

comparable to the loss of a parent or close relative. Eighty-two percent in Dallas, versus 68% nationally, experienced "extreme nervousness and tension." TV viewers had the following symptoms, which disappeared after the funeral: "loss of appetite, crying, difficulty sleeping, unusual fatigue." "Television temporarily created disaster victims." This is an intriguing assertion in a rather strange book; Barkun goes on to discuss the effects of induced and constant catastrophe, for example, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, suggesting that the secret of permanent revolution is permanent disaster—which, from another political position, accords with Benjamin and Prince who argue that disaster is one critical means of instigating revolution and change. Thus, there is a politics to catastrophe. Prince, quoting Professor Shailer Matthews, who distinguishes between a crisis and a revolution: "The difference between a revolution and a crisis is the difference between the fire and the moment when someone with a lighted match in hand pauses to decide whether a fire should be lighted." When I was a child, and older, we used to wonder what we would do if the bomb were dropped. Rather than running to church or falling to our knees in prayer, we most likely would turn on television.

36. I have analyzed this videotape and its context, the counterculture and Ant Farm, in "Video Politics: Guerilla TV, Ant Farm, *Eternal Frame*," *Discourse* 10.2 (Spring-Summer 1988):78–100.

37. Samuel Weber, *The Legend of Freud* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 143.

38. Patrick D. Morrow, "Those Sick Challenger Jokes," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 20.4:179; other examples of these jokes are "Did you hear that Christa MacAuliffe has been nominated for the 1986 Mother of the Year Award?" "Of course, she only blew up once in front of her kids this year." "What does Christa MacAuliffe teach?" "English, but she's history now."

39. Dan Nimmo and James E. Combs, *Nightly Horrors: Crisis Coverage by Television Network News* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985). See also W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion* (New York: Hangman, 1983); Barbara Matusow, *The Evening Stars: The Making of the Network News Anchor* (Boston: Houghton, 1983).

40. "Thus, if Freud's initial stories deal with men, betrayal, and ingratitude, death enters the scene with—as?—the passive female . . . a recurrent fatality linked to the female: she either eliminates the male or is eliminated by him. But nothing is more difficult to do away with than this persistent female." This, in Weber's interpretation of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 134.

41. Samuel Weber concludes with the Greeks: the myth, as it were, of our cultural origins or consciousness, back, along with Freud, to the *Symposium*.

42. Sigmund Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms, Anxiety*, p. 129.

NOTE: This essay was written before the 1989 California quake; however, the model developed here was a snug fit.

REPRESENTING TELEVISION

Stephen Heath

Discussion of television is extensive today; more than extensive, indeed, if we do not immediately limit discussion according to some criterion of seriousness (of what counts as "serious discussion") but allow it to embrace the range of discourses in which television is now talked through: from the government report or the sociological study to the feature in this week's *TV Guide* or the commuter-train conversation, to this or that program commenting on itself and all the others (television has television as an abiding concern). This more-than-extensiveness corresponds, of course, to the sheer size of television, its seamless equivalence with social life; or rather, it is part of that size, a reflection of it but also a material element in it, in the general substance and reality of television which cannot be merely envisaged as a totality of transmitted programs. Hence television is a somewhat difficult object, unstable, all over the place, tending derisively to escape anything we can say about it: given the speed of its changes (in technology, economics, programming), its interminable flow (of images and sounds, their endlessly disappearing present), its quantitative everydayness (the very quality of this medium each and every day), how can we represent television?

Partly here there is a problem simply with the use of the term "television" which covers not just the extensive social fact but a number of things which are not at all homogeneous despite that fact. Think only of the historical volatility of the technology and of the realities of broadcasting: the television of the 1980s is not the television of the 1950s or 1960s, is not merely more of the same in some straightforward continuity of technological, economic, and social relations. Or think of the differences from television to television across the world, the differences we elide as we too readily extrapolate from and collapse into US television as television *tout court*, the essential realization and the certain destiny. Or think again, recognizing another dimension of the problem, of the uneasy relation of "television" to video: many artists work with television (television technologies), but the

involvement of video art, video practice with television (broadcast television, TV) is problematic (aesthetically, culturally, ideologically): important in the history of video art is an initial—and continuing—practice against television, the mass broadcast form, leading in one direction into a typical modernist concern with the “essentials” of the medium in opposition to the whole idea of transmission, the dominant idea of the “medium,” while in another (but the two can overlap) to a critical interventionist concern with the politics of television, with its critique and transformation. Such examples are a necessary counter to the usual assumption of “television”; assuming, the latter excludes; excluding, it homogenizes; homogenizing, it accepts a specific domination. This assumption, moreover, is a condition of the slide which compels so many of the public discussions and reactions toward the projection of some anthropomorphized originating force: television as the autonomous subject-cause of this or that. Nowhere do technological determinism and cultural pessimism meet with so much assent as in attitudes to television (the assumption of “television”) which must, on the contrary, always be understood to involve in a given context the particular institution of a set of technical knowledges and procedures as an applied technology in a specific social formation.¹ It thus needs to be said that in most of what follows, “television” is used to refer to broadcast television as instituted in the US and—allowing nevertheless for characteristic differences—in the countries of Western Europe.

Yet to specify usage in that way is indicative. While homogenization is misleading, while the equation of US television with television is wrong, there is also an evident rightness, a necessary emphasis in it: to go no further, economic determinations have rendered such homogenization and equation powerfully real. Herbert Schiller, most vividly, has been analyzing for a number of years now the capitalist permeation of the informational realm, with information/communication services accounting for more than half of the economic activity in the US, and the emergence of a television based increasingly on world markets and multinational corporate over public ownership, with US television having the large monopoly of this television, being its very achievement. Imperialism translates into these terms of the media, economic and cultural appropriation, the world deluged by what Schiller calls “homogenized North Atlantic cultural slop.”² To say which is to point to the tensions of television as medium and as (economic) culture, possible diversity and effective domination, forms and form. We must acknowledge not technological determinism but the historical reality of a particular institution as determining domination—where domination does not, by definition, exhaust differences but at the same time is, again by definition, exactly domination.

