the mechanisms by which this “work” is accomplished?

Three Related Concepts of “Domination”

In a recent article, which represents a considerable modification of his earlier position, Raymond Williams argues that “in any particular period there is a central system of practices, meanings and values which we can properly

call dominant and effective . . . which are organized and lived.” This is understood, not as a static structure—“the dry husks of ideology” (“Base and Superstructure”)—but as a *process*: the process of incorporation. Williams cites the educational institutions as one of the principal agencies of this process. By means of it, certain of the available meanings and values through which the different classes of men live their conditions of life are “chosen for emphasis,” others discarded. More crucially, the many meanings and values which lie outside of the selective and selecting emphases of this central core are continually “reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture.” The dominant system must therefore continually make and remake itself so as to contain those meanings, practices, and values which are oppositional to it. Williams therefore understands any society to contain many more systems of meaning and value than those incorporated in its “central system of practices, meanings and values”—“no mode of production and therefore no dominant society or order . . . and therefore no dominant culture in reality exhausts human practice, human energy, human intention.” What then constitutes the “dominance” of these dominant meanings and practices are the mechanisms which allow it to select, incorporate, and therefore also exclude elements in what Williams understood as the full range of human practice (the selectivity of *tradition* plays a key role here). He identifies two classes of alternative meaning and practice. There are “residual” forms of alternative or oppositional culture, which consist of meanings and values which cannot find expression within the dominant structure, but which are principally drawn from the past. Ideas associated with the rural past and with “organic society” are examples of *residual* elements in our culture. They have often formed the basis (the English “culture-and-society” tradition is the best example) of a critique of existing cultural forms and tendencies: but they threaten it, so to speak, from the past. *Emergent* forms are the area of new practices, new meanings and values. Both residual and emergent forms of culture may, of course, be partially “incorporated” into the dominant structure: or they may be left as a deviation or enclave which varies from, without threatening, the central emphases.

Despite his continuing stress on experience and intention, this definition of “dominant culture” in Williams clearly owes a great deal to Gramsci’s pivotal and commanding notion of *hegemony* (*Prison Notebooks*). Gramsci argued that “hegemony” exists when a ruling class (or, rather, an alliance of ruling class fractions, a “historical bloc”) is able not only to coerce a subordinate

class to conform to its interests, but exerts a “total social authority” over those classes and the social formation as a whole. “Hegemony” is in operation when the dominant class fractions not only dominate but *direct* or lead: when they not only possess the power to coerce but actively organize so as to command and win the consent of the subordinated classes to their continuing sway. “Hegemony” thus depends on a combination of force and consent. But—Gramsci argues—in the liberal-capitalist state, consent is normally in the lead, operating behind “the armour of coercion.” Hegemony, then, cannot be won in the productive and economic sphere alone: it must be organized at the level of the state, politics, and the superstructures—indeed the latter is the *terrain* on which “hegemony” is accomplished. In part, “hegemony” is achieved by the *containment* of the subordinate classes within the “superstructures”: but crucially, these structures of “hegemony” work by *ideology*. This means that the “definitions of reality,” favorable to the dominant class fractions, and institutionalized in the spheres of civil life and the state, come to constitute the primary “lived reality” as such for the subordinate classes. In this way ideology provides the “cement” in a social formation, “preserving the ideological unity of the entire social bloc.” This operates, not because the dominant classes can prescribe and proscribe, in detail, the mental content of the lives of subordinate classes (they too “live” in their own ideologies), but because they strive and to a degree succeed in *framing* all competing definitions of reality *within their range*, bringing all alternatives within their horizon of thought. They set the limits—mental and structural—within which subordinate classes “live” and make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them. Gramsci makes it plain that ideological hegemony must be won and sustained through the existing ideologies, and that at any time this will represent a complex *field* (not a single, univocal structure), bearing “traces” of previous ideological systems and sedimentations, and complex ideological notations referring to the present. “Hegemony” cannot be sustained by a single, unified “ruling class” but only by a particular conjunctural alliance of class fractions; thus the content of dominant ideology will reflect this complex interior formation of the dominant classes. Hegemony is accomplished through the agencies of the superstructures—the family, education system, the church, the media, and cultural institutions, as well as the coercive side of the state—the law, police, the army, which *also*, in part, “work through ideology.” It is crucial to the concept that hegemony is not a “given” and permanent state of affairs, but has to be actively won and *secured*: it can also be lost. Gramsci was preoccupied

with Italian society, in which, for long periods, various alliances of the ruling classes had ruled through “force” without taking over an authoritative and legitimate *leadership* in the state. There is no *permanent* hegemony: it can only be established, and analyzed, in concrete historical conjunctures. The reverse side of this is that, even under hegemonic conditions, there can be no total incorporation or absorption of the subordinate classes (such as, for example, is foreseen in Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*). The dominated classes, which have their own objective basis in the system of productive relations, their own distinctive forms of social life and class practice, remain—often as a separate, distinct, dense, and cohesive structure—a *corporate* class culture which is nevertheless *contained*. When these subordinated classes are not strong or sufficiently organized to represent a “counter-hegemonic” force to the existing order, their own corporate structures and institutions can be used, by the dominant structure (hegemonized), as a means of enforcing their continued subordination. The trade unions, which arise as a defensive set of institutions in the working class, can nevertheless be used to provide a structure which perpetuates the *corporateness* of that class, confining its opposition within limits which the system can contain (e.g., “economism”). However, for Gramsci, this does not represent the total disappearance of a subordinate class into the culture of a hegemonic bloc, but the *achieved complementarity* between hegemonic and subordinate classes and their cultures. This complementarity—Gramsci calls it an unstable equilibrium—is the one moment of the class struggle which never disappears; but it can be more or less open, more or less contained, more or less oppositional. In general, then, “hegemony” achieves the establishment of a certain *equilibrium* in the class struggle so that, whatever are the concessions the ruling “bloc” is required to make to win consent and legitimacy, its fundamental basis will not be overturned. “In other words, the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the state is conceived as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria . . . between the interests of the fundamental group and those subordinate groups—equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e. stopping short of narrowly corporate economic interests” (*Prison Notebooks*). For Gramsci, this often has a great deal to do with the manner in which, at the level of the superstructures and the state, particular interests can be represented as “general interests” in which all classes have an equal stake.

The immense theoretical revolution which Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" represents (over, for example, the much simpler and more mechanical formulations of many parts of *The German Ideology*) cannot be overstressed. Through this concept, Gramsci considerably enlarges the whole notion of domination. He places it fundamentally in "the relations between structure and superstructure which must be accurately posed and resolved if the forces which are active in a particular period are to be correctly analysed." In doing so, he sets the concept at a critical distance from all types of economic or mechanical reductionism, from both "economism" and conspiracy theory. He redefines the whole notion of *power* so as to give full weight to its non-coercive aspects. He also sets the notion of domination at a distance from the direct expression of narrow class interests. He understands that ideology is not "psychological or moralistic but structural and epistemological." Above all he allows us to begin to grasp the central role which the superstructures, the state and civil associations, politics and ideology, play in securing and cementing societies "structured in dominance," and in actively conforming the whole of social, ethical, mental, and moral life in their overall tendencies to the requirements of the productive system. This enlarged concept of class power and of ideology has provided one of the most advanced theoretical bases for elaborating a "regional" theory of the much-neglected and often reduced spheres of the superstructural and ideological complexes of capitalist societies.

The third concept of domination is also closely inspired by and elaborated from Gramsci, though it is critical of the traces of "historicism" in Gramsci's philosophical approach to materialism. This is the thesis, signaled in an exploratory manner in Althusser's important and influential essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." "Ideological State Apparatuses" became known, for short, as "ISAs." This introduces the key notion of *reproduction* which has played an extremely important role in recent theorizing on these issues. Briefly, Althusser argues that capitalism as a productive system reproduces the conditions of production "on an expanded scale," and this must include *social reproduction*—the reproduction of labor-power and of the relations of production. This includes wages, without which labor-power cannot reproduce itself; skills, without which labor-power cannot reproduce itself as a developing "productive force"; and "appropriate ideas":

a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a

reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression . . . it is the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour power.

But this expanded notion of “social reproduction” precisely requires the agency of all those apparatuses which are apparently not directly linked in with production as such. The reproduction of labor-power through the wage requires *the family*; the reproduction of advanced skills and techniques requires *the education system*; the “reproduction of the submission to the ruling ideology” requires the *cultural institutions*, the *church* and the *mass media*, the *political apparatuses* and the overall management of the state, which, in advanced capitalism, increasingly takes all these other, “non-productive” apparatuses into its terrain. Since the state is the structure which ensures that this “social reproduction” is carried through (a) with the consent of the whole society, since the state is understood as “neutral,” above class interests, and (b) in the long-term interests of the continued hegemony of capital and of the ruling class bloc, Althusser calls all the apparatuses involved in this process (whether or not they are strictly organized by the state) “ideological state apparatuses.” (In fact, both Althusser and Poulantzas—who follows Althusser closely in this—exaggerate the role of the state and undervalue the role of other elements in the reproduction of capitalist social relations.) Unlike the coercive institutions of the state, these ISAs rule principally *through ideology*. Althusser recognizes that the ruling classes do not “rule” *directly* or in their own name and overt interests, but via the necessary displacements, examined earlier, through the “class neutral” structures of the state, and the complexly constructed field of ideologies. But the “diversity and contradictions” of these different spheres in which the different apparatuses function are nevertheless unified “beneath the ruling ideology.” In this arena Althusser gives pride of place to what he calls “the School-Family” couple. He understands “ruling ideology” here in terms of his exposition (summarized earlier)—as the “system of ideas and representations” by means of which men understand and “live” an imaginary relation to their real conditions of existence: “What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which governs the existence of men, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.”

Althusser is, here, despite important differences in terminology and in theoretical perspective, moving very close to the terrain of Gramsci’s work

(far closer than in the now acknowledgedly “over-theoreticist” formulations of some parts of *Reading Capital*): but with at least two significant differences of stress. First, Althusser insists that, since the terrain of ideologies is not simple but complex, and consists not simply of “ruling ideas” but of a field of ideological thematics constituted by *the relation* “in ideas” between dominant and subordinate classes, what the ISAs reproduce must be the ruling ideology “precisely in its contradictions.” Ideological reproduction thus becomes “not only the stake but also the site of class struggle.” Second, he insists that the form of the “unity” which the ISAs accomplish is closer to that of a “teeth-gritting harmony” than a functional “fit.” But both these aspects of his self-styled “Notes”—the idea of continuing struggle and of a *contradictory* reproduction in the sphere of ideology—though actively insisted upon, appear, in fact, more marginal to the theoretical heart of his argument, which centers upon the concept of continuing reproduction of the social relations of a system. This has the effect (as compared with Gramsci) of making Althusser’s outline more functionalist than he would clearly like.

What Does Ideology “Do” for the Dominant Capitalist Order?

Gramsci, following Marx, suggested that there were “two, great floors” to the superstructures—civil society and the state. (Marx, we recall, had called them both “ideological” or “phenomenal forms.” Gramsci, it should be noted, is particularly confusing as to the distinction between the two, a matter made more complex because, in the conditions of advanced monopoly capitalism, the boundaries between these two “floors” are, in any case, shifting.) One way of thinking the general function of ideology, in relation to these two spheres, is in terms of what Poulantzas calls *separation and uniting*. In the sphere of market relations and of “egoistic private interest” (the sphere, preeminently, of “civil society”) the productive classes *appear* or are represented as (a) individual economic units driven by private and egoistic interests alone, which are (b) bound by the multitude of invisible contracts—the “hidden hand” of capitalist exchange relations. As we have remarked, this re-presentation has the effect, first, of *shifting* emphasis and visibility from production to exchange, second of *fragmenting* classes into individuals, third of *binding* individuals into that “passive community” of consumers. Likewise, in the sphere of the state and of juridico-political ideology, the political classes and class relations are represented as individual

subjects (citizens, the voter, the sovereign individual in the eyes of the law and the representative system, etc.); and these individual political legal subjects are then “bound together” as members of a *nation*, united by the “social contract,” and by their common and mutual “general interest.” (Marx calls the general interest “precisely the generality of self-seeking interests.”) Once again, the class nature of the state is masked: classes are redistributed into individual subjects: and these individuals are united within the imaginary coherence of the state, the nation, and the “national interest.” It is surprising how many of the dominant ideological regions accomplish their characteristic inflections by way of this mechanism.

Poulantzas brings together a number of critical functions of ideology within this paradigmatic ideological *figure*. The first general ideological effect under capitalism appears to be that of *masking and displacing*. Class domination, the class-exploitative nature of the system, the source of this fundamental expropriation in the sphere of production, the determinacy in this mode of production of the economic—time and again the general manner in which the ideologies of the dominant culture function is to mask, conceal, or repress these antagonistic foundations of the system. The second general effect, then, is that of *fragmentation* or separation. The unity of the different spheres of the state are dispersed into the theory of the “separation of powers” (“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”). The collective interests of the working classes are fragmented into the internal oppositions between different strata of the class. The value which is collectively created is individually and privately appropriated. The “needs” of producers are represented as the “wants” of consumers—the two so separate that they can, in fact, be set against one another. In most of the dominant regions of this ideological field, the constituting category is what Poulantzas calls “individuals-persons.” The moral, juridical, representational, and psychological lexicons of the dominant system of practices, values, and meanings could literally not be constituted at all without this thoroughly bourgeois category of “possessive individuals.” (Hence Althusser’s stress on ideology “interpellating the subject.”) The third ideological “effect” is that of imposing an *imaginary unity or coherence* on the units so re-presented; and thus of replacing the real unity of the first level with the “imaginary lived relations” of the third. This consists of the reconstituting of individual person-subjects into the various ideological totalities—the “community,” the “nation,” “public opinion,” “the consensus,” the “general interest,” the “popular will,” “society,” “ordinary consumers” (even Mr. Heath’s great conglomerate, the “trade union of the nation”!). At

this level, unities are once again produced; but now in forms which mask and displace the level of class relations and economic contradictions and *represents* them as non-antagonistic totalities. This is Gramsci's hegemonic function of *consent and cohesion*.

One of the critical sites of this masking-fragmenting-uniting process is the state, especially under modern advanced capitalist conditions. We cannot elaborate on a Marxist theory of the state at this point. But the important fact about the state, for our purposes, is that it is the sphere, *par excellence*, where the *generalization* and *universalizing* of class interests into "the general interest" takes place. Hegemony is founded not only on force but on consent and leadership precisely because, within it, class interests are generalized in their passage through the mediation of the state: Gramsci refers to this process as "the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures" (*Prison Notebooks*). The state is necessary to ensure the conditions for the continued expansion of capital. But it also functions on behalf of capital—as what Engels called the "ideal total capitalist," often securing the long-term interests of capital against the narrow and immediate class interests of particular sections of the capitalist classes. In this lies its relative independence of any alliance of ruling classes. Rather than *ruling* the state, like Lenin's "executive committee," these classes must *rule through the mediation* of the state, where, precisely—through its different ideological discourses—class interests can assume the form of "the general interest" and (as Marx and Engels remarked in *The German Ideology*) are given "the form of universality and represent[ed] . . . as the only rational, universally valid ones." It is in this function, above all—secured not only by the dominant ideologies of the state but by its relations and structures—that the state imposes an "order which legalizes and perpetuates this [class] oppression by moderating the collision between the classes" (Lenin, *The State and Revolution*). It was Engels who remarked that "once the state has become an independent power vis-à-vis society, it produces forthwith a further ideology. It is indeed amongst professional politicians, theorists of public law and jurists of private law that the connection with economic facts gets lost for fair. . . . The interconnections between conceptions and their material conditions of existence become more and more complicated, more and more obscured by intermediary links" ("Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy").

The third arena of ideological effects which we must mention has to do, not with the process of ideological re-presentation, but with securing legitimacy and winning consent for these representations. The questions of legitimacy

and consent are crucial for Gramsci's concept of "hegemony," since it is through them that the dominant classes can use the field of ideologies positively to *construct* hegemony (what Gramsci calls the educative and ethical functions); but, also, because it is through them that the dominant system comes to win a certain *acceptance* from the dominated classes. The same processes of masking-fragmenting-uniting, commented on before, are to be found in this process of securing the legitimacy and assent of the subordinated to their subordination. Here, in the structures of political representation and of "separate powers" and of liberties and freedoms, which lie at the core of bourgeois-liberal formal democracy, both as superstructures and as lived ideologies, the operation of one class upon another in *shaping and producing consent* (through the selective forms of social knowledge made available) is rendered invisible: this exercise of ideological class domination is dispersed through the fragmentary agencies of a myriad of individual wills and opinions, separate powers; this fragmentation of opinion is then *reorganized* into an imaginary coherence in the mystical unity of "the consensus," into which free and sovereign individuals and their wills "spontaneously" flow. In this process, that consent-to-hegemony whose premises and preconditions are constantly structuring the sum of what individuals in society think, believe, and want, is represented, in appearance, as a freely given and "natural" coming together into a *consensus* which legitimates the exercise of power. This structuring and reshaping of consent and consensus—the reverse side of "hegemony"—is one of the principal kinds of work which the dominant ideologies perform.