One of the main difficulties in approaching television is the increasing inadequacy of existing terms and standards of analysis, themselves precisely bound up with a specific régime of representation, a certain coherence of object and understanding in a complex of political-social-individual mean-

ing. Representation in the régime we largely know (“we” in the democracies of Western industrial societies) involves together a depiction (something imaged for us), an argument (as we talk of representations being made regarding this or that), and a deputation (we are represented, taken up in the representativeness), an economy of message, communication, and subject-identity. That television is about messages, that it communicates, that it identifies in order to engage us, there is no need to doubt; clearly it is and does. At the lowest level, we can switch on and quickly find messages being delivered to us—political, religious, whatever, messages are constantly being proposed, time bought to make this or that offer of sense, some particular representation. Clearly there is nothing “pure” about these messages: they are enrolled in all the spectacle and ritual and procedure of television, televisuality, but they are nonetheless given as such, labeled thus, so many “this is a message” moments. Clearly again, messages are not to be limited to these declared moments; they are also everywhere else, television as a multiplication of messages through the whole range of programs and genres and slots with their various topics, narratives, dramas, constructions, strategies, all their diverse modes of presentation.

At this point, however, the idea of the “message” has begun to slip, has begun to lose its usefulness: extended across television, it both forgoes any specific analytic meaning and constrains understanding of television within a traditional framework that misses its reality, is too univocal, and this notwithstanding the added stress on “multiplicity.” By “univocal” is meant that such an idea can suggest a single coherent functioning of television, a single coherent effectivity (the transmission of messages); that it can suggest a single relation between institution and audience (the reception of messages); that it is liable to conflate the problem of meaning in television, of the production of social meanings, with, precisely, “messages” in a way which holds back from the necessary new terms we will need for thinking about television and ideology, about its conditions and reality of representation (and the validity and sense of the latter term will then be in question); that it accepts an essentialization of television as “communication,” which is—or was—after all a dominant respectable version of television (this having its other, complementary, lighter side: “entertainment”), the ideology of the noble social role with its accompanying rhetoric: criticize television and you criticize communication, democracy, the free flow of ideas and information (there was a time indeed in strong European “public service” televisions when every set was to all intents and purposes inscribed “this is communication—be grateful”).

Messages, communication, that is, may be part of our perception of television but must also be part of the analysis, part of its critique; at once inasmuch as that perception has been a given of television itself and is far from adequately registering the nature of its institution, and inasmuch as, politically, the point in the end cannot be only to communicate alternatives—although this is now certainly crucial—but equally to produce al-

ternatives to this specific social version of "communication," where the latter is both these particular orders of meaning and the terms of an ideological misconception: communicating alternatives, that is, involves moving beyond "communication" in order to grasp the reality of the television institution (and so of its modes of establishment and use of communication) as a prerequisite for effective transformation, the condition finally of any alternative (significantly enough here, Godard entitled his initial set of television interventions "on and under communication," *Sur et sous la communication*).

Thus we need, for example, to understand the institution in respect of its fundamental universalizing function, universalizing not in the sense of the creation of some one coherent subject, some representative reason for its orders, but in that, more basically, of the universalization of the function of reception. Television exists first and foremost as availability, as saying everything to everyone, all of us receivers, assembled and serialized in that unity ("the public," "the audience," "the viewer," what we have to be, exactly the everyone, and not someone; the religious television stations—and the prelapsarian Swaggart, for instance, was reaching a claimed 145 nations—are forcefully brute expressions of this: the *Assembly of God/TV*). Along with social security numbers we should also receive television recipient numbers (we have them now in one form or another, as most obviously in countries with television license systems), certification of our being there (no doubt it is not quite by chance that that last phrase finds the title of the Hal Ashby film in which Peter Sellers played a character—himself in fact just Chance—whose existence was entirely as viewer, not watching but receiving television, always immediately switching channels, even when he himself—but there is no such identity outside of reception—appeared on screen). The hierarchy of message and medium on which notions of communication habitually depend here shifts: what is transmitted is important, but it is the realization and maintenance of the function of reception that is *all*-important, everything else then to be seen as simply something like the minimum required to allow that realization and maintenance, to guarantee the fulfillment of the function.

This is to have come from the question of representing television as how to represent it to the question of representing television as how it represents, its relation to and of representation. The two go together, since how it represents will have to be a decisive focus of attention for any representation of television; to talk about the first is necessarily to raise the issues of the latter, of the concepts and procedures for a validly critical analysis. In what follows, the aim is to provide some initial discussion of how television represents, of thinking about it and representation; and then, too, implicitly and later on rather more explicitly, to give some consideration to studying it, to terms of analysis. Needless to say, no doubt, the determining perspective will be political: the questions of representing television are directly, from the start, a matter of a politics of representation.

Television is the displacement of representation from political into economic terms.

Representation, of course, is a basic reference for television itself which runs it into socio-economic constructions: "the audience," "the target group," and all the other expressions of such constructions. "The problem," a Nielsen ratings official once candidly said, "is picking the sample that is representative, that is representing what you want it to represent."³ Which holds above all for the networks and advertisers who commission and use the ratings. The criteria of the representative are not political but economic; representation works that way. The problem is representatively packaging the market grouping that represents what commodity value needs it to represent. Sitting in front of the television screen, we have always to remember that, whatever else, programs are so much wrapping paper and that what is being wrapped up for delivery is us, an audience. The mention of packaging can also remind us that, like packaging in other areas of capitalist production, programs themselves have not usually been subject to price competition amongst the networks: the competition is for ratings (through "quality," scheduling, etc.), for audience representation as market asset. This representation, moreover, is the prime economic relation: consumers—the viewers—express their preferences precisely through ratings, not through any direct buying of a product (programs are like and unlike other products).⁴

The ratings institutes work with the idea of the "representative sample," but this is simply an economic majority, a commodity standard which the programs—the means to the realization of the commodity audience—are anyway set to fit from the very beginning (the Preview Theater on Sunset Boulevard where proposed new series are sent to be tested for audience response is well known; and, of course, the audience itself each time must be tested for standardness, its reactions measured to a Mr. Magoo cartoon, making sure it laughs in the right places, gives good "Magoos"). Arthur C. Nielsen himself in the 1960s once described how he dealt with objections to his small number of homes recorded by using—what else?—a television analogy.⁵ Suppose for the sake of objection that someone in the sample is unrepresentative, which is to say "idiosyncratic" according to the Nielsen view of things; his example is a woman in Arkansas who, having once taken exception to some remark made by Jack Paar, turned off the set every time the latter appeared. The result would be equivalent to losing one out of the 525 lines scanned on your television screen: you would still have a good picture, "any one line by itself is meaningless"; the standard image is maintained and the standard representation too, "representing what you want it to represent." The contortions are evident: "while this woman statistically did stand for many viewers, she did not specifically represent them," "separately she represented no one. . . ." What they express, however, assertively defensive still (remember that this was some time ago), is the relocation of representation as the economic construction of a majority at the expense

of any social or political reality outside of its assembly through television, any other reality then being so much interference that distorts the true—representative—picture. The point is the mean, the right audience, the whole lot of Magoos; and the ever-increasing precision in targeting specific groups, the interest in particular minorities, is a continuation and an intensification of this relocation: the social identity is again economic, minorities defined by spending power (in a nice loop, television then defines spending power, is itself economic identification: witness the way that subscription to cable has now become a key indicator of disposable income). Of course, that representation and its realization and discussion are in the province of the biggest marketing research firm on earth (television work is responsible for only 11% of the Nielsen Company's earnings but 99% of its fame) is indicative enough from the start, shows immediately the relocation. Representation is the economic relation of an audience, and it is no surprise that disputes about the accuracy of the ratings are about just that, economic representation; as in the compensation payment demands by advertisers after more sophisticated measurement techniques developed by the Percy Company challenged accepted figures, giving a 70% audience share to the networks at the time as opposed to a previously believed 76%: the disputed 6% equals some 7 million television households equals a sizeable difference in marketable audience equals a considerable variation in the price at which time can be sold to advertisers—representation is now caught up in that equation.

The displacement of representation from political to economic terms is a relation of culture to the economic in new forms that challenge a political culture of the individual subject.

Obviously, the relation of representation to the economic is part of its history from the beginning: suffrage is a political demand from economic power by the middle classes in Britain, for example, in the early nineteenth century (as later in the century one strand within suffragism was pressure for the enfranchisement of propertied women, women with social responsibility). At the same time, the history—that of *universal* suffrage—is one of political independence from the economic, representation as condition of full subjecthood, as social recognition of the individual and his or her freedom (thus, alongside the middle classes, the working classes struggled for parliamentary reform, the more so after the 1832 Act limited the franchise to £10 rated householders; thus the historical project of suffragism was the enfranchisement of all women). This individual version of representation brings with it a new elaboration of and attention to culture, at once in the sense that culture is produced as an area of value and achievement in an argument against democracy and, *a fortiori*, socialism from which indeed it would need to be protected (culture or anarchy) and in the sense that culture becomes the expression of a social concern with the individual who, given the movement toward the extension of the suffrage, must now

be educated, socialized, cultured, indeed *acculturated* (to adapt a term that appears at our end of the history: the individual is as an alien to be brought into culture).

Historically, therefore, the idea of culture is a site of contradiction, both term of individual value (growth, development, self-realization through the attainment of a *true* perfection, Arnold's "the best which has been thought and said in the world") and term of social production (the realization of the individual in the social, its mesh of beliefs and customs and representations, *its* "reality"). In the history it then mediates the resolution of the two or rather the flattening out of any contradiction; and this finally by the holding together of the social as culture as value, value thus collapsing into an *indifference* of culture: culture is potentially everywhere and everything. "Culture," writes Fredric Jameson, "seems to me the very element of consumer society itself; no society has ever been saturated with signs and messages like this one . . . everything is mediated by culture to the point when even the political and the ideological 'levels' have initially to be disentangled from their primary mode of representation which is cultural."⁶ This, in fact, was the historical necessity of structuralism, treating everything—and indifferently—as communication, message, sign ("the interpretation of society as a whole in function of a theory of communication," as Lévi-Strauss so influentially put it);⁷ as it was and is then of poststructuralism, drawing its inevitable conclusion from the primacy of signs, namely, that of their disorigination from anything other than the nonorigin of their production, Derrida's *diffrance*: representation is taken no longer as record or expression of some existing reality but as production of reality, with a consequent suspicion of the term itself insofar as it cannot but involve the idea of a distinction between representation and represented with the latter "outside" of the former, its origin or cause or corresponding truth, this as against the generalized textuality within which representation works, which is its sole ground ("representations as signs that refer to other signs, which refer to still other signs," in Jonathan Culler's words).⁸

The interrelation of television with this development of culture and then also with that of poststructuralism is powerful. Television marks a qualitative change in the history in which it is included of the central cultural modes of representation in industrial societies. From the novel to cinema to television, these succeeding and overlapping one another in that history, there has been a prime concern with making individual-social sense, providing exactly the terms of *representation*, sense of the social in individual terms for the individual thus identified as a representative and represented subject, socially existent to him- or herself. Which brings us back to the logic of culture and its history and to the growth of mass culture. Representation, from the nineteenth century on, is a political fact and struggle and a market reality, the heavy investment in socially extensive representing modes that offer fictions, images, reports: so many repeatedly available

versions of how it is for me to be living in the new and changing society (note the importance of realism in these modes), versions of the culture that constitute the culture, that are the individual's social identity.