Only at this point is it possible to attempt to situate, in the most general terms, the ideological role and effects sustained by the mass media in contemporary capitalist societies. The ideological role of the media is by no means their only or exclusive function. The modern forms of the media first appear decisively, though on a comparatively minor scale as compared with their present density, in the eighteenth century, with and alongside the transformation of England into an agrarian capitalist society. Here, for the first time, the artistic product becomes a commodity; artistic and literary work achieves its full realization as an exchange value in the literary market; and the institutions of a culture rooted in market relationships begin to appear: books, newspapers, and periodicals; booksellers and circulating libraries; reviews and reviewing; journalists and hacks; bestsellers and pot-boilers. The first new "medium"—the novel, intimately connected with the rise of the emergent bourgeois classes (Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*)—appears

in this period. This transformation of the relations of culture and of the means of cultural production and consumption also provokes the first major rupture in the problematic of “culture”—the first appearance of the modern “cultural debate.” (See Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture and Society*.) (It is one of those great ironies that the very historical moment when this is happening is the one which, retrospectively, was represented by the conservative parts of the culture-and-society tradition and its heirs, as the last gasp of the “organic community.”) The evolution of the media, historically, cannot be traced here. But it is closely connected with the next profound transformation—that through which an agrarian capitalist society and culture becomes an industrial-urban capitalist one. This sets the scene, and provides the material basis and the social organization for the second great phase of change and expansion in the media of cultural production and distribution. The third phase coincides with the transformation from first-stage to second-stage industrial capitalism, or from laissez-faire to what is rather ambiguously called advanced “monopoly” capitalism. This “long,” uneven, and in many ways uncompleted transition, lasting from about the 1880s—through popular imperialism (in which the new popular press took deep root); the “remaking” of English working-class culture (Stedman Jones, “Notes on the Remaking of a Class”) and the rise of suburbia; the concentration and incorporation of capital; the reorganization of the capitalist division of labor; enormous productive and technological expansion; the organization of mass markets and of mass domestic consumption, etc.—to the present. This is the phase in which the modern mass media come into their own, massively expand and multiply, install themselves as the principal means and channels for the production and distribution of culture, and absorb more and more of the spheres of public communication into their orbit. It coincides with and is decisively connected with everything that we now understand as characterizing “monopoly” capitalism (and which was, for a very long period, ideologically misappropriated in the theory of “mass society”). In the later stages of this development, the media have penetrated right into the heart of the modern labor and productive process itself, grounded in the reorganization of capital and the state and marshaled within the same scale of mass organizations as other economic and technical parts of the system. These aspects of the growth and expansion of the media, historically, have to be left to one side by the exclusive attention given here to media as “ideological apparatuses.”

Quantitatively and qualitatively, in twentieth-century advanced capitalism, the media have established a decisive and fundamental leadership in the cultural sphere. Simply in terms of economic, technical, social, and cultural resources, the mass media command a qualitatively greater slice than all the older, more traditional cultural channels which survive. Far more important is the manner in which the whole gigantic complex sphere of public information, intercommunication, and exchange—the production and consumption of “social knowledge” in societies of this type—depends upon the mediation of the modern means of communication. They have progressively *colonized* the cultural and ideological sphere. As social groups and classes live, if not in their productive then in their “social” relations, increasingly fragmented and sectionally differentiated lives, the mass media are more and more responsible (a) for providing the basis on which groups and classes construct an “image” of the lives, meanings, practices, and values of *other* groups and classes; (b) for providing the images, representations, and ideas around which the social totality, composed of all these separate and fragmented pieces, can be coherently grasped as a “*whole*.” This is the first of the great cultural functions of the modern media: the provision and the selective construction of *social knowledge*, of social imagery, through which we perceive the “worlds,” the “lived realities” of others, and imaginarily reconstruct their lives and ours into some intelligible “world-of-the-whole,” some “lived totality.”

As society under the conditions of modern capital and production grows more complex and multifaceted, so it is experienced as more “pluralistic” in form. In regions, classes and sub-classes, in cultures and subcultures, neighborhoods and communities, interest groups and associative minorities, *varieties* of life-patterns are composed and recomposed in bewildering complexity. So an apparent plurality, an infinite variety of ways of classifying and ordering social life offer themselves as “collective representations” in place of the great unitary ideological universe, the master “canopies of legitimation,” of previous epochs. The second function of the modern media is to reflect and *reflect on this plurality* to provide a constant *inventory* of the lexicons, lifestyles, and ideologies which are objectivated there. Here the different types of “social knowledge” are classified and ranked and ordered, assigned to their referential contexts within the preferred “maps of problematic social reality” (Geertz, “Ideology as a Cultural System”). The media’s function here, as Halloran has remarked, is “the provision of social realities where they did not exist before or the giving of new directions to tendencies already

present, in such a way that the adoption of the new attitude or form of behaviour is made a socially acceptable mode of conduct, whilst failure to adopt is represented as socially disapproved deviance” (Halloran, “The Social Effects of Television”). Here the social knowledge which the media selectively circulate is ranked and arranged within the great normative and evaluative classifications, within the *preferred* meanings and interpretations. Since, as we argued earlier, there is no unitary ideological discourse into which all of this selective social knowledge can be programmed, and since many more “worlds” than that of a unitary “ruling class” must be selectively represented and classified in the media’s apparently open and diverse manner, this assignment of social relations to their classifying schemes and contexts is, indeed, the site of an enormous *ideological labor*, of ideological *work*: establishing the “rules” of each domain, actively ruling in and ruling out certain realities, offering the maps and codes which mark out territories and assign problematic events and relations to explanatory contexts, helping us not simply to *know more* about “the world” but to *make sense of it*. Here the line, amid all its contradictions, in conditions of struggle and contradiction, between *preferred* and *excluded* explanations and rationales, between permitted and deviant behaviors, between the “meaningless” and the “meaningful,” between the incorporated practices, meanings, and values and the oppositional ones, is ceaselessly drawn and redrawn, defended and negotiated: indeed, the “site and stake” of struggle. “Class,” Volosinov observed,

does not coincide with the sign community, i.e. with the community which is the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication. Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes the arena of the class struggle. This social *multi-actuality* of the ideological sign is a very crucial aspect. By and large, it is thanks to this intersecting of accents that a sign maintains its vitality and dynamism. . . . A sign that has been withdrawn from the pressures of the social struggle—which, so to speak, crosses beyond the pale of the class struggle—inevitably loses force, degenerating into allegory and becoming the object not of a live social intelligibility but of philological comprehension. (*Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*)

The third function of the media, from this point of view, is to organize, orchestrate, and *bring together* that which it has selectively represented and selectively classified. Here, however fragmentary and “plurally,” some degree

of integration and cohesion, some imaginary coherence and unities must begin to be constructed. What has been made visible and classified begins to shake into an *acknowledged order*: a complex order, to be sure, in which the direct and naked intervention of the *real* unities (of class, power, exploitation, and interest) are forever held somewhat at bay through the more neutral and integrative coherence of public opinion. From this difficult and delicate negotiatory work, the problematic areas of *consensus and consent* begin to emerge. In the interplay of opinions, freely given and exchanged, to which the idea of consensus always makes its ritual bow, *some* voices and opinions exhibit greater weight, resonance, defining and limiting power—for the pure consensus of classical liberal-democratic theory has long since given way to the reality of the more shaped and structured consensus, constructed in the unequal exchange between the unorganized masses and the great organizing centers of power and opinion—the consensus of the “big battalions,” so to speak. Nevertheless, in its own way and time, room must be found for other voices, for “minority” opinions, for “contrary” views, so that a shape, to which all reasonable men can begin to attach themselves, emerges. This forms the great unifying and consolidating level of the media’s ideological work: the generative structure beneath the media’s massive investment in the surface immediacy, the phenomenal multiplicity, of the social worlds in which it traffics. The production of consensus, the construction of legitimacy—not so much the finished article itself, but the whole process of argument, exchange, debate, consultation, and speculation by which it emerges—is the third key aspect of the media’s ideological effect.

Finally, what are the actual *mechanisms* which enable the mass media to perform this “ideological work”? In the class democracies, the media are not, on the whole, directly commanded and organized by the state (though, as in the case of British broadcasting, the links may be very close). They are not directly subverted by a section of the “ruling class” speaking in its own voice. They cannot be directly colonized by one of the ruling-class parties: no major interest of capital can exercise its access to the channels of communication without some “countervailing” voice. In their day-to-day administration and practices, the media are set to work within the framework of an impartial professional-technical set of working ideologies (e.g., the “neutral” structure of news values, applied, like the rule of law, “equally” to all sides); though the configurations which they offer are strikingly selective, drawn from an extremely limited *repertoire*, the open operation of “bias” is the exception

rather than the rule. How, then, do the discourses of the media become systematically penetrated and inflected by dominant ideologies?

We can only refer here to some of the mechanisms, taking television here as the paradigm instance, by which the media achieve their ideological effects. The media, as we have suggested, are socially, economically, and technically organized apparatuses, for the production of messages, signs arranged in complex discourses: symbolic “goods.” The production of symbolic messages cannot be accomplished without passing through the relay of language, broadly understood as the systems of signs which signify meaning. Events on their own cannot, as we have tried to show, signify: they must be *made intelligible*; and the process of social intelligibility consists precisely in those practices which translate “real” events (whether drawn from actuality or fictionally constructed) into symbolic form. This is the process we have called *encoding*. But encoding (Hall, “Encoding and Decoding”) means precisely that—selecting the codes which assign meanings to events, placing events in a referential context which attribute meaning to them. (Fictional codes perform this work too; it is not limited to the codes of “actuality” and naturalism.) There are significantly different ways in which events—especially problematic or troubling events, which breach our normal, commonsense expectations, or run counter to the given tendency of things or threaten the status quo in some way—can be encoded. The selection of codes, those which are the *preferred* codes in the different domains, and which appear to embody the “natural” explanations which most members of the society would accept (that is, which appear naturally to incarnate the “rationality” of our particular society), casts these problematic events, consensually, somewhere within the *repertoire* of the dominant ideologies. We must remember that this is not a single, unitary, but a plurality of dominant discourses: that they are not deliberately selected by encoders to “reproduce events within the horizon of the dominant ideology,” but constitute the *field* of meanings within which they must choose. Precisely because they have become “universalized and naturalized,” they appear to be the only forms of intelligibility available; they have become sedimented as “the only rational, universally valid ones” (*The German Ideology*). The premises and preconditions which sustain their rationalities have been rendered invisible by the process of ideological masking and taking-for-granted we earlier described. They seem to be, even to those who employ and manipulate them for the purposes of encoding, simply the “sum of what we already know.” That they contain premises, that these premises embody the dominant definitions of the situation, and represent

or refract the existing structures of power, wealth, and domination, hence that they *structure* every event they signify, and *accent* them in a manner which reproduces the given ideological structures—this process has become unconscious, even for the encoders. It is masked, frequently, by the intervention of the professional ideologies—those practical-technical routinizations of practice (news values, news sense, lively presentation, “exciting pictures,” good stories, hot news, etc.) which, at the phenomenal level, structure the everyday practices of encoding, and set the encoder within the bracket of a professional-technical neutrality which, in any case, distances him or her effectively from the ideological content of the material s/he is handling and the ideological inflections of the codes s/he is employing. Hence, though events will not be systematically encoded in a single way, they will tend, systematically, to draw on a very limited ideological or explanatory repertoire; and that repertoire (though in each case it requires ideological “work” to bring new events within its horizon) will have the overall tendency of making things “mean” within the sphere of the dominant ideology. Further, since the encoder wants to enforce the explanatory reach, the credibility and the effectiveness of the “sense” which s/he is making of events, s/he will employ the whole repertoire of encodings (visual, verbal, presentations, performance) to “win consent” in the audience; not for his or her own “biased” way of interpreting events, but for the legitimacy of the *range or limits* within which his encodings are operating. These “points of identification” make the preferred reading of events credible and forceful: they sustain its preferences through the *accenting* of the ideological field. Volosinov would say that they exploit the sign’s ideological flux. They aim to “win the consent” of the audience, and hence structure the manner in which the receiver of these signs will decode the message. We have tried to show, elsewhere (Hall, “Encoding and Decoding”; Morley, “Reconceptualizing the Media Audience”), that audiences, whose decodings will inevitably reflect their own material and social conditions, will not necessarily decode events within the same ideological structures as those in which they have been encoded. But the overall intention of “effective communication” must, certainly, be to “win the consent” of the audience to the *preferred reading*, and hence to get him/her to decode within the hegemonic framework. Even when decodings are not made, through a “perfect transmission,” within the hegemonic framework, the great range of decodings will tend to be “negotiations” *within* the dominant codes—giving them a more situational inflection—rather than systematically decoding them in a *counter-hegemonic* way. “Negotiated” decodings, which allow

wide “exceptions” to be made in terms of the way the audience situates itself within the hegemonic field of ideologies, but which also legitimate the wider reach, the inclusive reference, the greater overall coherence of the dominant encodings, reflect and are based upon what we called, earlier, the structured complementarity of the classes. That is, the areas for negotiation within the hegemonic codes provide precisely those necessary *spaces* in the discourse where corporate and subordinate classes insert themselves. Since the media not only are widely and diffusely distributed throughout the classes, but bring them within the grid of social communication, and must continually reproduce their own popular legitimacy for commanding that ideological territory, these negotiated spaces and inflections, which permit the subordinate readings to be contained within the larger ideological syntagmas of the dominant codes, are absolutely pivotal to media legitimacy, and give that legitimacy a popular basis. The construction of a “consensus” basis for media work is how, in part, this work of legitimation is realized.

The legitimation for this process of ideological construction and deconstruction which structures the processes of encoding and decoding is underpinned by the position of the media apparatuses. These are not, as we have suggested, by and large in our kinds of society, directly owned and organized by the state. But there is a crucial sense (it may be this which enabled Althusser to call them, nevertheless, “Ideological *State Apparatuses*”) in which it must be said that the media relate to the ruling class alliances, not directly but indirectly; and hence they have some of the characteristics—the “relative autonomy”—of the state apparatuses themselves. Broadcasting, for example, functions, like the law, and the governmental bureaucracies, under the rubric of the “separation of powers.” Not only can it not be commandeered by any single class or class party directly; but this direct and explicit command (like its reverse, a deliberate inclination toward them, or “bias,” on the part of the communicators) would immediately destroy the basis of their legitimacy—since it would reveal an open complicity with ruling-class power. The media, then, like other state complexes in the modern stage of capitalist development, absolutely depend on their “relative autonomy” from ruling-class power in the narrow sense. These are enshrined in the operational principles of broadcasting—“objectivity,” “neutrality,” “impartiality,” and “balance”: or, rather, these are the practices through which broadcasting’s “relative neutrality” is realized (Hall, “External/Internal Dialectic in Broadcasting”; and Hall, “Determinations of News Photographs”). Balance, for example, ensures that there will always be a two-sided dialogue, and thus always more than one

definition of the situation available to the audience. In the political sphere, broadcasting here reproduces with remarkable exactness the forms of parliamentary democracy, and of “democratic debate,” on which other parts of the system—the political apparatuses, for example—are constituted. The ideological “work” of the media, in these conditions, does *not*, then, regularly and routinely, depend on *subverting* the discourse for the direct support of one or another of the major *positions* within the dominant ideologies: it depends on the underwiring and underpinning of that *structured ideological field* in which the positions play, and over which, so to speak, they “contend.” For though the major political parties sharply disagree about this or that aspect of policy, there are fundamental agreements which bind the opposing positions into a complex unity: all the presuppositions, the limits to the argument, the terms of reference, etc. which those elements within the system must *share* in order to “disagree.” It is this underlying “unity” which the media underwrite and reproduce: and it is in this sense that the ideological inflection of media discourses are best understood, not as “partisan” but as fundamentally oriented “within the mode of reality of the state.” The role of shaping and organizing *consensus*, which is necessarily a complex not a simple entity, is critical here. What constitutes this, not simply as a field, but as a field which is “structured in dominance,” is the way its limits operate—to rule certain kinds of interpretation “in” or “out,” to effect its systematic *inclusions* (for example, those “definitions of the situation” which regularly, of necessity, and legitimately “have access” to the structuring of any controversial topic) and *exclusions* (for example, those groups, interpretations, positions, aspects of the reality of the system which are regularly “ruled out of court” as “extremist,” “irrational,” “meaningless,” “utopian,” “impractical,” etc.) (Hall, “The Structured Communication of Events”; and Connell, Curti, and Hall, “The ‘Unity’ of Current Affairs TV”).