Mass culture may be understood as dependent on the following at least: the imposition of market relations as the condition of production and reception; processes of industrialization; the incorporation of the vast majority of people into the dominant industrial production of culture.⁹ Novel and television can thus be seen equally as classic instances of mass cultural production, as single history. Television, however, at the same time that it continues also changes that history, quite decisively alters our experience of mass culture (we need to think, too, of the position of radio, its inception of broadcasting and subsequent accompaniment of television). What is at stake here is the dominance of television as medium and culture—as mode of cultural production—in the societies of its institution in a way that gives new content to dominance, that is characterized by a quantitative-qualitative shift in respect of: *extension* (television's massive penetration—the industry's own word—of homes: 98% of US households with one or more sets); *sociality* (owning and watching television has become an obligatory requirement for full membership of the modern capitalist state); *occupation* (a French person born after 1970, for example, will spend on average 63,000 hours of his or her life in front of the television as opposed to 55,000 hours working); and so on. This is precisely the realization of the saturation of signs and messages, of representations, mediating everything, everyone in a general spread of culture that operates the displacement of representation from political to economic terms and is the result of a determining cultural-economic organization of the social (the increasing importance of information/communication services can be noted again in this context). Debates in the recent history of television in Western Europe with their arguments over "public service" or "private, commercial" television are indicative: political-representational versions of State and individual subject are juxtaposed with economic-representational versions of media, network, circulation (of sounds-images-capital), with the future—and the present—on the side of the latter (inflation and reduced public spending have facilitated the shift from public to private and prompted new accommodations between State and market around communications). Culture is a matter no longer of political calculation for the individual but of economic calculation for the consumer as audience; and representation is now the form of that calculation.

The displacement of representation to economic terms is the archaization of all address to the individual as citizen, as individual subject.

In its most archaic systems ("archaic" from the perspective of its institution in advanced capitalist societies), television is exactly broadcasting, the transmission of state speech to viewers as first and foremost citizens; television as "a mirror of the principles of the State," as the director of the

USSR State Committee for Television and Radio put it in 1984, describing the reality in his country.¹⁰ Such a television will be news-centralized, highly educational, and parsimonious; thus in China, where the average daily watching time is one-seventh of that in the US, some 70% of programs are informational, artistic, or pedagogic, with broadcasting a state monopoly and television under direct government control. The "public service" traditions of some European televisions mediated individual and state through culture (both as value and as general socialization) in a varied appeal to and identification of free subject plus state citizen plus socio-cultural being plus, more and more, consumer, with these instances "catered for" to a considerable extent by different programs and channels.

The current situation is one of that cultural saturation already mentioned, with television as main agency of the explosion of messages, signs, endless traces of meaning, a whole performance of the society as culture. This can be seen too as the recasting of the social into "the everyday," the culturalization of everyday life by and as television. Socio-political representation is turned into the commodification of a public that is television's economic representation of itself (its market existence); identities are leveled to that standard, the "other people" of the public (for the individual this is the serial consciousness that television gives: viewers are not me but all the others, and this is the same for everybody), and redeemed in the valuation of the everyday, constructed and presented as the truly real (television accounts for daily life: prime activity, taking up my time, and prime mode of its being, taking over reality in a constant domestic recycling in which the terms of my world are made and approved). The new intellectual interest in everyday life is critically important, grasping the need for an understanding of a material sphere usually left aside, if not contemptuously dismissed, by previous theoretical approaches—Habermas talks of "the no-man's land of everyday life" which for the Frankfurt School, for instance, "was a mere epiphenomenon either of the totalizing force of the administrative world or of suffering nature."¹¹ But it is also, like structuralism and poststructuralism indeed, caught up in a history in which television is crucial and in which the production of the sphere of "the everyday," the realization and proposal of that, is an erasure of the possibility of political meaning: the political as transcending the everyday as analysis and critique, project of transformation and action toward it. One initial mode of interest in the everyday, that of the Situationists in the 1950s and 1960s, was concerned precisely with critique and interruption of "*la société du spectacle*"; another, however, the more recent, is often given at best to retrenchment in a low-level pragmatism (the great projects have failed us, stick to the ordinary and its little adjustments), at worst to jubilation in "the screen stage" (forget politics, moral sense, truth, and all other such anachronisms: "Happily . . . the social will not take place").¹² Which, again, is not to suggest that there is not a necessary renegotiation of the political from and in respect of the everyday—think only of the way in which feminism has cut

across the old political exclusions of the lives and oppressions of women by its attention to daily life, forging an everyday politics; it is simply to acknowledge an appeal to "the everyday," following television, that is just the reverse.

In *L'Entretien infini* Maurice Blanchot describes the everyday as "without subject, without object," as the dissolution of the one and the other, of the one with the other: the objective realm cedes to a series of compartmentalized actions, day-to-day indifference, "the medium in which alienations, fetishisms, reifications produce their effects"; the subjective cedes to an empty third-person, an anyone:

The everyday escapes. Why does it escape? Because it is without a subject. When I live the everyday, it is anyone, anyone whatsoever, who does so, and this anyone is, properly speaking, neither me nor, properly speaking, the other; he is neither the one nor the other, and he is the one and the other in their interchangeable presence, their annulled irreciprocity—yet without there being an "I" and an "alter ego" to give rise to a *dialectical recognition*.¹³

"Dialectical recognition" is another term for socio-political representation, dependent on the realization of specific identities, a historical process of subject and object; as "everyday speech," the title of the section in which Blanchot's description occurs, is a term for its neutralization, an omnipresent lateral movement of language, from moment to moment, "the leveling of a steady slack time," "this present without particularity."¹⁴ Such speech is now the province of television, and we can note the sheer extent to which the latter has been developed for and as talk: talk shows, game shows, news shows, soap operas, situation comedies, and so on and on. Not surprisingly, the true stars and symbols of television are talkers, instigators of ever more talk: Johnny Carson or Oprah Winfrey or Phil Donahue or Barbara Walters or . . . Television is meeting people over and over again (with programs inevitably about people meeting people—*The Dating Game*—and then too about whether people really met who they meet—*The Newlywed Game*) and talking over and over again (day in, day out, from *Good Morning America* through to Ted Koppel or David Letterman).¹⁵ Before all else we are treated to a permanent serial of the public for the public in a circle of proximation: if I watch for long enough, I will get meeting and talking with everyone; and, in fact, the long enough is of no matter since at any moment, for any stretch of viewing, the ritual will be being gone through for everyone, anyone, me and the others and whoever it is in television's proximity, which we all are: near, next, before, after, round and round. This proximity, grounded in the huge production of everyday speech, is then the new representational reality, the new democratic condition: not *suffrage*, archaic historical expression of identity, but *reception*, today's social availability to, of, and for all—welcome in, reception's good, whoever wherever; and who where can you be but here-now on television's everyday life, serial days?

In representative elections in the US, less than half of those eligible to

vote do so; 98% of homes in the US have television, and the networks still share between 60% and 70% of the audience, and anyway everyone watches network TV. Democratization is through the medium, not the state, parliamentary majority gives way to televisual—and commercial—majority, the viewing public at any and every moment. For as long as the networks are broadcasting, there is always a guaranteed majority: electronic assembly gives an instantaneous mass, creates a majority discourse. This is not to say that the program of the moment represents (in anything of the old sense) the discourse of the majority (it might, but that is not what is first and foremost at stake); rather, it is the majority discourse at this point by virtue of television: its representation is exhausted in its audience which is what makes it representative and which exists only as a function of television, its aim, standard, and product, its rating.

Classically, representation is bound up with some assumption of a stability of the subject, the imaginable and imagined individual in the social identity of his or her project (the subject *means*); television's imagination is a continuation of itself, the achieved distribution of a *network*. This imagination, moreover, is strong even in programs that are deliberately cast as appealing to the viewer as citizen, that assume the responsibility of the social-individual subject. Thus the producer and presenter of the West German *Aktenzeichen XY . . . Ungelöst* (from which *America's Most Wanted* now derives) calls his book on the program *Das Unsichtbare Netz*—the invisible net or network—and offers a powerful corollary definition of its audience-method:

The method used is reminiscent of the operation of an electronic data-bank from which extraordinarily precise information can be called up in an extremely short time. . . . And the receptive capacity of millions of human minds, which can be checked at one and the same time with the help of the television screen, could be considerably greater than that of an equally powerful electronic robot.¹⁶

Which is a definition that can be applied throughout television: viewers as audience as *receptive capacity*. Note too that the network can operate only in television's electrification of it, switching it on: the presenters of *Crimewatch UK* (the equivalent British program) record that "for some extraordinary reason [but then not so extraordinary] . . . people only believe their experiences when they see something on *Crimewatch* [only, that is, when they—the experiences and the people—are *networked*]!"¹⁷ And, of course, what you see on *Crimewatch* is primarily television: a quarter of a million crimes are reported per month in Britain, but "it is remarkably difficult to find three crimes worthy of reconstruction."¹⁸

The archaization of address to the individual is concomitant with a transformation of relations of time at the expense of the temporality of history.

The distinction is sometimes made in sociological studies between *pledged*

time (spent at work), *compulsive time* (spent fulfilling various necessary requirements, such as traveling to and from work, completing official forms), and then *free time* (spent "as one chooses"). Television is the second proposed as the third and running into the first: free time as compulsive time and as economic relation. The point is the appropriation of free time as commodity, the watching time produced by the seller (the networks and cable stations) for the buyer (the advertisers); the viewer has to watch—has to be a viewer—not just as a social requirement but as an economic one too, so as to produce the marketable commodity, time as that. Godard once remarked how strange it was that people were not paid for watching television given the productive labor involved, the economic service performed.¹⁹ Obviously, "free time" is always a concept and a reality within a specific system of the organization of time, is always given socially and caught up economically (as in capitalist societies for consumption, and it is in just such societies that "free time" becomes important, along with the elaboration of "public" and "private" life). What is new with television, however, is the directness of the relation to and of this free time, the nature and extent of its appropriation, both commodification and occupation—time at home is time for television, the latter occupies the former, and more and more.

This appropriation then finds expression in how and what we see on television, in television's prodigious work on time. Time is monitored, the day organized into time slots; there is a homogenization—every moment contained within this organization—and a certain hierarchization of time—the ordering of a time for learning, a time for news, a time for entertainment, and so on (although the multiplication of channels with cable is shifting this somewhat to an anything anytime situation, news twenty-four hours a day, for instance); with this ordering determining the form and content of programs so that they can be read as signifying "six o'clock," "eight o'clock," as in every sense *meaning* time (Earl Hamner, producer of *Falcon Crest*: "it was designed to be an eight o'clock show . . . CBS felt that with some modifications it could become a ten o'clock show . . . one of them was to shift the emphasis away—not totally away—from the attempt to build a strong family . . . the kind of thing you do at ten o'clock. . . .")²⁰ Typically, time needs to be filled and accelerated, as much time *made* as possible—the Lexicon time-compression process for speeding up movies on TV, for gaining time on them, is symbolic enough of the general urge. Days, hours, minutes, seconds, television is time and motion study in practice, assembly-line quantification for maximum efficiency. Hence the potential panic around time, the endlessly repeated dramatization of doing things in the quickest time; as in game shows, that staple of television—who can do this the quickest, answer the fastest, time always in jeopardy. The liveness of television—whether real or fictive (liveness is a prime imaginary of television)—also has its significance here, that of a constant immediacy, TV today, now, this minute.