Inevitably we have had to confine ourselves here to very broad mechanisms and processes, in order to give some substance to the general proposition advanced. This proposition can now be stated in a simple way, against the background of the theoretical and analytic framework established in the essay. The media serve, in societies like ours, ceaselessly to perform the critical ideological work of “classifying out the world” within the discourses of the dominant ideologies. This is neither simply, nor conscious, “work”: it is *contradictory work*—in part because of the internal contradictions between those different ideologies which constitute the dominant terrain, but even more because these ideologies struggle and contend for dominance in the field of class practices and class

struggle. Hence there is no way in which the “work” can be carried through without, to a considerable degree, also reproducing the contradictions which structure its field. Thus we must say that the work of “ideological reproduction” which they perform is by definition work in which counteracting tendencies—Gramsci’s “unstable equilibria”—will constantly be manifested. We can speak, then, only of the *tendency* of the media—but it is a systematic tendency, not an incidental feature—to reproduce the ideological field of a society in such a way as to reproduce, also, its structure of domination.

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Power as Process

We begin with Stuart's deconstruction of the term "the popular," an analysis first presented in the context of what was then called "people's history" in the UK in the early 1980s, stimulated by the pathbreaking work of E. P. Thompson, Gareth Stedman Jones, and Stuart's old colleague from the New Left, Raphael Samuel. Like many of his papers that have their origin in the context of specific conference debates, this chapter too has a strong rhetorical edge. The object of critique here (as it was for Thompson, Stedman Jones, and Samuel) is the kind of nostalgic perspective that focuses principally on celebrating the supposedly autonomous popular cultures of earlier ages. Those (putatively) pure and authentic popular cultures are often then presumed to have been overwhelmed by the power of the industrialized cultural industries that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. The people then come to be seen simply as cultural dupes, manipulated into a state of false consciousness by the debased capitalistic forms of commercial culture.

For Stuart, that perspective represented the road to nowhere, because for him there is no pure and unadulterated space of authenticity to be found whence the people, with their "culture untouched[,] . . . their liberties and instincts intact," might entirely throw off the yoke of oppression and march victoriously onto the historical stage. Rather, he sees popular culture as an always contested site of partial consent and resistance, where hegemony is struggled over in a double movement of "containment and resistance." As he ends by declaiming, *that* is why popular culture matters and is, he avers, otherwise not

something about which he would “give a damn.”¹ However, this is not to say that, at a personal level, he took no enjoyment in popular culture: far from it. Angela McRobbie has written vividly of the pleasures that she and Stuart shared in relation to their mutual enthusiasm for TV programs such as *MasterChef*.²

Stuart is conscious of the importance of attending to how powerful institutions continually attempt to reeducate, reform, and improve their subjects’ cultural habits—whether in the nineteenth century, in relation to matters of temperance and education, or today in relation to their physical and psychic fitness. As he notes, this is no passive process of cultural change but rather involves active interventions by the powerful, in which elements of popular culture deemed undesirable (such as the slovenliness of those who used to be called the lumpenproletariat but in Britain in recent years have been referred to as “chavs” or, in North American terms, “white trash”) are to be driven out and replaced by healthier (and crucially, more productive) lifestyles.

However, while he argues that it is important to recognize the potential manipulative power of both state and commercial institutions, he refuses to see their domination as in any way guaranteed.³ Drawing on Volosinov, he argues that popular language and culture is always a key arena of ideological struggle. However, he insists that this cuts both ways and that the linguistic ventriloquism of the demotic popular culture in which the media must engage in order to be effective is still compelled to preserve “some element of its roots in a real vernacular.” In a parallel sense, in passing comments here, he makes the same point about how the success of Thatcherite discourse depended on its production of some elements of an identification of “recognizable experiences and attitudes” to which people responded positively. Thus he sees popular culture and politics as ongoing processes “by means of which some things are actively preferred,” but where popular and dominant cultures exist in a continuing tension.

As indicated at the end of the introduction to the previous part, the period of the late 1970s saw Stuart involved in work concerned both with the media representation of the forms of deviance and conflict that increasingly dominated that period and with the political and legal institutions involved in policing the various crises of the time. In the preface to the “35th Anniversary” edition of *Policing the Crisis* (hereafter *PTC*), which came out in 2013 and is reprinted below as chapter 12, Stuart and his coauthors explain how their analyses developed between 1973 and 1978. However, before proceeding to the substance of their arguments, it is necessary to also attend to the conditions and methods of their production.

Policing the Crisis, Thatcherism, and After

The “mugging” project, as it was first known, was exemplary in demonstrating how the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies worked at that time. Collective authorship—particularly by the members of the specialist subgroups who constituted the Centre’s graduate student membership—was, if anything, more common than individual authorship.⁴ The authorship of the original study, *PTC*, is thus attributed to Stuart in collaboration with Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts. Further, as explained in the acknowledgments to the original volume, individual chapters were also drafted by other CCCS members, including Janice Winship and Roger Grimshaw. Stuart found this kind of collective intellectual production particularly convivial, founded as it was within the form of dialogic pedagogy that was fundamental to the working culture he had established at CCCS. Given this consideration, and the centrality of the “Policing the Crisis” project to the reputation of the CCCS, it was particularly important to include this piece of collective authorship as a representative sample of work of this type.

It is also important to note the extent of the interdisciplinarity of the project in its intellectual conception. It drew on the work of the Centre’s Media Group on the role of the media (in articulation with elite groups) in functioning as the primary definers who set the agenda of public debate. It also drew on the work of the Subcultures Group, which, influenced by the work of criminologists such as Stan Cohen and Jock Young of the National Deviancy Symposium, had been exploring the way in which youth cultures had become figured as the basis of what they called “moral panics” about what were perceived to be declining standards in public life in the UK. Further, it drew on the State Group’s work on the relationship between the repressive and educational (or, in Gramsci’s terms, ethical) dimensions of state power.⁵

As the authors of *PTC* indicate, they began with local, concrete issues. These concerned the coverage of a particular street crime in the impoverished Handsworth area of Birmingham and the punitive sentencing for street robbery of three young boys of mixed ethnic backgrounds. Thence, the analysis moves to a broader consideration of the emerging problems of inner-city areas of this type, with their overcrowding and cultural heterogeneity, poor housing, and unemployment. Thus they develop the outlines of an analysis of what Paul Gilroy later called the forms of “postcolonial melancholia” characteristic of an ex-imperial society, bemused by its own declining status

in the world and on the lookout for convenient scapegoats to explain away its problems.⁶ This question brings them to the broader political terrain of the role of the media in legitimating the newly emerging forms of authoritarian populism.

All this involved a particular form of conjunctural analysis, insofar as they were analyzing the moment in which the long, postwar settlement in the UK, based on the social-democratic construction of the welfare state, moved into terminal crisis in the wake of the stagflation provoked by the rise in global oil prices in 1973. Their analysis was concerned to articulate together the economic, sociocultural, and ethnic dimensions of this (in their terms, “ruptural”) crisis, as post-imperial Britain experienced the simultaneous traumas of economic decline (in the context of what we can see now as some of the early symptoms of globalization), the political bankruptcy of the older Labour tradition, and the conflicts emerging around the particular situation of the new generation of unemployed and alienated black youth in the UK’s inner cities. As Stuart and his coauthors explain, they came to understand this as no temporary matter but as a generalized crisis of hegemony that had, in the words of Prime Minister Edward Heath, made the country “ungovernable.” This was a situation in which, as the previous forms of legitimate consent broke down, it was possible to hear “the ugly sound of an old conjuncture unraveling.” In all of this, the media played a very significant role, importing American models of race and crime into the discussion of the British context—and melodramatically posing the issue as one where “Harlem comes to Handsworth.” Thus a toxic mixture of social, cultural, and political anxieties came to be condensed around the figure of the (implicitly black) mugger. It was in this situation that, under Thatcher’s tutelage, what we now recognize (with all the advantages of hindsight) as her specific form of authoritarian populism then emerged as the hegemonic force that was to define political life in the UK over the next three decades.

In 1978 the eminent Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm had presented his landmark analysis of the long-term decline of the European Labour movement, based on the decline in manufacturing industries (and thus of manual work for the traditional working class, who now represented a fast-shrinking percentage of the labor force), in “The Forward March of Labour Halted.”⁷ It was in its wake, in 1979, that Stuart published in the same journal the essay reprinted here “The Great Moving Right Show” (chapter 13), which has come to be recognized as one of the most influential pieces of political analysis

produced in the UK in the late twentieth century. As noted in the introduction to the previous part, the article was developed from the groundwork laid in *PTC* in examining the shift to the Right in British politics occurring in the late 1970s. As Richard English and Michael Kenny have argued, if Stuart understood Thatcherism as a “misguided, but ideologically potent attempt to provide a solution to the problems attendant upon Britain’s relative economic decline and social fragmentation,” his further claim was that its “particular discourse on race, national identity and crime was central to its ideological appeal.”⁸ When questioned on these issues many years later, Stuart still argued that race and crime functioned as a central ideological motif of the UK’s crisis of the 1970s—and thus provided a vitally important prism through which this profound change in political culture, marking the shift to a new historical conjuncture, could be read symptomatically.⁹

In other writings of this period, such as “Drifting into a Law and Order Society,” Stuart had begun to outline the shape of a newly emerging form of right-wing Conservatism in political life, which married a dedication to the “free market” (derived from Milton Friedman) and individualism with an implicit form of ethnic nationalism and more authoritarian forms of policing and state control.¹⁰ His point was that, rather than representing a short-term change of political fortunes, in which power simply shifted from Labour to Conservative, the emergence of “Thatcherism” (as he named it) represented a structural change of long-term consequence. What he identified was the specificity of the new historical bloc (in Gramsci’s terminology) that Thatcher had succeeded in constructing—and for which she had been able to win a great deal of active popular consent—in a moment when the old discourses of both the traditional Labour and Conservative parties were coming to be seen to be incapable of addressing the problems of the new era.

When the analysis was first published, there were many, including Bob Jessop, who denied the specificity and significance of this new political formation.¹¹ In a later formulation of the rationale for his terminology, Stuart explained that he “deliberately used the Gramscian term hegemony in order to foreclose any falling back on the mechanical notion that Thatcherism was merely another name for the exercise of the same old . . . class domination, by the same old familiar ruling class.”¹² In retrospect, the extraordinary prescience of Stuart’s analysis has been demonstrated by the extent to which, over the last thirty-five years, British politics has continued to be dominated by one or another form of Thatcherism, independently of whether the nominal

government was constituted by the Conservatives, by New Labour, or by a coalition.

It is often noted that Thatcher herself regarded Tony Blair's New Labour government as her finest achievement, as it operated within the parameters of the political form of neoliberalism that she had instituted. New Labour simply elaborated the same vision of modernization initiated by Thatcher eighteen years earlier (though with some slight softening up on the ideological front). The long march of this neoliberal revolution was carried further when David Cameron, as prime minister of the Conservative-Liberal coalition that came to power in 2010, then took up the baton by signaling Blair as his role model in his attempts to reposition the Tories as a compassionate party. Nonetheless, and despite these apparently warm-hearted claims, Cameron installed George Osborne in the Treasury, who was determined to follow Milton Friedman's mantra of "creative destruction" by using the economic crisis to massively cut state funding. These cuts were strategically intended to effect an irreversible transformation of British society, which would prevent the future reestablishment of any form of welfare state in Britain, whichever political party were to subsequently come to power.¹³

In the end, Thatcher turned out to have done exactly what Stuart had argued—insofar as she effectively transformed the boundaries of British politics by making it seem, as her slogan "TINA" ("There is no alternative") famously put it, that one or another version of her policies constituted the only way forward. She transformed the once obscure doctrine of monetarism into a form of populist common sense that could confidently decry not only Keynesian economics but all forms of collectivism as simply modes of pandering to welfare scavengers at the expense of people variously hailed as ordinary, decent, and/or real by Nigel Farage in the UK and Donald Trump in the US. Writing (as I am) in late 2016, the speeches of these populist politicians are echoing around the mediasphere, decrying the same "folk devils" and espousing the same forms of confidently assertive nationalism, xenophobia, and racism. In this populism, the state is figured entirely as a cumbersome, bureaucratic machine serving only to repress individual freedoms. Thus, the whole apparatus of the welfare state is seen as needing to be rolled back so as to allow the free market to better work its magic, without interference. At the same time traditional values—sanctifying the family, respect for authority, and the better maintenance of law and order—are invoked. In troubled times of economic depression, rising un-

employment, manifest social conflict, and widespread anxiety, this heady mixture—replete with a newly respectable form of racialized scapegoating of the “enemies within”—has now repeatedly proved a great success at the ballot box, its greatest achievement the rhetorical sleight of hand in which the demotic replaces the democratic.¹⁴

Looking back on all this later, Stuart made two important qualifications to his initial argument as to the conjunctural significance of Thatcherism. First, in a retrospective discussion of his work with *Marxism Today*’s “New Times” group in the 1980s, analyzing the emergence of a putatively post-Fordist economy, he did emphasize that initially he had felt that Blair had at least grasped that there was no prospect of a viable return to the old Labour tradition, even if, as things developed, New Labour’s own vision of these new times turned into the anodyne rhetoric of the “Third Way.”¹⁵ Second, it is important to also note the qualification he makes in the discussion with Bill Schwarz, referred to above, when he observes that it had subsequently become clearer to him that, while being a specifically British phenomenon, Thatcherism also needed to be understood as a local version of the attempt to come to terms (however inadequately) with the problems which the rise of globalization posed to all national economies.

NOTES

- 1 Note his critique of merely celebratory accounts of popular cultural forms, in his interview with Laurie Taylor, “Thinking Allowed,” BBC Radio 4, rebroadcast in a memorial edition of the program, February 13, 2014.
- 2 Angela McRobbie, “Stuart Hall and the Fate of Welfare in Neo-Liberal Times,” in *Stuart Hall: Conversations, Projects and Legacies*, ed. Julian Henriques and David Morley with Vana Goblot (London: Goldsmiths, 2018).
- 3 Here we see, once again, this crucial rhetorical trope. The point is strengthened by Stuart’s being able to draw on V. N. Volosinov’s work on the multi-accentuality of language, a perspective that was introduced to the CCCS at Birmingham by Charles Woolfson: “The Semiotics of Working Class Speech,” *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 9 (1976).
- 4 Inconceivable as it may seem in today’s academic climate, there was a period in the 1970s in some radical circles in the UK when the very notion of individual authorship was frowned on as a politically suspect form of careerism.
- 5 In relation to media issues: Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, “Mugging and Law and Order,” Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Papers no. 35, Birmingham University, 1975; Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, John Clarke, Tony

Jefferson, Brian Roberts, “Newsmaking and Crime,” Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Papers no. 37, Birmingham University, 1975. For the key collection of work on subcultures, see Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance through Rituals*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), particularly the retrospective view by Hall and Jefferson, “Once More Round *Resistance through Rituals*.” For some of the more historical aspects of the work of the State Group, see Mary Langan and Bill Schwarz, eds., *Crises in the British State 1880–1930* (London: Hutchinson, 1983). For an introduction to the contemporary work on criminology in North America, see Howard Becker, *Outsiders* (New York: Free Press, 1963). In the UK, for the work of those associated with the National Deviancy Symposium, Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers* (London: MacGibbon and Key, 1972); and in relation to the media’s general coverage of deviancy, Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, eds., *The Manufacture of News: Deviancy, Social Problems and the Mass Media* (London: Constable, 1973).

- 6 Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004). Writing this introductory material just after the shameful scapegoating of foreigners and migrants during the “Brexit” referendum in the UK in 2016 is a chilling reminder of how very little, in this respect, has changed since those days.
- 7 Eric Hobsbawm, “The Forward March of Labour Halted.” This was initially delivered in London as the Marx Memorial Lecture and subsequently published in the Communist Party journal *Marxism Today* in September 1978.
- 8 Richard English and Michael Kenny, eds., *Rethinking British Decline* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 2000), 105.
- 9 “Living with Difference: An Interview with Bill Schwarz,” *Soundings* 37 (2007): 148.
- 10 Stuart Hall, *Drifting into a Law and Order Society* (London: Cobden Trust, 1979).
- 11 Bob Jessop, Kevin Bonnett, Simon Bromley, and Tom Ling, “Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations, and Thatcherism,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 147 (1984); Stuart Hall, “Authoritarian Populism: A Reply to Jessop et al.,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 151 (1985); Jessop, Bonnett, Bromley, and Ling, “Thatcherism and the Politics of Hegemony: A Reply to Stuart Hall,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 153 (1985).
- 12 Stuart Hall, “Introduction,” in *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988), 7.
- 13 Martin Jacques and Stuart Hall, “Tony Blair: The Greatest Tory since Thatcher?,” *Observer*, April 14, 1997; Martin Jacques and Stuart Hall, “The Great Moving Centre Show,” *New Statesman*, November 21, 1997; Stuart Hall, “The Great Moving Nowhere Show,” *Marxism Today—Memorial Issue*, November/December 1998; Hall, “New Labour’s Double Shuffle,” *Soundings* 24 (2003); Stuart Hall, “The Neo-Liberal Revolution,” *Cultural Studies* 25, no. 6 (2011). For the origins of neoliberal economic theory: Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
- 14 In “The Great Moving Nowhere Show” Stuart attributes this latter phrase to the political journalist Martin Kettle. For an interesting further exploration of this

distinction between the democratic and the demotic, in relation to the dominant forms of contemporary popular culture, see also the work of the Australian cultural theorist Graeme Turner, *Ordinary People and Media: The Demotic Turn* (London: Sage, 2010).