Exhausting time into moments, its "now-thisness," television produces forgetfulness, not memory, flow, not history. If there is history, it is congealed, already past and distant and forgotten other than as television archive material, images that can be repeated to be forgotten again (Jameson: "Think only of the media exhaustion of the news: of how Nixon and, even more so, Kennedy are figures from a now distant past. One is tempted to say that the very function of the news media is to relegate such recent historical experiences as rapidly as possible into the past. The informational function of the media would thus be to help us forget, to serve as the very agents and mechanisms for our historical amnesia").²¹ There is no place for anything other than actuality, the moments as they come; television actualizes rather than intelligibilizes time, this latter being the condition of time's achievement as history. Representation and the subject are terms of that achievement; television and the rated viewer are those of an ahistoricization of time—no distance, position, intelligible construction. Such a global description is not to ignore the possibility of historical terms and constructions in television; it is to suggest that these too are archaicized by the overall institution of TV time, the quantitative-qualitative appropriation.

All of this is to indicate the excess that television is. It has gone out of any simply graspable and comprehensible régime of representation and so over the edge of habitual terms, habitual approaches. The problem, then, is that of finding new approaches that are neither the mimicking of that excess nor the refusal of its implications and effects. Which, of course, is a political problem: television is a central site of politics today and any account of television is directly political discourse; indeed with the politics often derived from the reflection on, the description of the experience of television—witness Baudrillard, as we shall see.

Representation, classically, comes with a two-faced idea of representativeness, of likeness. What is the representative *like*? One answer invokes a general subjectivity, the individual as agent of a universal reason; he (the masculine is appropriate for this account), once elected, is then there not to represent any particular group or interest but to realize that reason, chosen to express it as best he can. The second answer, of course, is that he represents precisely an interest, a group, that he is chosen in that likeness; which is our actual political history, so many struggles for representation by the middle classes, the working classes, women. The struggle for women's suffrage is significant here in that it posed acutely the problems of the assumptions in representation and its versions of likeness. In what sense were women a group and what were they like? The arguments in Britain, for example (and they were duplicated elsewhere), from both those in favor of and those against this suffrage, went the two ways: women were like men, the same identity of human reason (thus they are as able as men to vote and be representatives, or thus there is no need for them to vote

and be representatives since men can perfectly stand for them); women were unlike men, a different identity, like themselves (thus they need to vote and be representatives since men cannot perfectly stand for them, or thus they should not have the vote and be representatives since they cannot be really representative, can represent only their particularity).²²

If a representative is like what he or she represents, then identity and interest determine representation, a consequence that preoccupied political thinkers during the nineteenth-century movement toward democracy. John Stuart Mill, for instance, author indeed of an essay "On Representative Government," argued strongly for a general extension of the suffrage (and to include women) but was also deeply apprehensive of the majority rule it would bring ("the natural tendency of representative government, as of modern civilization, is towards collective mediocrity"),²³ which is seen as exactly the removal of decision from reason, from the capacity developed by instruction to transcend local and immediate desires and inclinations (the effect of extensions of the franchise "being to place the principal power in the hands of classes more and more below the highest level of instruction in the community").²⁴ Such representation is thus, in fact, from this standpoint, no representation—what is the identity of a majority of the lowest common denominator created in this way, and what of the essential values that then find no expression? Mill turned to systems of proportional representation to ensure a voice to "the minority of educated minds," proposing multiple votes for those of "mental superiority" in order that disinterestedness—reason—should prevail over "class legislation."²⁵

Mill's minority supposedly transcends interest, but any appeal to proportional representation is evidently a direct recognition of interest, quickly brings the idea of a "personal representation" (a phrase Mill also uses) to which different minorities might aspire: "every minority in the whole nation, consisting of a sufficiently large number to be, on principles of equal justice, entitled to a representative."²⁶ On what constitutes a sufficiently large number and as to what the principles of justice are, Mill is here vague; potentially there are an infinite number of categories in respect of which likeness can be affirmed and representation demanded. In reality, there is a political struggle for the social definition of relevant areas for likeness, for the recognition and expression of specific identities; as today with racial or sexual minorities, which are then too open to the contradictions of different identities, struggles of other minorities within them (think of lesbian women in relation to the general representation of women and then of S/M lesbians in relation to both). The result has been a challenge to the classical idea of representation and its institutions, even while idea and institutions have necessarily often provided the immediate terms and objectives for the particular movements out of which the challenge comes (it can be important at once to gain representation and to call into question the very assumptions of that in a given society). At the same time, psychoanalysis especially—undermining with its account of the subject any simple

possibility of "representing oneself"—and modernism generally—stressing representation as construction, not reflection, as order of language—have offered a further challenge to any stable ground for the representative.

Television shifts representation into economic terms (even in Western European public service televisions prior to the breaking of state monopolies, ratings and interchannel competition were important for advertising when this was allowed and for justification of the spending of license money when it was not): the consumer majority (Mill no doubt would have identified this mass culture as collective mediocrity) and then the targeted consumer minorities (a kind of economic version of Mill's "personal representation"). Experiments within television which give viewers the vote through the interactive possibilities of cable symptomatically repeat these terms. Thus Warner's QUBE system in Columbus, Ohio, opened in December 1977 with voting on what to call a just-born baby girl (43% for Elizabeth) and then rapidly harnessed interaction to commercial prospection (for example, survey advertising asking which of several holiday spots viewers would most like information on) and data gathering (even though not making a profit from subscriptions, the system produced very substantial and precise marketing information). Shifting representation into economic terms, furthermore, tying it to the movement of market forces from moment to moment, television has participated decisively in a logic of late capitalism: that of the coming together of commodity and image in a constitutive interdependence, with the image "the final form of commodity reification"²⁷ and, indeed, the supreme commodity-reality. The full alignment of representation with commodification and the solicitation of consumer desire is finally the loss of the sense of representation (its sense as in any way representative *of*). The answer to the question as to what television represents, in other words, becomes television itself: it "represents" the reality it produces and imitates (this gives those common feelings of television as source of reality, things existing only by virtue of being on television, events losing any specific singularity of eventfulness and having always already happened as they happen on television which is precisely where they happen—events now are television events, but then the only event is television).