- 15 Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, eds., *New Times* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1989); and Jacques and Hall, “The Great Moving Centre Show.”

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Notes on Deconstructing “the Popular”

First, I want to say something about periodizations in the study of popular culture. Difficult problems are posed here by periodization—I don’t offer it to you simply as a sort of gesture to the historians. Are the major breaks largely descriptive? Do they arise largely from within popular culture itself, or from factors which are outside of but impinge on it? With what other movements and periodizations is “popular culture” most revealingly linked? Then I want to tell you some of the difficulties I have with the term “popular.” I have almost as many problems with “popular” as I have with “culture.” When you put the two terms together, the difficulties can be pretty horrendous.

Throughout the long transition into agrarian capitalism and then in the formation and development of industrial capitalism, there is a more or less continuous struggle over the culture of working people, the laboring classes and the poor. This fact must be the starting point for any study, both of the basis for, and of the transformations of, popular culture. The changing balance and relations of social forces throughout that history reveal themselves, time and again, in struggles over the forms of the culture, traditions, and ways of life of the popular classes. Capital had a stake in the culture of the popular classes because the constitution of a whole new social order around capital required a more or less continuous, if intermittent, process of re-education, in the broadest sense. And one of the principal sites of resistance to the forms through which this “reformation” of the people was pursued lay in popular tradition. That is why popular culture is linked, for so long, to

questions of tradition, of traditional forms of life—and why its “traditionalism” has been so often misinterpreted as a product of a merely conservative impulse, backward looking and anachronistic. Struggle and resistance—but also, of course, appropriation and *ex*-propriation. Time and again, what we are really looking at is the active destruction of particular ways of life, and their transformation into something new. “Cultural change” is a polite euphemism for the process by which some cultural forms and practices are driven out of the center of popular life, actively marginalized. Rather than simply “falling into disuse” through the Long March to modernization, things are actively pushed aside, so that something else can take their place. The magistrate and the evangelical police have, or ought to have, a more “honored” place in the history of popular culture than they have usually been accorded. Even more important than ban and proscription is that subtle and slippery customer—“reform” (with all the positive and unambiguous overtones it carries today). One way or another, “the people” are frequently the object of “reform”: often, for their own good, of course—“in their best interests.” We understand struggle and resistance, nowadays, rather better than we do reform and transformation. Yet “transformations” are at the heart of the study of popular culture. I mean the active work on existing traditions and activities, their active reworking, so that they come out a different way: they appear to “persist”—yet, from one period to another, they come to stand in a different relation to the ways working people live and the ways they define their relations to each other, to “the others” and to their conditions of life. Transformation is the key to the long and protracted process of the “moralization” of the laboring classes, and the “demoralization” of the poor, and the “re-education” of the people. Popular culture is neither, in a “pure” sense, the popular traditions of resistance to these processes; nor is it the forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the transformations are worked.

In the study of popular culture, we should always start here: with the double-stake in popular culture, the double movement of containment and resistance, which is always inevitably inside it.

The study of popular culture has tended to oscillate wildly between the two alternative poles of that dialectic—containment/resistance. We have had some striking and marvelous reversals. Think of the really major revolution in historical understanding which has followed as the history of “polite society” and the Whig aristocracy in eighteenth-century England has been upturned by the addition of the history of the turbulent and ungovernable

people. The popular traditions of the eighteenth-century laboring poor, the popular classes, and the “loose and disorderly sort” often, now, appear as virtually independent formations: tolerated in a state of permanently unstable equilibrium in relatively peaceful and prosperous times; subject to arbitrary excursions and expeditions in times of panic and crisis. Yet, though formally these were the cultures of the people “outside the walls,” beyond political society and the triangle of power, they were never, in fact, outside of the larger field of social forces and cultural relations. They not only constantly pressed on “society”; they were linked and connected with it, by a multitude of traditions and practices. Lines of “alliance” as well as lines of cleavage. From these cultural bases, often far removed from the dispositions of law, power, and authority, “the people” threatened constantly to erupt: and, when they did so, they break onto the stage of patronage and power with a threatening din and clamor—with fife and drum, cockade and effigy, proclamation and ritual, and, often, with a striking, popular, ritual discipline. Yet never quite overturning the delicate strands of paternalism, deference, and terror within which they were constantly if insecurely constrained. In the following century, where the “laboring” and the “dangerous” classes lived without benefit of that fine distinction the reformers were so anxious to draw (this was a cultural distinction as well as a moral and economic one: and a great deal of legislation and regulation was devised to operate directly on it), some areas preserved for long periods a virtually impenetrable enclave character. It took virtually the whole length of the century before the representatives of “law and order”—the new police—could acquire anything like a regular and customary foothold within them. Yet, at the same time, the penetration of the cultures of the laboring masses and the urban poor was deeper, more continuous—and more continuously “educative” and reformatory—in that period than at any time since.

One of the main difficulties standing in the way of a proper periodization of popular culture is the profound transformation in the culture of the popular classes which occurs between the 1880s and the 1920s. There are whole histories yet to be written about this period. But, although there are probably many things not right about its detail, I do think Gareth Stedman Jones’s article on the “re-making of the English working class” in this period has drawn our attention to something fundamental and qualitatively different and important about it. It was a period of deep structural change. The more we look at it, the more convinced we become that somewhere in this period lies the matrix of factors and problems from which our history—and our

peculiar dilemmas—arise. Everything changes—not just a shift in the relations of forces but a reconstitution of the terrain of political struggle itself. It isn't just by chance that so many of the characteristic forms of what we now think of as “traditional” popular culture either emerge from or emerge in their distinctive modern form, in that period. What has been done for the 1790s and for the 1840s, and is being done for the eighteenth century, now radically needs to be done for the period of what we might call the “social imperialist” crisis.

The general point made earlier is true, without qualification, for this period, so far as popular culture is concerned. There is no separate, autonomous, “authentic” layer of working-class culture to be found. Much of the most immediate forms of popular recreation, for example, are saturated by popular imperialism. Could we expect otherwise? How could we explain, and what would we *do* with the idea of, the culture of a dominated class which, despite its complex interior formations and differentiations, stood in a very particular relation to a major restructuring of capital; which itself stood in a peculiar relation to the rest of the world; a people bound by the most complex ties to a changing set of material relations and conditions; who managed somehow to construct “a culture” which remained untouched by the most powerful dominant ideology—popular imperialism? Especially when that ideology—belying its name—was directed as much at them as it was at Britain's changing position in a world capitalist expansion?

Think, in relation to the question of popular imperialism, of the history and relations between the people and one of the major means of cultural expression: the press. To go back to displacement and superimposition—we can see clearly how the liberal middle-class press of the mid-nineteenth century was constructed on the back of the active destruction and marginalization of the indigenous radical and working-class press. But, on top of that process, something qualitatively new occurs toward the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in this area: the active, mass insertion of a developed and mature working-class audience into a new kind of *popular*, commercial press. This has had profound cultural consequences: though it isn't in any narrow sense exclusively a “cultural” question at all. It required the whole reorganization of the capital basis and structure of the cultural industry; a harnessing of new forms of technology and of labor processes; the establishment of new types of distribution, operating through the new cultural mass markets. But one of its effects was indeed a reconstituting of the cultural and political relations between the

dominant and the dominated classes: a change intimately connected with that containment of popular democracy on which “our democratic way of life” today appears to be so securely based. Its results are all too palpably with us still, today: a popular press, the more strident and virulent as it gradually shrinks; organized by capital “for” the working classes; with, nevertheless, deep and influential roots in the culture and language of the “underdog,” of “Us”: with the power to represent the class to itself in its most traditionalist form. This is a slice of the history of “popular culture” well worth unraveling.

Of course, one could not begin to do so without talking about many things which don’t usually figure in the discussion of “culture” at all. They have to do with the reconstruction of capital and the rise of the collectivisms and the formation of a new kind of “educative” state as much as with recreation, dance, and popular song. As an area of serious historical work, the study of popular culture is like the study of labor history and its institutions. To declare an interest in it is to correct a major imbalance, to mark a significant oversight. But, in the end, it yields most when it is seen in relation to a more general, a wider history.

I select this period—the 1880s–1920s—because it is one of the real test cases for the revived interest in popular culture. Without in any way casting aspersions on the important historical work which has been done and remains to do on earlier periods, I do believe that many of the real difficulties (theoretical as well as empirical) will only be confronted when we begin to examine closely popular culture in a period which begins to resemble our own, which poses the same kind of interpretive problems as our own, and which is informed by our own sense of contemporary questions. I am dubious about that kind of interest in “popular culture” which comes to a sudden and unexpected halt at roughly the same point as the decline of Chartism. It isn’t by chance that very few of us are working in popular culture in the 1930s. I suspect there is something peculiarly awkward, especially for socialists, in the non-appearance of a militant, radical mature culture of the working class in the 1930s when—to tell you the truth—most of us would have expected it to appear. From the viewpoint of a purely “heroic” or “autonomous” popular culture, the 1930s is a pretty barren period. This “barrenness”—like the earlier unexpected richness and diversity—cannot be explained from *within* popular culture alone.

We have now begun to speak, not just about discontinuities and qualitative change, but about a very severe fracture, a deep rupture—especially in popular culture in the postwar period. Here it is not only a matter of a

change in cultural relations between the classes, but of the changed relationship between the people and the concentration and expansion of the new cultural apparatuses themselves. But could one seriously now set out to write the history of popular culture without taking into account the monopolization of the cultural industries, on the back of a profound technological revolution (it goes without saying that no “profound technological revolution” is ever in any sense “purely” technical)? To write a history of the culture of the popular classes exclusively from inside those classes, without understanding the ways in which they are constantly held in relation with the institutions of dominant cultural production, is not to live in the twentieth century. The point is clear about the twentieth century. I believe it holds good for the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries as well.

So much for “some problems of periodization.”

NEXT, I WANT to say something about “popular.” The term can have a number of different meanings: not all of them useful. Take the most common-sense meaning: the things which are said to be “popular” because masses of people listen to them, buy them, read them, consume them, and seem to enjoy them to the full. This is the “market” or commercial definition of the term: the one which brings socialists out in spots. It is quite rightly associated with the manipulation and debasement of the culture of the people. In one sense, it is the direct opposite of the way I had been using the word earlier. I have, though, two reservations about entirely dispensing with this meaning, unsatisfactory as it is.

First, if it is true that, in the twentieth century, vast numbers of people *do* consume and even indeed enjoy the cultural products of our modern cultural industry, then it follows that very substantial numbers of working people must be included within the audiences for such products. Now, if the forms and relationships, on which participation in this sort of commercially provided “culture” depend, are purely manipulative and debased, then the people who consume and enjoy them must either be themselves debased by these activities or else living in a permanent state of “false consciousness.” They must be “cultural dopes” who can’t tell that what they are being fed is an updated form of the opium of the people. That judgment may make us feel right, decent, and self-satisfied about our denunciations of the agents of mass manipulation and deception—the capitalist cultural industries: but I don’t know that it is a view which can survive for long as an adequate ac-

count of cultural relationships; and even less as a socialist perspective on the culture and nature of the working class. Ultimately, the notion of the people as a purely *passive*, outline force is a deeply unsocialist perspective.

Second, then: can we get around this problem without dropping the inevitable and necessary attention to the manipulative aspect of a great deal of commercial popular culture? There are a number of strategies for doing so, adopted by radical critics and theorists of popular culture, which, I think, are highly dubious. One is to counterpose to it another, whole, “alternative” culture—the authentic “popular culture”; and to suggest that the “real” working class (whatever that is) isn’t taken in by the commercial substitutes. This is a heroic alternative; but not a very convincing one. Basically what is wrong with it is that it neglects the absolutely essential relations of cultural power—of domination and subordination—which is an intrinsic feature of cultural relations. I want to assert on the contrary that there is *no* whole, authentic, autonomous “popular culture” which lies outside the field of force of the relations of cultural power and domination. Second, it greatly underestimates the power of cultural implantation. This is a tricky point to make, for, as soon as it *is* made, one opens oneself to the charge that one is subscribing to the thesis of cultural incorporation. The study of popular culture keeps shifting between these two, quite unacceptable, poles: pure “autonomy” or total encapsulation.

Actually, I don’t think it is necessary or right to subscribe to either. Since ordinary people are not cultural dopes, they are perfectly capable of recognizing the way the realities of working-class life are reorganized, reconstructed, and reshaped by the way they are represented (i.e., re-presented) in, say, *Coronation Street*. The cultural industries do have the power constantly to rework and reshape what they represent; and, by repetition and selection, to impose and implant such definitions of ourselves as fit more easily the descriptions of the dominant or preferred culture. That is what the concentration of cultural power—the means of culture-making in the heads of the few—actually means. These definitions don’t have the power to occupy our minds; they don’t function on us as if we are blank screens. But they do occupy and rework the interior contradictions of feeling and perception in the dominated classes; they *do* find or clear a space of recognition in those who respond to them. Cultural domination has real effects, even if these are neither all-powerful nor all-inclusive. If we were to argue that these imposed forms have no influence, it would be tantamount to arguing that the culture of the people can exist as a separate enclave, outside the distribution of cultural

power and the relations of cultural force. I do not believe that. Rather, I think there is a continuous and necessarily uneven and unequal struggle, by the dominant culture, constantly to disorganize and reorganize popular culture; to enclose and confine its definitions and forms within a more inclusive range of dominant forms. There are points of resistance; there are also moments of supersession. This is the dialectic of cultural struggle. In our times, it goes on continuously, in the complex lines of resistance and acceptance, refusal and capitulation, which make the field of culture a sort of constant battlefield. A battlefield where no once-for-all victories are obtained but where there are always strategic positions to be won and lost.

This first definition, then, is not a useful one for our purposes; but it might force us to think more deeply about the complexity of cultural relations, about the reality of cultural power and about the nature of cultural implantation. If the forms of provided commercial popular culture are not purely manipulative, then it is because, alongside the false appeals, the fore-shortenings, the trivialization and short-circuits, there are also elements of recognition and identification, something approaching a re-creation of recognizable experiences and attitudes, to which people are responding. The danger arises because we tend to think of cultural forms as whole and coherent: either wholly corrupt or wholly authentic. Whereas, they are deeply contradictory; they play on contradictions, especially when they function in the domain of the “popular.” The language of the *Daily Mirror* is neither a pure construction of Fleet Street “newspeak” nor is it the language which its working-class readers actually speak. It is a highly complex species of linguistic *ventriloquism* in which the debased brutalism of popular journalism is skillfully combined and intricated with some elements of the directness and vivid particularity of working-class language. It cannot get by without preserving some element of its roots in a real vernacular: in “the popular.” It wouldn’t get very far unless it were capable of reshaping popular elements into a species of canned and neutralized demotic populism.

The second definition of “popular” is easier to live with. This is the descriptive one. Popular culture is all those things that “the people” do or have done. This is close to an “anthropological” definition of the term: the culture, mores, customs, and folkways of “the people.” What defines their “distinctive way of life.” I have two difficulties with this definition, too.

First, I am suspicious of it precisely because it is too descriptive. This is putting it mildly. Actually, it is based on an infinitely expanding inventory. Virtually *anything* which “the people” have ever done can fall into the list.

Pigeon-fancying and stamp-collecting, flying ducks on the wall and garden gnomes. The problem is how to distinguish this infinite list, in any but a descriptive way, from what popular culture is not.

But the second difficulty is more important, and relates to a point made earlier. We can't simply collect into one category all the things which "the people" do, without observing that the real analytic distinction arises, not from the list itself—an inert category of things and activities—but from the key opposition: the people/not of the people. That is to say, the structuring principle of "the popular" in this sense is the tensions and oppositions between what belongs to the central domain of elite or dominant culture, and the culture of the "periphery." It is this opposition which constantly structures the domain of culture into the "popular" and the "non-popular." But you cannot construct these oppositions in a purely descriptive way. For, from period to period, the *contents* of each category changes. Popular forms become enhanced in cultural value, go up the cultural escalator—and find themselves on the opposite side. Others things cease to have high cultural value, and are appropriated into the popular, becoming transformed in the process. The structuring principle does not consist of the contents of each category—which, I insist, will alter from one period to another. Rather it consists of the forces and relations which sustain the distinction, the difference: roughly, between what, at any time, counts as an elite cultural activity or form, and what does not. These categories remain, though the inventories change. What is more, a whole set of institutions and institutional processes are required to sustain each—and to continually mark the difference between them. The school and the education system is one such institution—distinguishing the valued part of the culture, the cultural heritage, the history to be transmitted, from the "valueless" part. The literary and scholarly apparatus is another—marking-off certain kinds of valued knowledge from others. The important fact, then, is not a mere descriptive inventory—which may have the negative effect of freezing popular culture into some timeless descriptive mold—but the relations of power which are constantly punctuating and dividing the domain of culture into its preferred and its residual categories.

So I settle for a third definition of "popular," though it is a rather uneasy one. This looks, in any particular period, at those forms and activities which have their roots in the social and material conditions of particular classes; which have been embodied in popular traditions and practices. In this sense, it retains what is valuable in the descriptive definition. But it goes on to insist that what is essential to the definition of popular culture is the

relations which define “popular culture” in a continuing tension (relationship, influence, and antagonism) to the dominant culture. It is a conception of culture which is polarized around this cultural dialectic. It treats the domain of cultural forms and activities as a constantly changing field. Then it looks at the relations which constantly structure this field into dominant and subordinate formations. It looks at the *process* by which these relations of dominance and subordination are articulated. It treats them as a process: the process by means of which some things are actively preferred so that others can be dethroned. It has at its center the changing and uneven relations of force which define the field of culture—that is, the question of cultural struggle and its many forms. Its main focus of attention is the relation between culture and questions of hegemony.

What we have to be concerned with, in this definition, is not the question of the “authenticity” or organic wholeness of popular culture. Actually, it recognizes that almost all cultural forms will be contradictory in this sense, composed of antagonistic and unstable elements. The meaning of a cultural form and its place or position in the cultural field is not inscribed inside its form. Nor is its position fixed once and forever. This year’s radical symbol or slogan will be neutralized into next year’s fashion; the year after, it will be the object of a profound cultural nostalgia. Today’s rebel folksinger ends up, tomorrow, on the cover of the *Observer* color magazine. The meaning of a cultural symbol is given in part by the social field into which it is incorporated, the practices with which it articulates and is made to resonate. What matters is *not* the intrinsic or historically fixed objects of culture, but the state of play in cultural relations: to put it bluntly and in an oversimplified form—what counts is the class struggle in and over culture.

Almost every fixed inventory will betray us. Is the novel a “bourgeois” form? The answer can only be historically provisional: when? which novels? for whom? under what conditions?

What that very great Marxist theoretician of language who used the name Volosinov once said about the sign—the key element of all signifying practices—is true of all cultural forms:

Class does not coincide with the sign community, i.e. with . . . the totality of users of the same sets of signs for ideological communication. Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of class struggle. . . . By and large it is thanks to this intersecting

of accents that a sign maintains its vitality and dynamism and the capacity for further development. A sign that has been withdrawn from the pressure of the social struggle—which so to speak crosses beyond the pale of the social struggle—inevitably loses force, degenerating into an allegory and becoming the object not of live social intelligibility but of philosophical comprehension. . . . The ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgements which occurs in it, to make the sign unaccentual. In actual fact, each living ideological sign has two faces, like Janus. Any current curse word can become a word of praise, any current truth must inevitably sound to many people as the greatest lie. This inner dialectic quality of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crisis or revolutionary change.¹

Cultural struggle, of course, takes many forms: incorporation, distortion, resistance, negotiation, recuperation. Raymond Williams has done us a great deal of service by outlining some of these processes, with his distinction between emergent, residual, and incorporated moments. We need to expand and develop this rudimentary schema. The important thing is to look at it dynamically: as a historical process. Emergent forces reappear in ancient historical disguise; emergent forces, pointing to the future, lose their anticipatory power, and become merely backward looking; today's cultural breaks can be recuperated as a support to tomorrow's dominant system of values and meanings. The struggle continues: but it is almost never in the same place, over the same meaning or value. It seems to me that the cultural process—cultural power—in our society depends, in the first instance, on this drawing of the line, always in each period in a different place, as to what is to be incorporated into “the great tradition” and what is not. Educational and cultural institutions, along with the many positive things they do, also help to discipline and police this boundary.

This should make us think again about that tricky term in popular culture, “tradition.” Tradition is a vital element in culture; but it has little to do with the mere persistence of old forms. It has much more to do with the way elements have been linked together or articulated. These arrangements in a national-popular culture have no fixed or inscribed position, and certainly no meaning which is carried along, so to speak, in the stream of historical tradition, unchanged. Not only can the elements of “tradition” be rearranged, so that they articulate with different practices and positions, and

take on a new meaning and relevance. It is also often the case that cultural struggle arises in its sharpest form just at the point where different, opposed traditions meet, intersect. They seek to detach a cultural form from its implantation in one tradition, and to give it a new cultural resonance or accent. Traditions are not fixed forever: certainly not in any universal position in relation to a single class. Cultures, conceived not as separate “ways of life” but as “ways of struggle,” constantly intersect: the pertinent cultural struggles arise at the points of intersection. Think of the ways in the eighteenth century, in which a certain language of legality, of constitutionalism, and of “rights” becomes a battleground, at the point of intersection between two divergent traditions: between the “tradition” of gentry “majesty and terror” and the traditions of popular justice. Gramsci, providing a tentative answer to his own question as to how a new “collective will” arises, and a national-popular culture is transformed, observed that

what matters is the criticism to which such an ideological complex is subjected by the first representatives of the new historical phase. This criticism makes possible a process of differentiation and change in the relative weight that the elements of old ideologies used to possess. What was previously secondary and subordinate, even incidental, is now taken to be primary—becomes the nucleus of a new ideological and theoretical complex. The old collective will dissolves into its contradictory elements since the subordinate ones develop socially.²

This is the terrain of national-popular culture and tradition as a battlefield.

This provides us with a warning against those self-enclosed approaches to popular culture which, valuing “tradition” for its own sake, and treating it in an ahistorical manner, analyze popular cultural forms as if they contained within themselves, from their moment of origin, some fixed and unchanging meaning or value. The relationship between historical position and aesthetic value is an important and difficult question in popular culture. But the attempt to develop some universal popular aesthetic, founded on the moment of origin of cultural forms and practices, is almost certainly profoundly mistaken. What could be more eclectic and random than that assemblage of dead symbols and bric-a-brac, ransacked from yesterday’s dressing-up box, in which, just now, many young people have chosen to adorn themselves? These symbols and bits and pieces are profoundly ambiguous. A thousand lost cultural causes could be summoned up through them.

Every now and then, among the other trinkets, we find that sign which, above all other signs, ought to be fixed—solidified—in its cultural meaning and connotation forever: the swastika. And yet there it dangles, partly—but not entirely—cut loose from its profound cultural reference in twentieth-century history. What does it mean? What is it signifying? Its signification is rich, and richly ambiguous: certainly unstable. This terrifying sign may delimit a range of meanings but it carries no guarantee of a single meaning within itself. The streets are full of kids who are not “fascist” because they may wear a swastika on a chain. On the other hand, perhaps they *could* be . . . What this sign means will ultimately depend, in the politics of youth culture, less on the intrinsic cultural symbolism of the thing in itself, and more on the balance of forces between, say, the National Front and the Anti-Nazi League, between White Rock and the Two Tone Sound.

Not only is there no intrinsic guarantee within the cultural sign or form itself. There is no guarantee that, because at one time it was linked with a pertinent struggle, that it will always be the living expression of a class: so that every time you give it an airing it will “speak the language of socialism.” If cultural expressions register for socialism, it is because they have been linked as the practices, the forms and organization of a living struggle, which has succeeded in appropriating those symbols and giving them a socialist connotation. Culture is not already permanently inscribed with the conditions of a class before that struggle begins. The struggle consists in the success or failure to give “the cultural” a socialist accent.

The term “popular” has very complex relations to the term “class.” We know this, but are often at pains to forget it. We speak of particular forms of working-class culture; but we use the more inclusive term, “popular culture,” to refer to the general field of inquiry. It’s perfectly clear that what I’ve been saying would make little sense without reference to a class perspective and to class struggle. But it is also clear that there is no one-to-one relationship between a class and a particular cultural form or practice. The terms “class” and “popular” are deeply related but they are not absolutely interchangeable. The reason for that is obvious. There are no wholly separate “cultures” paradigmatically attached, in a relation of historical fixity, to specific “whole” classes—although there are clearly distinct and variable class-cultural formations. Class cultures tend to intersect and overlap in the same field of struggle. The term “popular” indicates this somewhat displaced relationship of culture to classes. More accurately, it refers to that alliance of

classes and forces which constitute the “popular classes.” The culture of the oppressed, the excluded classes: this is the area to which the term “popular” refers us. And the opposite side to that—the side with the cultural power to decide what belongs and what does not—is, by definition, not another “whole” class, but that other alliance of classes, strata, and social forces which constitute what is not “the people” and not the “popular classes”: the culture of the power bloc.

The people versus the power bloc: this, rather than “class-against-class,” is the central line of contradiction around which the terrain of culture is polarized. Popular culture, especially, is organized around the contradiction: the popular forces versus the power bloc. This gives to the terrain of cultural struggle its own kind of specificity. But the term “popular,” and even more, the collective subject to which it must refer—“the people”—is highly problematic. It is made problematic by, say, the ability of Mrs. Thatcher to pronounce a sentence like, “We have to limit the power of the trade unions because that is what the people want.” That suggests to me that, just as there is no fixed content to the category of “popular culture,” so there is no fixed subject to attach to it—“the people.” “The people” are not always back there, where they have always been, their culture untouched, their liberties and their instincts intact, still struggling on against the Norman Yoke or whatever: as if, if only we can “discover” them and bring them back on stage, they will always stand up in the right, appointed place and be counted. The capacity to *constitute* classes and individuals as a popular force: that is the nature of political and cultural struggle. To *make* the divided classes and the separated peoples—divided and separated by culture as much as by other factors—into a popular-democratic cultural force.

We can be certain that *other* forces also have a stake in defining “the people” as something else: “the people” who need to be disciplined more, ruled better, more effectively policed, whose way of life needs to be protected from “alien cultures,” and so on. There is some part of both those alternatives inside each of us. Sometimes we can be constituted as a force against the power bloc: that is the historical opening in which it is possible to construct a culture which is genuinely popular. But, in our society, if we are not constituted like that, we will be constituted into its opposite: an effective populist force, saying “Yes” to power. Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. It is not a sphere

where socialism, a socialist culture—already fully formed—might be simply “expressed.” But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why “popular culture” matters. Otherwise, to tell you the truth, I don’t give a damn about it.

NOTES

- 1 V. N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973).
- 2 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

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Policing the Crisis: Preface to the 35th Anniversary Edition

with Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts

Policing the Crisis (PTC) was first published over thirty years ago and has been positively received by general readers, researchers, and students. The book aimed to explore “‘mugging’ . . . as a social phenomenon, rather than as a particular form of street crime” (1). It addressed how and why this highly emotive label, “mugging,” came to be so widely deployed in the early 1970s; how that definition was constructed and amplified; why British society—the police, judiciary, media, the political classes, moral guardians, and the state—reacted to it in so extreme a way; and what this told/tells us about the social and political conjuncture in which this sequence unfolded.

This *Preface* is addressed to new readers, or to those already familiar with it but who are looking at the book again from new perspectives and in different historical circumstances. It attempts to answer the question, “what does a contemporary reader need to know in order to understand the book and get as much as is possible out of it?” It provides a brief retrospective account of why the book was structured as it was, the intellectual and theoretical traditions which were drawn on in its making, and the nature of the historical conjuncture in which it appeared.

PTC was a response to events concerning the robbery and injury of a man in Birmingham by three boys of mixed ethnic backgrounds. They were given long, exemplary sentences (twenty years, in one case). However, these events were not used to illustrate a preexisting theoretical argument. Written over six years, the prolonged, difficult process of collective research served as the

intellectual “laboratory” out of which the ideas, theories, and arguments that animate the text were produced. The book ends by making connections and offering explanations that could not have been anticipated at the beginning.

PTC was conceived and written at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), a new research center in a new and evolving field which opened in 1964. At the time, Stuart Hall was the only member of staff involved in the study; John Clarke, Chas Critcher, and Tony Jefferson were registered postgraduate Centre members, and Brian Roberts was formally attached to the Department of Sociology. Many other Centre people contributed to it. The Centre’s approach was transdisciplinary, and this facilitated authors bringing different perspectives and concerns into the research. In a “post-1968” participatory spirit, CCCS was committed to collective modes of intellectual work, research, and writing, in which staff and graduate students worked together. The ethos, project, and practice of the Centre were therefore crucial for the form that the project took. Indeed, this collective authorship is one way in which *PTC* is widely viewed as an exemplary text.

Although influenced by sociological and criminological thinking, the overarching object of analysis in *PTC* was not “crime” or even “society,” but “the social formation,” conceptualized as an ensemble of practices, institutions, forces, and contradictions. *PTC* treated the cultural, ideological, and discursive aspects of the “mugging” phenomenon, along with its legal, social, economic, and political dimensions, as constitutive and overdetermining in their effects, not as secondary and dependent factors determined elsewhere.

THE AUTHORS WERE NOT criminologists in any formal sense, though the book has been perhaps most consistently debated within critical criminology. But we were convinced, not only that crime and deviance were fully social phenomena, but that they represented a challenge to society’s normative assumptions and the maintenance of social order, and could therefore be read as symptomatic of wider social and political factors. Our aim was to restore crime to its social and political “conditions of existence.”

The first half of the book drew on the Centre’s subcultural work and on deviancy and subcultural theory. Sources and influences here included the discussions of the recently formed National Deviancy Conference; the writings of American interactionist sociologists like Howard Becker (1963), who argued that deviancy was not a quality of the act but of the social response to it.¹ They made the labeling and defining of an action as deviant by the

institutions of social control an essential part of deviancy as a social process. *PTC* was strongly influenced by British sociologists like Jock Young (1971) and Stan Cohen (1972), who produced important studies of socially deviant behavior in Britain in this period, like drug-taking² and clashes between the authorities and groups of “mods” and “rockers.”³

Since we have been both praised for our ethnographic approach (in the related CCCS project *Resistance Through Rituals* [*RTR*])⁴ and criticized for its absence in *PTC* (in the last chapter particularly),⁵ it seems useful to add something on our relationship to ethnography because, for us, *RTR* and *PTC* are two sides of the same coin and neither is a conventional ethnography. Both projects share the “abiding commitment” of ethnographers “to the principled exploration and reconstruction of social worlds,” their “engagement with . . . fellow men and women,” and a “commitment to the interpretation of local and situated cultures.”⁶ (Our concern was to use such a starting point—concrete events, practices, relationships, and cultures—to approach the “structural configurations that cannot be reduced to the interactions and practices through which they express themselves,” as Bourdieu, another sympathizer with ethnographers, put it.⁷ In other words, we sought to emulate the ethnographic imagination but also to move beyond the focus on the here and now of everyday “interactions and practices” by locating them in the histories taking place behind all our backs.

Although the classic methods of ethnography are participant observation, listening, and interviewing, any approach that assists the journey toward a detailed empirical knowledge of a particular “social world” can be ethnographic: wading through mounds of newspapers (primary materials for the “social world” of social reaction); reading masses of secondary material in the form of books, articles, and commentaries (on the “social worlds” of police and black youth, for example); and living and working in the “social world” of Handsworth (in the case of one of us). It is this pragmatic approach, an ethnographic orientation combined with varieties of sociology and media studies framed by a Marxist approach to conjunctural analysis, which seems to have confused some of our advocates and critics. But its strength would seem to be evident, not least in the apparent realism of our “typical biography of the youth who ends up mugging,” which one reviewer thought was “one of the most realistic-looking accounts of crime . . . [he] had ever seen.”⁸ He went on to say that “Pryce’s findings in *Endless Pressure* strongly support their picture.”⁹ Ken Pryce’s book analyzes West Indian lifestyles in Bristol based on four years of ethnographic research, much of it

with delinquent “teeny boppers” and “hustlers.”¹⁰ Our research periods coincide almost exactly; his book was first published in 1979, a year after *PTC*.

PTC certainly owed much to the Centre’s work in this area of youth from *RTR* to studies of schooling,¹¹ youth fashion, and style.¹² It was followed by studies of urban rock and black music¹³ and the position of girls in male-dominated subcultural movements.¹⁴ In all these arenas, “youth” seemed to figure as recurring agents of “trouble,” symptomatic of a certain social disaffiliation and of wider social trends and problems, around which public and official disquiet circled. This social anxiety contributed to the generation of “moral panics”—excessive waves of fear and apprehension among sections of the public about a perceived threat to society itself and, in reaction, the recruitment of the agencies of social control and wider political structures to deal with it.

PTC pursued this line of argument: the culture and institutions of social control were as much part of deviant or criminal phenomena as those who committed crime. They played an active role, not only in the control of antisocial behavior but in how that behavior was labeled, defined, and publicly understood. In this expanded context, however, “control culture” came to seem too vague a concept. These institutions were more appropriately identified as that condensed site of different kinds of power—the state. This move to the state, then, drove the analysis of mugging into the heart of society, the shifting tides of public opinion and the centers of social power and political authority.