Reactions to television in these terms, unsurprisingly, are often in one form or another the reassertion of representation, of grounds of identity. Thus the debates around cultural literacy that periodically recur (their recurrence over a longer period of mass cultural production should not lead us to ignore their particular occurrence in the today of television) are concerned with an identified decline of culture as value and increasingly with an identified decline of national cultural identity—witness the recent spate of books on the closing of the American mind and on what every American does not but should know. With no cultural identity, there is no representation for and of the American as subject and citizen, no stability or from which representation could operate politically (no nationhood) or

socially (only the dissolution of "the American mainstream"). Television can be directly blamed for this (it is all television's fault), or half blamed (television is damaging, but some amount of television is beneficially acculturative for some groups), or indirectly blamed (the schools are really responsible, including for excessive television watching). Even when not directly blamed, however, television is liable to be effectively dismissed from the conception of the cultural identity that should hold (E. D. Hirsch, for example, in his "list of cultural literacy," "What Literate Americans Know," includes "telescope" but not "television," and beyond the figure of Archie Bunker finds virtually no place for any television names: literate Americans should not know Lucille Ball, say, or even Walter Cronkite).²⁸ Thus the debates around what can be called political literacy, where television is seen as bound up with a demobilization of social identities and terms of struggle, an alienation of needs and aspirations—in Enzensberger's words, a "present depraved form" of the media works through "the falsification and exploitation of quite real and legitimate needs."²⁹ Television, that is, is *misrepresentation*; politically, the collapsing of identity into mass, social group into serialized conglomerate, a disenabling of agency and vision.

Such accounts are involved in an overall perception of the nature and effects of television, and the account given here so far is parallel with them in that (and some of the issues they raise will also be taken up later on), insisting on the necessity for a recognition of the institution of television, the functioning, as it were, of television itself. This is not, however, here at least, to foreclose thereby the reality too of the play between television and the particularity of its realizations at any given moment: the institution is overall, but that is not to say that television is then a simply homogeneous totality.

There is, of course, a way of thinking about and expressing this that has an official existence within the institution, part of the ideology of its self-presentation, namely that of *pluralism*. The pluralism of society, of its democracy, is reflected in the pluralism of what gets shown on television, which is then itself the democratic medium of the transmission of the social multiplicity and its freedom. The truth in this, the facts of variety and difference, need not be denied in order to stress nevertheless, simultaneously, that any pluralism exists only within the governing terms of plurality (pluralism is not defined naturally but within a system), terms in this case that are firmly political and economic: what constitutes the recognized spectrum of "opinion," holding television to a consensual center that it endlessly recreates, and what constitutes the recognized spectrum of economically viable programming, holding television to the market and its version of audiences (with the two potentially at odds but—and—with a series of accommodations of the former to the latter that differ from country to country). Pluralism is so many orders of television, as the latter's programs are so many orders of variety and difference.

There is another side to the reference to pluralism, its proposal with regard to a plurality of positions of reception: television is watched differently by different people with different histories that produce different experiences of the television offered—it is not television that controls but people who control television in their watching. It is possible too now in this respect to adduce new technological developments as confirming this, as allowing the viewer to increase pluralization: thus VCRs give the possibility of selectively multiplying viewing and of viewing in different ways, with different times (repeats, freezes, and so on); thus remote controls permit rapid movement in and out of programs, across channels, each viewer able to create his or her own absolutely unique viewing experience. Again, the point is not to deny this but to accept it only within limits, the limits of television, the institution.

Television is a construction of pluralism; the viewer participates in that construction. What is at stake is a determined consensuality, at once in the sense that television is determined by dominant social terms and that it itself is a powerful creation-articulation of those terms. "Dominant social terms" here should be taken to refer not to some single expression of a ruling class—though there is such expression—but much more to the hegemonic social ground that includes those specifically class forms at the same time that their inclusion is within the process of a general sociality which goes beyond them, accommodating a whole number of potentially disparate meanings, values, and practices in an extensively available, more or less cohesive space of social discourse, precisely the pluralism. The idea of democracy is a prime theme and figure of this space, with the more or less cohesion ("more or less" indicates the spectrum, the limits) focused around what constitutes it, what can and cannot be said, what is representative and what can be represented, what like is like. But then, as has been emphasized, television's own dominance and the nature of the economic realization of the medium also shift pluralism and consensus from old notions of representation to the new conditions of multiplication and indifference: the maximum number of heterogeneous images in the maximum homogenization, the saturation of signs and messages which is the reduction—the neutralization—of meaning, of representation (the heterogeneity is anyway above all quantitative: more and more images). The democratic now is interminable pluralization, not a set of representable positions (although these are also around in television, ever more archaic to it) but a fading of positions in the flow of the images and the assemblages created from their reception (the audience as representations of that). Television does not control, certainly, but then again it does, defining and encompassing, including us in its reality whether or not we watch—can anyone in our societies be outside television, beyond its compulsions? We can note, moreover, that the technological developments mentioned above are realized much more as continuations of the given television than as challenges to it: VCRs are used vis-à-vis television largely to watch more

of it in perfectly conventional ways, in one's own time but as much in its; remote controls allow the picking and choosing of this or that and the making up of unique individualized sequences, bits from here and there, yet of course within the constraints of what is proposed by television in the first place—and, in fact, the phenomenon of zapping can be seen mostly as a kind of lateralization, a side-stepping through images that effects an insignificant—nonnarrative, nonhistorical— temporality which runs into and mirrors television's own performance of time.