The institutions responsible for the control of deviance thus became a central thread in the story. Control included, not only their capacity to practice authority, but also their ideological and cultural power to signify—give events a social meaning—and to win society to their “definition of the situation.” By putting these two functions together in the same frame, the traditional distinction between the state as an instance of domination (e.g., depriving individuals of their liberty, punishment, etc.) and as a site for “winning popular consent” was decisively undercut. Discursive practices—making definitions prevail in both symbolic and material ways—were as much part of social control as breaking up crowds or imprisoning offenders.

The police are seen as society’s first line of defense in protecting the liberty of the individual and the rights of private property, and as a bulwark against social anarchy. They are authorized to produce official measures of overall crime levels—the crime statistics—and to provide a rolling commentary on the relation between crime and wider social trends. Indeed, *PTC* starts with

a discussion of the discursive practices involved in constructing a statistical measure for “mugging”—since at that time there was no such crime on the statute books to “record” statistically (and there still isn’t). But there are few “social facts” as persuasive as a line of numbers.

The judiciary, too, has enormous authority in this area. Judges interpret the law, apply it to particular cases, impose punishment—but also exercise the wider functions of commenting on crime, pronouncing on its social meaning, interpreting its social and political implications. They too influence how the public “makes sense” of the situation, what actions will be found politically acceptable and legitimate, to what consent is given.

In contemporary societies, these ideological, cultural, and interpretative practices are the primary territory of the press and mass media. Though not formally part of the state, they play a critical function—in articulation with other institutions—in the business of popular influence via “the social production of news,” in which crime always ranks very high. *PTC* regarded these key institutions as “primary definers.” They provide the baseline interpretations, influence “lay” attitudes, mold the ideological climate, and are instrumental in the orchestration of political and public responses.

The public does not approach this process of “making sense of crime” *tabula rasa*. It brings to bear interpretative schema, uninspected assumptions, common sense, tacit knowledge, and forms of reasoning, many of which are already in place, though not necessarily in a logical, consistent, or evidential form (they are no less compelling for that). Especially when society feels threatened by the pace or direction of social change—as British society did when confronted by the unsettling effects of postwar “affluence” and migration in the 1950s/60s—the majority tends, commonsensically, to reproduce definitions and approaches to problems which are supportive of the existing structures of power: adopting, for example, “traditionalist” views on crime, race, and punishment.

Methodologically, this was a complex area to research. Since these structures of interpretation operate outside conscious awareness or recall, the questionnaire and traditional interview are too blunt as research tools. We chose instead to focus on readers’ letters in the popular press, trying to catch public opinion, as it were, unawares—in the very moment of its formation. We used that material, interpretatively, to put together a “map” of the informal ideologies of crime, urban space, and race that provide the “deep structures” of public opinion. Common sense, Gramsci argued, may be obvious, confused, episodic, or contradictory.¹⁵ The traces of many different

traditions of thought are condensed into it, leaving behind no inventory. It has a low place in the hierarchy of knowledge. But, in formally democratic societies, “becoming common sense” is one key route to securing popular legitimacy and compliance and thus the basis of what Gramsci called “hegemonic” forms of power.¹⁶

This took the analysis to a new level. *PTC* argues that “when a ruling class alliance has achieved an undisputed authority . . . when it masters the political struggle, protects and extends the needs of capital, leads authoritatively in the civil and ideological spheres, and commands the restraining forces of the coercive apparatuses of the state in its defence—when it achieves all this on the basis of consent . . . we can speak of the establishment of a period of hegemony or hegemonic domination” (215–216).

Place and location are critical vectors in “common sense,” carrying powerful social connotations and quasi-explanations in their slipstream. Handsworth, where the key event of the book occurred, exemplified urban poverty and social deprivation, with a long roster of so-called “typical,” inner-city problems. An old residential area of Birmingham declining into multicultural multi-occupation as a result of poverty, poor housing, and unemployment, it was also a space of African Caribbean and Asian migration and settlement. Its problems were real enough. But they were compounded by the way in which those groups seen as “different” and “other” were blamed for the problems, thus deepening stereotyping and racial discrimination.

Postwar black migration, beginning in earnest with the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, transformed the face of British society and brought British identity itself into question. It touched a deep reservoir of negative and stereotypical attitudes in Britain about racialized difference—a legacy inherited from Britain’s imperial role and brought to the surface by the arrival of significant numbers of black migrants from the Caribbean on the “home territory” of a society which imagined itself to be liberal, tolerant, and racially homogeneous. Paul Gilroy calls the pathological response of an old imperial society like Britain to the decline of its power a form of “post-colonial melancholia”—the unrequited grieving for a lost object that easily turns phobic.¹⁷ It continues to have profound resonances and effects in British society today.

These new emphases formed the hinge, and marked the transition, between the first and second halves of the book. The convergence of crime, policing, race, and the city that we find at work in the “mugging” phenomenon was an explosive mixture. It precipitated social anxiety about how communities

were changing, strengthened the equation of “Britishness” with “whiteness,” and convinced many of the socially excluded that the cause of their deprivation was not poverty but race. This stimulated from “below” the demand for a political response from those institutions “above” ultimately responsible for the defense of the social order. Clearly, then, “mugging”—which had taken us from crime and deviance, through the apparatuses of the “control culture,” to the state—could not be fully explained without setting it in its wider societal, historical, and political contexts. We had to follow the not-yet-completed line that our inquiries had opened up.

We use the term “contextualizing” to describe this analytic process of widening the frame. But it is a weak formulation. In the *Grundrisse* Marx argues that the only way to produce “the concrete by way of thought” is to add more determinations: “the concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations.”¹⁸ Contextualizing is thus not the invocation of an inert “background” but involves treating these articulated processes as a real movement through time and identifying, in their historical specificity, the links between the different levels of abstraction.

What did the appearance of “mugging” and the social reaction to it tell us about the historical conjuncture in which it occurred? “Conjuncture” is a concept developed by Gramsci¹⁹ and Althusser²⁰ which designates a specific moment in the life of a social formation and refers to a period when the antagonisms and contradictions, which are always at work in society, begin to “fuse” into a *ruptural unity*.²¹ Conjunctural analysis deploys a type of periodization based on a distinction between moments of relative stability and those of intensifying struggles and unrest, which may result in a more general social crisis. The concept covers the development of contradictions, their fusion into a crisis, and its resolution. Resolutions to the crisis can take different forms: there is no preordained result. They may allow the historical project to continue or be renewed; or they may provoke a process of transformation. In some cases, protracted struggle may continue without resolution (what Gramsci calls “a passive revolution”).²² Conjunctures have no fixed duration, but so long as the crisis (and its underlying contradictions) remain unresolved, further crises are likely to proliferate and echo around different domains of the social formation. So long as a period is dominated by roughly the same struggles and contradictions and the same efforts to resolve them, it can be said to constitute the same conjuncture. This is the type of “crisis” to which the title of the book refers. “The reaction to mug-

ging,” we argued, “constitute[s] an aspect of a general ‘crisis of hegemony’ of the British state” (215).

The first conjuncture that framed our analysis is the welfare state/social-democratic political “settlement” or “historic compromise” that emerged at the end of World War II with Labour’s accession to power. Its mandate was to ensure full (male) employment, avert economic crises through Keynesian measures, redistribute wealth, take the “commanding heights” of the private economy into public ownership, and create national health and social security systems. This was a major moment in the redistribution of wealth and power in British society.

The welfare state was always a compromised social formation—corporate profits and the public good, privatized “affluence” and collective social provision pulling in opposite directions. It depended on the continuing growth of private capital to create the wealth that the state then redistributed. However, the redistributive impact of the welfare state cannot be underestimated: it proved one of the most successful peaceful social transformations of modern times. For this reason, it was seen by its conservative opponents as an unwarranted intrusion by the state into the prerogatives of capital, private property, and the “free” individual and as an attempt fundamentally to shift the balance of social forces toward the working classes and the poor. They determined to reverse this damaging initiative and to destroy the consensus that developed around it. Some would argue that this long vendetta is still working its way through the political system today.

The social-democratic welfare state consensus began to fall apart in the sixties. The consensual mode of authority on which the welfare state was built could not hold. But what was the nature of the new conjuncture that followed? *PTC* describes the transition process as “the exhaustion of consent.” Increasingly, Labour governments adopted a more top-down, corporatist, “national-interest”-driven variant of reformist politics. Harold Wilson tried to construct a “social bloc”—harmonizing capital and labor “in place of strife,” based on “the white heat of technology”; Jim Callaghan launched a new “social contract.” They tried unsuccessfully to contain “wildcat” strikes and “wage drift” through a state-led incomes policy. But the economy was fundamentally weak, a fact which “affluence” and consumerism had tended to mask. There was a serious collapse in productivity and profitability. The public deficit soared. Labour chancellors were obliged (first) to devalue sterling and (second) to call on the IMF for emergency loans.

On one front after another, the social formation began to fracture. Student protests and occupations; global movements against the Vietnam War; the alternative lifestyles of the counter-culture detaching sections of young people from identification with “the system”; the unhinging of stable patterns and moral points of reference; the surge of social anxiety focusing on a hedonistic, “permissive” youth culture; the aroused moral guardianship of organizations like the National Viewers and Listeners Association; the trial of the magazine *Oz* for obscene publications. . . . In all this, “1968” marked something of a climacteric. Increasingly, the state turned to the law to contain the crisis: squatting was met by strengthening the laws against trespass; industrial militancy by the Industrial Relations Act; the “troubles” in Northern Ireland by the Emergency Powers Act and “low-intensity operations”; IRA bombing campaigns by “Bloody Sunday.” There emerged the Angry Brigade, new fears about hijacking and terrorism, public-sector strikes, and the three-day week. At one point, Mr. Heath declared the country “ungovernable.”

There were parallel developments on the race front: Enoch Powell’s speech prophesying that, as a result of black immigration, “rivers of blood” would flow in the streets; the perceived threat to the British way of life symbolized by the black presence; legislation redefining citizenship and limiting the flow of immigration; the black consciousness-raising impact of anti-apartheid, civil rights, and “Black Power” in the US; the flowering of a resistance, reggae-inspired, black, expressive culture based on the affirmation of “black identity”; the “Rasta” and “rude boy” currents among black youth; a sustained and popular anti-racist resistance campaign in reaction to racist practices, especially the movement against police use of the “sus” laws to stop and search black youth and the way black life and culture were being policed and “criminalized” in the “colony” areas. And, overall, the fixation on “the biggest crime wave of the century” (270).

The years 1970–1974 witnessed the shift of social regulation from consent to coercion, the state’s knee-jerk recourse to “the law,” and the onset of a full crisis of hegemony. The state provided, not only the instruments of authoritarian governance, but “just that ‘sense of direction’ which the lay public feels society has lost” (315). This process was much enhanced by the construction of nightmares: the mapping of discrete areas into one, commodious, all-inclusive, protean but invisible “Enemy.” The Lord Chancellor linked into the law-and-order theme “the interruption of high Court proceedings by ‘a group of young hooligans,’” the rise in the use of firearms, the fatal violence used by “a group of youths,” the “abuse, insults and provocation

nightly hurled” at the police “by street corner hooligans,” and those “challenging the system of law itself” (269–270). Powell mapped striking teachers, “students ‘destroying’ universities and ‘terrorising’ cities,” “the power of the ‘modern form’ of the mob,” demonstrations, “the government’s capitulation” to the anti-apartheid movement digging up the pitches during the South African cricket tour, “the success of disorder,” “making governments ‘tremble,’” “the near-destruction of civil government in Northern Ireland,” “and the accumulation of ‘combustible material’ of ‘another kind’ (i.e. race)” in Britain into one figure: “the enemy and his power” (270–271).

PTC called this “transition from this tightening of control at the end of the 1960s into the full repressive ‘closure’ of 1970” (256) the drift into “the Law-and-Order Society” or, more simply, “Towards the ‘Exceptional State’” (268). This was “the combined effect of the ‘law-and-order’ led from on high, the sharpening of the legal engine . . . [and] the steady percolation of a conspiratorial reading of Britain’s ‘troubles’” (274). It legitimated “the recourse to the law, to constraint and statutory power” (273) as a way of effecting what could no longer be achieved by consent. “It . . . groomed the society for the extensive exercise of the repressive side of state power. It made this routinisation of control normal, natural, and thus right and inevitable. It legitimated the duty of the state . . . to ‘go campaigning’” (273).

In the final section, the book focused attention on one of the main figures or tropes that had been conjured up at the center of the mugging phenomenon: black youth. At a high point in the crisis, a journalist, drawing comparisons between black crime in the US and Britain, asked “Must Harlem Come to Handsworth?” The question became a self-fulfilling prophesy. The term “mugging” in its contemporary American meaning, with its connotations of race, crime, and violence, was first used to describe a modern British crime in 1972: “To our police it’s a frightening new strain of crime” (7). The attack in Birmingham that led to *PTC* occurred in 1973.

We knew the symbolic weight being carried by this figure of the black mugger. But what was the structural position of, and political forms of struggle and consciousness among, black people? The final chapter tried to take the argument to this deeper level. It analyzed the place of work and “worklessness,” and crime and “hustling,” as survival strategies among sections of the black population. It examined the mobilizing role played by the expressive black culture as a form of symbolic resistance. It looked at internal distinctions in the class position of black migrants as a racially differentiated section of the “proletariat” and the interlocking mechanisms through which

this position is reproduced. It examined the *lumpenproletariat* thesis, in prevalent use at the time. Finally, it contrasted two views from within Marxist perspectives of how the position of black people can be read: as a “reserve army of labor” or as inserted simultaneously into both “First” and “Third” World structures of exploitation. In their detail, these approaches have since been superseded. But the perspectives that inform them have not been fully exhausted.

This was the end of the book but not quite the end of the story. The crises in the seventies were to be followed by the world-shattering political accession of Mrs. Thatcher—“There is no such thing as society”—and the blitzkrieg launched by “Thatcherism,” with its contradictory authoritarian and neoliberal, strong state/free market impulses, on the social fabric. In transmuted forms, this doubly inscribed template has since dominated British society and politics (in Conservative, New Labour, and Coalition governments alike). Few believed that this was a historic turning point. They defined it as another of the usual swings of the political pendulum. But those of us who had heard the ugly sound of an old conjuncture unraveling, watched the crisis unfold, understood its populist roots and its long-term hegemonic project, were in a position to know differently. And this led to the final claim which *PTC* staked—that, unlike many great works of sociological analyses, it was genuinely and, on the whole, accurately predictive. For this, if for nothing else, it remains worth reading and thinking about today.

One question that this poses to contemporary readers is, what are the significant differences between the two conjunctures? Does the basic shape of social control identified in our analysis persist? Are we still in some kind of “exceptional state”? Or is the neoliberal/“market state” which followed fundamentally different in its modalities? And, if so, what are we to make of the continuing oscillation between free market and “authoritarian populist” impulses? The book, published in 1978, could not have addressed this question. But if its republication provokes the posing of new questions, not just the rehearsal of old ones, the decision to have a second edition will have been vindicated.

NOTES

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- 20 L. Althusser, *For Marx* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1969), 249.
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The Great Moving Right Show

No one seriously concerned with the development of Left political strategies in the present situation can afford to ignore the “swing to the Right” which is taking place. We may not yet fully understand its extent, specific character, causes, or effects. There is still some debate as to whether it is likely to be short-lived or long-term, a movement of the surface or something more deeply lodged in the body politic. But the tendency is hard to deny. It no longer looks like a temporary swing of the pendulum in political fortunes. Indeed, it would be wrong to identify the rise of the radical Right solely with the success in the political party stakes of Mrs. Thatcher and the hard-edged cronies she has borne with her into high office inside the Conservative Party. Mrs. Thatcher has given the “swing to the Right” a powerful impetus and a distinctive personal stamp, but the deeper movement which finds in her its personification has—when properly analyzed—a much longer trajectory. It has been well installed—a going concern—since the late 1960s. It has developed through a number of different phases. First, the “backlash” against the revolutionary ferment of “1968” and all that. Then, the bold, populist bid by Mr. Powell—speaking over the heads of the party factions to “the people,” helping to construct “the people” in their most patriotic, racist, constitutional disguise. Then—borrowing the clothes of his opponent, in the best Tory tradition—Mr. Heath: a politician instinctively of the soft center, but not averse, in the anxiety-ridden days of the early 1970s, to going to the country with a program to restore “Selsdon Man”—a close cousin of Neanderthal Man—to

the center of British politics. It was this Heath version of the backlash—a chillingly reactionary specter in its own way—which the miners and others stopped in its tracks. But they did not cut short the underlying movement.

There now seems little doubt that, as we moved through the 1970s, the popular mood shifted decisively against the Left. This fact was mirrored in the decline of Mr. Callaghan's government. As Labour lost parliamentary strength, so it has drifted deep into the ideological territory of the Right, occupying with panache many of the positions only just evacuated by the Right. It was Labour, not the Conservatives, which applied the surgical cut to the welfare state. And there was Mr. Healey's not wholly unexpected conversion to orthodox monetarism and fiscal restraint—tutored by the IMF and the oil price. In this climate of austerity, Keynes has been decently buried; the Right has re-established its monopoly over "good ideas"; "capitalism" and "the free market" have come back into common usage as terms of positive approval.

And yet the full dimensions of this precipitation to the Right still lack a proper analysis on the Left. The crisis continues to be read by the Left from within certain well-entrenched, largely unquestioned assumptions. Our illusions remain intact, even when they clearly no longer provide an adequate analytic framework. Certainly, there is no simple, one-to-one correspondence between a "correct" analysis and an "effective" politics. Nevertheless, the failure of analysis cannot be totally unrelated to the obvious lack of political perspective which now confronts the Left.

In spite of this there are still some who welcome the crisis, arguing that "worse means better." The "sharpening of contradictions," comrades, together with the rising tempo of the class struggle, will eventually guarantee the victory of progressive forces everywhere. Those who hold such a position may enjoy untroubled nights; but they have short political memories. They forget how frequently in recent history the "sharpening of contradictions" has led to settlements and solutions which favored capital and the extreme Right rather than the reverse.

Then there are those who dismiss the advance of the Right as "mere ideology." Ideology, as we know, is not "real" and so cannot become a material factor, let alone a political force. We have only to wait until the *real* economic forces exert their absolute determinacy, and then all this ideological vapor will be blown away. . . . Yet another common response is an extension of this last position. It argues that the current "swing to the Right" is only the simple and general expression of every economic recession. On this view, there are

no significant differences between the present and any other variant of Tory philosophy. “Thatcherism,” “Baldwinism,” etc.—each is only a name for the same phenomenon: the permanent, unchanging shape of reactionary ideas. What is the point of drawing fine distinctions?

Such arguments are especially characteristic of a certain hard-headed response from the “hard” Left. All this analysis, it is implied, is unnecessary. The committed will not waste time on such speculations, but get on with the job of “engaging in the real struggle.” In fact, this last is a position which neglects everything that is specific and particular to this historical conjuncture. It is predicated on the view that a social formation is a simple structure, in which economic conditions will be immediately, transparently, and indifferently translated onto the political and ideological stage. If you operate on the “determining level,” then all the other pieces of the puzzle will fall into place. The idea that we should define a conjuncture as the coming together of often distinct though related contradictions, moving according to different tempos, but condensed in the same historical moment, is foreign to this approach. The name of Lenin is frequently and reverently invoked in these circles. Yet the approach precisely neglects Lenin’s graphic reminder that 1917 was “an extremely unique historical situation,” in which “absolutely dissimilar currents, absolutely heterogeneous class interests, absolutely contrary political and social strivings have merged . . . in a strikingly ‘harmonious’ manner.”¹ Above all, it takes for granted what needs to be explained, and is in no sense simple or obvious: namely, how a capitalist economic recession (economic), presided over by a social-democratic party with mass working-class support and organized depth in the trade unions (politically), is “lived” by increasing numbers of people through the themes and representations (ideologically) of a virulent, emergent “petty-bourgeois” ideology. These contradictory features of the present crisis are absorbed into some orthodox analyses only at considerable cost. The ideology of the radical Right is less an “expression” of economic recession than the recession’s condition of existence. Ideological factors have effects on and for the social formation as a whole—including effects on the economic crisis itself and how it is likely to be politically resolved.

We also encounter variants of “revolutionary optimism” as a counter to what is considered to be exaggerated “revolutionary pessimism.” The Left, it is said, will rise again, as it has done before. We should look for the points of resistance. The class struggle continues! Of course, in one sense, they

are right. We must not underestimate the possibilities of struggle and resistance. We must look behind the surface phenomena. We must find the points of intervention. But, on the other hand, if we are to be effective, politically, it can only be on the basis of a serious analysis of things as they are, not as we would wish them to be. Gramsci once enjoined those who would be politically effective to turn their thoughts “violently” toward the present *as it is*. Whistling in the dark is an occupational hazard not altogether unknown on the British Left. Gramsci’s slogan is old, but it contains the essence of the matter none the less: “Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will.”

Finally, there is the long-awaited threat of “fascism.” There is a sense in which the appearance of organized fascism on the political stage seems to solve everything for the Left. It confirms our best-worst suspicions, awakening familiar ghosts and specters. Fascism and economic recession together seem to render transparent those connections which most of the time are opaque, hidden, and displaced. Away with all those time-wasting theoretical speculations! The Marxist guarantees are all in place after all, standing to attention. Let us take to the streets. This is *not* an argument against taking to the streets. Indeed, the direct interventions against the rising fortunes of the National Front—local campaigns, anti-fascist work in the unions, trades councils, women’s groups, the mobilization behind the Anti-Nazi League, the counter-demonstrations, above all Rock Against Racism (one of the timeliest and best constructed of cultural interventions, repaying serious and extended analysis)—constitute one of the few success stories of the conjuncture. But it *is* an argument against the satisfactions which sometimes flow from applying simplifying analytic schemes to complex events. What we have to explain is a move toward “authoritarian populism”—an exceptional form of the capitalist state which, unlike classical fascism, has retained most (though not all) of the formal representative institutions in place, and which at the same time has been able to construct around itself an active popular consent. This undoubtedly represents a decisive shift in the balance of forces, and the National Front has played a “walk-on” part in this drama. It has entailed a striking weakening of democratic forms and initiatives; but not their suspension. We miss precisely what is specific to *this* exceptional form of the crisis of the capitalist state by mere name-calling.

An Organic Crisis?

The swing to the Right is part of what Gramsci called an “organic” phenomenon:

A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves . . . and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making efforts to cure them within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts . . . form the terrain of the conjunctural and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organize.²

Gramsci insisted that we must get the “organic” and “conjunctural” aspects of a crisis into a proper relationship. What defines the “conjunctural”—the immediate terrain of struggle—is not simply the given economic conditions, but precisely the “incessant and persistent” efforts which are being made to defend and conserve the *status quo*. If the crisis is deep—“organic”—these efforts cannot be merely defensive. They will be *formative*: aiming at a new balance of forces, the emergence of new elements, the attempt to put together a new “historic bloc,” new political configurations and “philosophies,” a profound restructuring of the state and the ideological discourses which construct the crisis and represent it as it is “lived” as a practical reality: new programs and policies, pointing to a new result, a new sort of “settlement”—“within certain limits.” These new elements do not “emerge”: they have to be constructed. Political and ideological work is required to disarticulate old formations, and to rework their elements into new ones. The “swing to the Right” is not a reflection of the crisis: it is itself a *response* to the crisis. In what follows I consider some aspects of that response, concentrating particularly on the neglected political and ideological dimensions.

Economic Crisis

We must first examine the precipitating conditions. These are the result of a set of discontinuous but related histories. In economic terms, Britain’s structural industrial and economic weakness emerged in the immediate aftermath of the postwar boom. The 1960s were marked by the oscillations between recession and recovery, with a steady underlying deterioration. These effectively destroyed the last remnants of the “radical program” on the basis of which Wilson won power in 1964, and to which he tried to harness a new

social bloc. By the end of the 1960s, the economy had dipped into full-scale recession—slumpflation—which sustained the exceptional “Heath course” of 1971–1974, and its head-on collisions with organized labor. By the mid-1970s, the economic parameters were dictated by a synchronization between capitalist recession on a global scale, and the crisis of capital accumulation specific to Britain—the weak link in the chain. Domestic politics have thus been dominated by crisis management and containment strategies: dove-tailed through an increasingly interventionist state, intervening to secure the conditions of capitalist production and reproduction. The dominant strategy had a distinctively corporatist character, incorporating sections of the working class and unions into the bargain between state, capital, and labor, the three “interests.” Crisis management has drawn successively on different variants of the same basic *repertoire*: incomes policy, first by consent, then by imposition; wage restraint; social contracting. The “natural” governor of this crisis has been the party of social democracy in power: Labour. This last factor has had profound effects in disorganizing and fragmenting working-class responses to the crisis itself.

At the ideological level, however, things have moved at a rather different tempo; in certain respects they predate the economic aspects. Many of the key themes of the radical Right—law and order, the need for social discipline and authority in the face of a conspiracy by the enemies of the state, the onset of social anarchy, the “enemy within,” the dilution of British stock by alien black elements—had been well articulated before the full dimensions of the economic recession were revealed. They emerged in relation to the radical movements and political polarizations of the 1960s, for which “1968” must stand as a convenient, though inadequate, notation. Some of these themes got progressively translated to other fronts as the confrontation with organized labor, and militant resistance developed during the Heath interregnum. For the constitution of the principal thematics of the radical Right, this must be seen as a formative moment.³

The Radical Right

The radical Right does not therefore appear out of thin air. It has to be understood in direct relation to alternative political formations attempting to occupy and command the same space. It is engaged in a struggle for hegemony, within the dominant bloc, against both social democracy and the moderate wing of its own party. Not only is it operating in the same space: it

is working directly on the contradictions within those competing positions. The strength of its intervention lies partly in the radicalism of its commitment to break the mold and not simply to rework the elements of the prevailing “philosophies.” In doing so, it nevertheless takes the elements which are already constructed into place, dismantles them, reconstitutes them into a new logic, and articulates the space in a new way, polarizing it to the Right.

This can be seen with respect to both the earlier competing positions. The Heath position was destroyed in the confrontation with organized labor. But it was also undermined by its internal contradictions. It failed to win the showdown with labor; it could not enlist popular support for this decisive encounter; in defeat, it returned to its “natural” position in the political spectrum, engaging in its own version of corporatist bargaining. “Thatcherism” therefore succeeds in this space by directly engaging the “creeping socialism” and apologetic “state collectivism” of the Heath wing. It thus centers on the very nerve of consensus politics, which dominated and stabilized the political scene for over a decade. To sustain its credibility as a party of government in a crisis of capital, “Thatcherism” retains some lingering and ambivalent connections to this center territory: Mr. Prior is its voice, but *sotto voce*. On other grounds, it has won considerable space by the active destruction of consensus politics from the Right. Of course, it aims for the construction of a national consensus of its own. What it destroys is that form of consensus in which social democracy was the principal tendency. This evacuation of centrist territory has unleashed political forces on the Right which have been kept in rein for most of the postwar period.

The Contradictions within Social Democracy

But the contradictions within social democracy are the key to the whole Rightward shift of the political spectrum. For if the destruction of the Heath “party” secures hegemony for “Thatcherism” over the Right, it is the contradictory form of social democracy which has effectively disorganized the Left and the working-class response to the crisis, and provided the terrain on which Thatcherism is working.

This contradiction can be put in simple terms: to win electoral power, social democracy must maximize its claims to be the political representative of the interests of the working class and organized labor. It is the party capable of (a) mastering the crises, while (b) defending—within the constraints imposed by capitalist recession—working-class interests. It is important

here to remember that this version of social democracy—“Labourism”—is not a homogeneous political entity but a complex political formation. It is not *the* expression of *the* working class “in government,” but the principal means of the political representation of the class. Representation here has to be understood as an active and formative relationship. It organizes the class, constituting it as a political force of a particular kind—a social-democratic political force—in the same moment as it is constituted. Everything depends on the means—the practices, the apparatuses, and the “philosophies”—by which the often dispersed and contradictory interests of a class are welded together into a coherent position which can be articulated and represented in the political and ideological theatres of struggle.

The expression of this representative relationship of class-to-party, in the present period, has depended decisively on the extensive set of corporatist bargains negotiated between Labour and the trade-union representatives of the class. This “indissoluble link” is the practical basis for Labour’s claim to be the natural governing party of the crisis. This is the contract it delivers. But, once *in* government, social democracy is committed to finding solutions to the crisis which are capable of winning support from key sections of capital, since its solutions are framed within the limits of capitalist survival. But this requires that the indissoluble link between party and class serves both to advance and to *discipline* the class and the organizations it represents. This is only possible if the class-to-party link can somehow be redefined or dismantled and if there can be substituted for it an alternative articulation: people-to-government. The rhetoric of “national interest,” which is the principal ideological form in which a succession of defeats has been imposed on the working class by social democracy in power, is exactly the site where this contradiction shows through and is being constantly re-worked. But people-to-government dissects the field of struggle differently from class-to-party. It sets Labour, at key moments of struggle—from the strikes of 1966 right through to the 1979 five percent pay norm—by definition “on the side of the nation” *against* “sectional interests,” “irresponsible trade-union power,” etc., i.e., against the class.

This is the terrain on which Mr. Heath played such destructive games in the lead-through to the Industrial Relations Act and its aftermath, with his invocation of “the great trade union of the nation” and the specter of the greedy working class “holding the nation to ransom.” “Thatcherism,” deploying the discourses of “nation” and “people” against “class” and “unions” with far greater vigor and populist appeal, has homed in on the same objective contradiction.

Within this space is being constructed an assault, not on this or that piece of “irresponsible bargaining” by a particular union, but on the very foundation of organized labor. Considerable numbers of people—including many trade unionists—find themselves reflected and set in place through this interpellation of “nation” and “people” at the center of this mounting attack on the defensive organizations of the working class.

Anti-Collectivism

A closely related strand in the new philosophy of the radical Right are the themes of anti-collectivism and anti-statism. “Thatcherism” has given these elements of neoliberal doctrine within conservative “philosophy” an extensive rejuvenation. At the level of theoretical ideologies, anti-statism has been refurbished by the advance of monetarism as the most fashionable economic credo. Keynesianism was the linchpin of the theoretical ideologies of corporatist state intervention throughout the postwar period, assuming almost the status of a sacred orthodoxy or *doxa*. To have replaced it in some of the most powerful and influential apparatuses of government, in research and the universities, and restored in its place the possessive individualist and free-market nostrums of Hayek and Friedman is, in itself, a remarkable reversal. Ideological transformations, however, do not take place by magic. For years bodies like the Institute for Economic Affairs have been plugging away in the margins of the Conservative Party and the informed public debate on economic policy, refurbishing the gospel of Adam Smith and the free market, undermining the assumptions of neo-Keynesianism, planning and projecting how the “competitive stimulus” could be applied again to one area after another of those sectors which, as they see it, have fallen into the corporatist abyss.

Gradually, in the more hospitable climate of the 1970s, these seeds began to bear fruit. First in the learned journals, then in the senior common rooms, and finally in informal exchanges between the “new academics” and the more “sensitive” senior civil servants, a monetarist version of neo-classical economics came to provide the accepted frame of reference for economic debate. The economic journalists helped to make this revolution in ideas acceptable in the media and the serious financial press—and thus, not long after, in the boardrooms of enterprises which everyone imagined had long since abandoned open competition for the safer waters of state capitalism.

Neither Keynesianism nor monetarism, however, wins votes as such in the electoral marketplace. But, in the discourse of “social market values,” Thatcherism discovered a powerful means of translating economic doctrine into the language of experience, moral imperative, and common sense, thus providing a “philosophy” in the broader sense—an alternative *ethic* to that of the “caring society.” This translation of a theoretical *ideology* into a populist *idiom* was a major political achievement: and the conversion of hard-faced economics into the language of compulsive *moralism* was, in many ways, the centerpiece of this transformation. “Being British” became once again identified with the restoration of competition and profitability; with tight money and sound finance (“You can’t pay yourself more than you earn!”)—the national economy projected on the model of the household budget. The essence of the British people was identified with self-reliance and personal responsibility, as against the image of the overtaxed individual, enervated by welfare-state “coddling,” his or her moral fiber irrevocably sapped by “state handouts.” This assault, not just on welfare over-spending, but on the very principle and essence of collective social welfare—the centerpiece of consensus politics from the Butskell period onward—was mounted, not through an analysis of which class of the deserving made most out of the welfare state, but through the emotive image of the “scrounger”: the new folk-devil.

To the elaboration of this populist language and the reconstruction of a “free-market” ethic both the excessively high-minded Sir Keith Joseph and the excessively broad-bottomed Rhodes Boyson, both the “disinterested” leader writers of the *Times*, *Telegraph*, and the *Economist* and the ventriloquists of populist opinion in the *Mail*, the *Express*, the *Star*, and the *Sun*, lent their undivided attention. The colonization of the popular press was a critical victory in this struggle to define the common sense of the times. Here was undertaken the critical ideological work of constructing around “Thatcherism” a populist common sense.

Thatcherite populism is a particularly rich mix. It combines the resonant themes of organic Toryism—nation, family, duty, authority, standards, traditionalism—with the aggressive themes of a revived neoliberalism—self-interest, competitive individualism, anti-statism. Some of these elements had been secured in earlier times through the grand themes of One-Nation popular Conservatism: the means by which Toryism circumnavigated democracy, lodged itself in the hearts of the people and lived to form many another popular government. Other elements derived from the anachronistic vocabulary of political economy and possessive individualism. The latter

had been absorbed into Conservative rhetoric only when the old Liberalism ceased to provide the Conservatives with a viable political base. The idea that “freedom of the people equals the free market” has never been wholly banished from the Tory universe; but, despite Powellism, and Mr. Heath in the “Selsdon Man” phase, it has failed to achieve full ascendancy within the party in the postwar period, until recently. But now, in the wake of an era dominated by the social-democratic consensus, and a Conservatism tainted with distinct corporatist tendencies, “Freedom/free market” is once again in the foreground of the conservative ideological repertoire. “Free market—strong state”: around this contradictory point, where neoliberal political economy fused with organic Toryism, the authentic language of “Thatcherism” has condensed. It began to be spoken in the mid-1970s—and, in its turn, to “speak,” to define—the crisis: what it was and how to get out of it. The crisis has begun to be “lived” in *its* terms. This is a new kind of taken-for-grantedness; a reactionary common sense, harnessed to the practices and solutions of the radical Right and the class forces it now aspires to represent.

The Repertoire of Thatcherism

Only two aspects of this rich repertoire of anti-collectivism can be remarked on in the space available here. First, there is the way these discourses operated directly on popular elements in the traditional philosophies and practical ideologies of the *dominated* classes. These elements—as Ernesto Laclau and others have argued—often express a contradiction between popular interests and the power bloc.⁴ But since the terms in which this contradiction is expressed have no intrinsic, necessary, or fixed class meaning, they can be effectively recomposed as elements within very different discourses, positioning the popular classes in relation to the power bloc in different ways. When, in a crisis, the traditional alignments are disrupted, it is possible, on the very ground of this break, to construct the people into a populist political subject: *with*, not *against*, the power bloc; in alliance with new political forces in a great national crusade to “make Britain ‘Great’ once more.” The language of “the people,” unified behind a reforming drive to turn the tide of “creeping collectivism,” banish Keynesian illusions from the state apparatus, and renovate the power bloc is a powerful one. Its radicalism connects with radical-popular sentiments; but it effectively turns them round, absorbs and neutralizes their popular thrust, and creates, in the place of a popular rupture, a *populist unity*. It brings into existence a new “historic

bloc” between certain sections of the dominant and dominated classes. We can see this construction of ideological cross-alliances between “Thatcherism” and “the people” actually going on in the very structure of Mrs. Thatcher’s own rhetoric. “Don’t talk to me about ‘them’ and ‘us’ in a company,” she once told the readers of *Woman’s Own*: “You’re all ‘we’ in a company. You survive as the company survives, prosper as the company prospers—everyone together. The future lies in cooperation and not confrontation.” This displaces an existing structure of oppositions—“them” vs. “us.” It sets in its place an alternative set of equivalents: “Them *and* us equals *we*.” Then it positions we—“the people”—in a particular relation to capital: behind it, dominated by its imperatives (profitability, accumulation); yet at the same time, yoked to it, identified with it. “You survive as the company survives”; presumably also, you collapse as it collapses. . . . Cooperation not confrontation! The process we are looking at here is very similar to that which Gramsci once described as *transformism*: the neutralization of some elements in an ideological formation and their absorption and passive appropriation into a new political configuration.

The second aspect is closely related to this process of transformism. For what we have so far described could well appear—and has often been described by the traditional left—as mere illusion, pure “false consciousness”: just a set of ideological con-tricks whose cover will be blown as soon as they are put to the stern test of material circumstances. But this reading greatly underestimates both the rational core on which these populist constructions are situated, *and* their real, not false, material basis. Specifically, such a reading neglects the materiality of the contradictions between “the people”—popular needs, interests, desires, and aspirations—on the one hand, and the actual, imposed structures of the interventionist state—the state of the monopoly phase of capitalist development—on the other. “Thatcherism,” far from simply conjuring demons out of the deep, operated directly on the real and manifestly contradictory experience of the popular classes under social-democratic corporatism.

It is important to understand why Labourist social democracy was vulnerable to the charge of “statism”—and therefore why “anti-statism” has proved so powerful a populist slogan: otherwise, we may confuse ourselves into believing that the headway which “Thatcherism” is undoubtedly making among working people, committed Labour voters and some sectors of skilled labor, can be wholly attributed to “false consciousness.” As we have seen, the project which social-democratic corporatism set itself was the containment and reform, not the transformation, of the crisis of British capitalism. What capital

manifestly could no longer accomplish on its own, “reformism” would have to do by harnessing capital to the state, using the state as representative of the “general interest” to create the conditions for the effective resumption of capitalist accumulation and profitability. Social democracy had no other viable strategy, especially for “big” capital (and “big” capital had no viable alternative strategy for itself), which did not involve significant state regulation and support. Hence the state has become a massive presence, inscribed over every feature of social and economic life. But, as the recession bit more deeply, so the management of the crisis required Labour to discipline, limit, and police the very classes it claimed to represent—again, through the mediation of the state.

The best index of this problem was the incomes policy strategy, especially in its last and most confusing manifestation, the Social Contract. The Social Contract was one of those open-ended or double-sided ideological mechanisms into which each side could read quite contradictory meanings. To the Left, it represented an attempt to use the corporatist bargaining of the state to graft certain powerful social and economic objectives on to the “price” of limiting wage demands. To the Labour government, it clearly represented the only form in which social and economic discipline could be “sold” to the trade union movement. The glaring discrepancies between the redistributive language of the Social Contract and its actual disciplinary character was the best index of how “the state” under corporatist management came to be experienced as “the enemy of the people.” This contradiction bit deeper and deeper into the Labour/trade union alliance until, with the revolt against incomes policies and in favor of “collective bargaining,” it undermined the credibility and *raison d’être* of Mr. Callaghan’s government itself. The radical Right welcomed this trade union revolt against “state interference in free collective bargaining” much in the manner of the Prodigal Son.

It would be easy to believe that Labourism has been trapped by the statist dilemma only recently and inadvertently. In fact, “Labourism,” or Labour socialism, has been marked from its origins by its Fabian-collectivist inheritance. The expansion of the state machine, under the management of state servants and experts, has often been defined in this tradition as synonymous with socialism itself. Labour has been willing to use this state to reform conditions for working people, provided this did not bite too deeply into the “logic” of capitalist accumulation. But it has refused like the plague the mobilization of democratic power at the popular level. This has always been the site on which Labour has been brought back from the brink into its deep

reverence for “constitutionalism.” Nothing, indeed, so rattles the equanimity of Labour leaders as the spectacle of the popular classes on the move under their own steam, outside the range of “responsible” guidance and leadership. The fact is that “statism” is not foreign to the trajectory of Labour socialism: it is intrinsic to it. Corporatism is only the latest form in which this deep commitment to using the state on behalf of the people, but without popular mobilization, has manifested itself.

The radical Right has capitalized on this fatal hesitancy, this deep weakness in Labour socialism. Mrs. Thatcher is therefore guilty of exaggeration—but of no more than that—when she identifies state bureaucracy and creeping collectivism with “socialism,” and “socialism” with the specter of “actual existing socialism” under the East European regimes: and then counterposes to this fatal syllogism the sweet sound of “Freedom” which, of course, she and her New Model Conservative Party represent.

It is also the case that the actual experience which working people have had of the corporatist state has not been a powerful incentive to further support for increases in its scope. Whether in the growing dole queues or in the waiting rooms of an overburdened National Health Service, or suffering the indignities of Social Security, the corporatist state is increasingly experienced by them not as a benefice but as a powerful bureaucratic imposition *on* “the people.” The state has been present to them, less as a welfare or redistributive agency, and more as the “state of monopoly capital.” And since Labour has foregrounded the requirements of monopoly capital above all others, what is it that can be said to be “false” in this consciousness?

Instead of confronting this contradiction at the heart of its strategy, Labourism has typically fallen back on reaffirming the neutral-benevolent definition of the state, as incarnator of the National Interest and above the struggle between the contending classes. It is precisely this abstract state which now appears transformed in the discourses of Thatcherism as the enemy. It is “the state” which has over-borrowed and overspent; fueled inflation; fooled the people into thinking that there would always be more where the last handout came from; tried to assume the regulation of things like wages and prices which are best left to the hidden hand of market forces; above all, interfered, meddled, intervened, instructed, directed—against the essence, the Genius, of the British People. It is time, as she says, with conviction, “to put people’s destinies again in their own hands.”

Thus, in any polarization along the fissure between state and people, it is *Labour* which can be represented as undividedly part of the power

bloc, enmeshed in the state apparatus, riddled with bureaucracy, in short, as “with” the state; and Mrs. Thatcher, grasping the torch of freedom with one hand, as someone who is undividedly out there, “with the people.” It is the Labour Party which is committed to things as they are—and Mrs. Thatcher who means to tear society up by the roots and radically reconstruct it! This is the process by which—as they say—the radical Right has “become popular.”

Education

We might turn to another area of successful colonization by the radical Right: the sphere of education. Until very recently, the social-democratic goals of “equality of opportunity” and “remedying educational disadvantage” were dominant throughout the world of secondary education. The struggle over comprehensivization was its political signature. Contestation in this area has only gradually developed, through a series of strategic interventions. The *Black Paper* group—at first no more than an elitist, education rump—has moved from very modest beginnings to the point where it could justly be claimed (and was) that its preoccupations set the agenda for the “Great Debate” which the Labour government initiated in 1978. In the 1960s “progressive” and “community” education made considerable advances within state schools. Today, “progressivism” is thoroughly discredited: the bodies of a whole series of well-publicized schools—William Tyndale and after, so to speak—lie strewn in its path. The panic over falling standards and working-class illiteracy, the fears concerning politically motivated teachers in the classroom, the scare stories about the “violent” urban school, about the adulteration of standards through the immigrant intake, and so on, have successfully turned the tide in the education sphere toward themes and goals established by the forces of the Right. The press—especially those three popular ventriloquist voices of the radical right, the *Mail*, the *Sun*, and the *Express*—have played here a pivotal role. They have publicized the “examples” in a highly sensational form, and they have drawn the connections.

These connections and couplings are the key mechanisms of the process by which education as a field of struggle has been articulated to the Right. There are long, deep-seated resistances within the philosophy of state education to any attempt to measure schooling directly in terms of the needs and requirements of industry. That these were resistances often shot through with ambiguity is not so important for our purposes. However it arose, the reluctance to cash schooling in terms of its immediate value to capital was

one on which campaigns could be mounted with some hope of professional administrative support. These defenses have now been dismantled. Clear evidence is supposed to exist that standards are falling: the principal witnesses to this alarming trend are employers who complain about the quality of job applicants: this, in turn, must be having an effect on the efficiency and productivity of the nation—at a time when recession puts a premium on improving both. Once the often ill-founded elements were stitched together into this chain of reasoning, policies could begin to be changed by leading educationists of the political Right, indirectly, even before they took charge at the Department of Education. And why?

First, because the terrain on which the debate is being conducted has been so thoroughly reconstructed round this new “logic” that the groundswell for change is proving hard to resist. Second, because Labour itself has always been caught between competing goals in schooling: to improve the chances of working-class children and the worse-off in education, and to harness education to the economic and efficiency needs of the productive system. We can see now that this contradiction, even within the social-democratic educational program, is another variant of what earlier we called the principal contradiction of social democracy in this period. The educational experts and spokesmen, the educational press, sections of the profession, the media, many educational interest groups and organizations have been operating exactly on the site of this dilemma and—in conditions of recession—carried the argument with the Labour government which in turn took the lead in promoting debates and policies designed to make this equation—success in education = meeting the needs of industry—come true!

The “Great Debate”

Thus the agenda for the “Great Debate” on education was indeed set for social democracy by the social forces of the radical Right. And the language of comprehensive education has been effectively displaced by the language of educational excellence. The Labour government, which initiated this “Great Debate,” was almost certainly still convinced that this is largely a non-political debate, as debates about education ought to be. “Education should not be a political football,” Labour ministers solemnly declared—a slogan they should try selling to the public school Headmasters’ Conference! And, lest it be thought that this is, after all, only a debate, we should be aware that a major restructuring of the educational state apparatuses is taking place. The Department

of Education and Science is to be set somewhat to one side, and new apparatuses capable of realizing the equation in more immediate and practical forms have moved into a central position in the field, such as the Manpower Services Commission, and the “Tops” retraining programs, directly geared to the demands and movements of industry and to the silent reskilling and deskilling of the unemployed.

The restructuring of the state apparatus from above is one thing. But the active and positive support from parents—including many working-class ones—is another. As unemployment grows, working-class parents are obliged to take the competitive side of education more seriously: being skilled—even if it is only for particular places in dead-end, low-skill, routine labor—is better than being on the dole. If comprehensivization in the form in which it was offered is not going to deliver the goods, then working-class children may have to be content to be “skilled” and “classed” in any way they can. This is what Marx meant by the “dull compulsion” of economic existence.

But it is also the case that, as the failure of social-democratic initiatives to turn the tide of educational disadvantage becomes more manifest, so the positive aspirations of working people for the education of their children can be re-articulated toward the support for a more conventional and traditional approach to the educational marketplace. This great exodus back to known and familiar territory, to tried pathways, to the traditional and the orthodox, to the safe territory of *what is*, is one of the strongest and deepest of commonsense sentiments: and, for that reason, one of the most resonant themes in the discourse of the radical Right. In the 1960s, “parent power” belonged with the radical movements, with Ivan Illich and “deschooling.” In the 1970s and 1980s it was one of the strongest cards in the educational pack shuffled by Tory education spokespersons.

Law and Order

If education is an area where the Right has won territory without having to win power, two other areas in the repertoire of the radical Right—race and law and order—are ones where the Right has traditionally assumed a leading role. We can be brief about them since they have gained considerable attention on the Left in the recent period. They are chosen as examples here only to make a general point. On law and order, the themes—more policing, tougher sentencing, better family discipline, the rising crime rate as an index of social disintegration, the threat to “ordinary people going about their private

business” from thieves, muggers, etc., the wave of lawlessness and the loss of law-abidingness—are perennials of Conservative Party conferences, and the sources of many a populist campaign by moral entrepreneur groups and quoting editors. But if the work of the Right in some areas has won support over into its camp, the law and order issues have worked to scare people. The language of law and order is sustained by a populist moralism. It is where the great syntax of “good” versus “evil,” of civilized and uncivilized standards, of the choice between anarchy and order, constantly divides the world up and classifies it into its appointed stations. The play on “values” and on moral issues in this area is what gives to the law-and-order crusade much of its grasp on popular morality and commonsense conscience. But it also touches concretely the experience of crime and theft, of the loss of scarce property and the fears of unexpected attack in working-class areas and neighborhoods; and, since it promulgates no other remedies for their underlying causes, it welds people to that “need for authority” which has been so significant for the Right in the construction of consent to its authoritarian program.

Race constitutes another variant of the same process. In recent months questions of race, racism, and relations between the races, as well as immigration, have been dominated by the dialectic between the radical-respectable and the radical-rough forces of the Right. It was said about the 1960s and early 1970s that, after all, Mr. Powell lost. This is true only if the shape of a whole conjuncture is to be measured by the career of a single individual. In another sense, there is an argument that “Powellism” won: not only because his official eclipse was followed by legislating into effect much of what he proposed, but because of the magical connections and short-circuits which Powellism was able to establish between the themes of race and immigration control and the images of the nation, the British people, and the destruction of “our culture, our way of life.”

I have looked exclusively at some political-ideological dimensions of the emergence of the radical Right, not to evoke wonder at its extent, but to try to identify what is specific to it, what marks its difference from other variants which have flourished since the war. The first is the complex but interlocked relationship of the Right to the fortunes and fate of social democracy when the latter takes power in a period of economic recession, and tries to provide a solution “within certain limits.” It is always the case that the Right is what it is partly because of what the Left is. The second is its popular success in neutralizing the contradiction between people and the state/power bloc and winning popular interpellations so decisively for the Right. In short, the

nature of its *populism*. But now it must be added that this is no rhetorical device or trick, for this populism is operating on genuine contradictions, it has a rational and material core. Its success and effectivity do not lie in its capacity to dupe unsuspecting folk but in the way it addresses real problems, real and lived experiences, real contradictions—and yet is able to represent them within a logic of discourse which pulls them systematically into line with policies and class strategies of the Right. Finally—and this is not limited to this analysis, though it seems especially relevant—there is the evidence of just how ideological transformation and political restructuring of this order is actually accomplished. It works on the ground of already constituted social practices and lived ideologies. It wins space there by constantly drawing on these elements which have secured over time a traditional resonance and left their traces in popular inventories. At the same time, it changes the field of struggle by changing the place, the position, the relative weight of the condensations within any one discourse and constructing them according to an alternative logic. What shifts them is not “thoughts” but a particular practice of social struggle: ideological and political class struggle. What makes these representations popular is that they have a purchase on practice, they shape it, they are written into its materiality. What constitutes them as a danger is that they change the nature of the terrain itself on which struggles of different kinds are taking place; they have pertinent effects on these struggles. Their effect is to constitute a new balance of political forces. This is exactly the terrain on which the forces of opposition must organize, if we are to transform it.

NOTES

- 1 V. I. Lenin, *Letters from Afar, Selected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970).
- 2 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).
- 3 We have attempted a fuller analysis of this moment elsewhere: the chapters on the “Exhaustion of Consent” and “Towards the Exceptional State” in Hall, Clarke, Critcher, Jefferson, and Roberts, *Policing the Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1978).
- 4 Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: New Left Books, 1977).

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