Versions of pluralism have been and are important to television studies. In the elaboration of a sociological theory of the media, a sociology of mass communications, attention was typically focused initially on the effects of television as influence (investigations of the relations between violence on screen and violence in society and so on) and on "ritualized" viewing modes, the social roles of television and the kinds of viewer behavior induced by it. Subsequently, in reaction against this more passive conception of the viewer, a "uses and gratifications" approach was developed which envisaged the relation to television as one of selection according to prior dispositions, people manipulating rather than being manipulated by it. The prior dispositions, however, are not evidently separable from television, are formed within a social process in which television has a strong and constitutive part; something that the "uses and gratifications" approach did not often manage adequately to take into account. A left parallel to this sociology-of-mass-communications movement is to be found in the switch from the critique of "the culture industry" and its degraded products, with attendant ideas of something amounting to brainwashing (consumer pacification plus political orientation: Althusser talked of television "cramming" people "with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc."),³⁰ to the insistence on viewers as actively judging and deciding subjects producing their own critical readings in function of their lived experience and on the need to understand the popular values of the programs so massively watched, which are thus not to be dismissed from what is then identified as an "elitist" position.

This latter emphasis is especially attractive now in television studies where the call to attend to "the popular" and to "pleasure" is increasingly strong. The necessary response to the failings of structuralism and the Althusserian account of ideology, with an analysis of subject and subject-positioning suggesting mere passivity, functioning acquiescence ("les sujets 'marchent'"),³¹ can be acknowledged; but it can also be seen in some of its current developments as implicated in a damaging crisis in theory, falling into an equally demobilizing mirror-image version of mere activity. The thinking through of the nature of culture and cultural production today and of the difficult relations between mass culture and popular culture is often collapsed into the assumption of something of the latter in the former, "popular" quickly simply dependent on and guaranteed by the fact of being well liked by many people (but then what is and what are the

conditions of this "liking," this pleasure?), and with evaluation too elided in that same fact. Pluralism then enters the argument, as it were, in addition, on the side of the viewers, a plurality of readings even granted the problems of mass culture: bad television turns into good audiences—and into good television studies. The pursuit of plural readings mostly just leaves television intact, unthought, including again in its role in the reality in and from which those readings are given: no one comes simply from outside television with a reading, from some authentic experience that is entirely television-free. At its worst, television studies uses this idea of viewers' plurality of readings to justify its own academic proliferation of readings, the demonstration of some alternative reading, often dubbed "resistance," taken as the demonstration of television and its reception in a falsely humble gesture of identification with "people" or even "the people," whose potential as readers-resistants we must not underrate—a view of things as patronizing as its passivity opposite. Which should make it clear that the point is not that people, we as viewers, do not at many or fewer times read plurally and critically and differently but that the active/passive, dupe/not-dupe dichotomy is an impasse that needs to be broken.

Something of this too can be followed through in the current fortunes of "the everyday," to return to that. The grand narratives and systems having failed, politically and theoretically, as is said in an indiscriminate gesture (*all* those narratives and systems), the day-to-day in its local activities and concerns is so much the more real, the site of a valorized particularity over against what is then to be seen only as reductive totalizing abstraction. The importance of the everyday can again at once be stressed: politics and theory should not be at the expense of everyday life—this after all the realm of the lived experience of actual men and women—which it is the aim of socialist politics and theory at any rate precisely to know, value, and transform. Moreover, the specific attention to the everyday, its bringing into political and theoretical focus, has been in some of its manifestations a crucial grasping of areas of life that have been typically ignored or marginalized, areas where oppression and struggles against it together with traditions of the creation of values have to be recognized and taken up in any valid vision of change: there is a politics of the everyday, that is, to be recovered, made, turned into action. Thus the editors of a recent *Yale French Studies* issue on the topic comment that "everyday life has always weighed heavily on the shoulders of women," and Michèle Mattelart writes of that: "Everyday life. Day-to-day life. These represent a specific idea of time within which women's social and economic role is carried out. It is in the everyday time of domestic life that the fundamental discrimination of sex roles is expressed, the separation between public and private, production and reproduction."³² To reclaim this everyday of women's lives, to bring back its reality, is to demonstrate the oppression and to explore the potential from which transformation can come, a resiting of politics exactly.

The recourse to everyday life in other of its examples, however, can be

a quite contrary retreat from any such radical-political conception. The transforming dialectic of appraisal and critique gives way to the smoothing out of the everyday into a good object, good by simple virtue of the everydayness, the beginning and the end of politics; with the latter now cast at best into the micromovements of "molecular revolution" ("underground," "transversal," "a kind of infinite swarming of desiring machines"),³³ at worst into the quietism of the interminable appreciation of ordinariness, a fetishism of the day-to-day. The academic realization of this last, the new production of everyday life as object of study, finds its apotheosis round television. Television and its programs (and this approach sees nothing but programs) are projected as value—as to be valued—because of their everydayness and their popularity (which is here the same thing) in a circle in which the mass existence of something is proof of that value and proof of the validity of its acceptance in the name of the everyday. I can drop critique and talk about my favorite TV programs with all the guarantee of political correctness, nonelitism, and requisite responsiveness to pleasure that "everyday life" has been constructed to provide. But then the fetishizing of everyday life as "everyday life" is not a politics of the former, nonelitism turns out to mean the refusal to negotiate terms of judgment and value that for any socialism cannot but transcend (which is not at all the same as deny or denigrate) the everyday, and pleasure is now become the automatism of an answer to everything and nothing—"we have to look at people's pleasure, the problem of pleasure," we are incessantly told, but "people's" usually screens the academic analyst's and the problem never comes, pleasure just left as an evidence, an effectively essentialized faculty, as inevitable and unquestionable as breathing.

Critical attention to the everyday comes with the insight that, however degraded, the latter contains within it something of the possibility of its own transformation: thus if mass culture is alienating, it is also expressive of needs, potentialities, contradictory forces—"the wishing is genuine," as Ernst Bloch once put it.³⁴ A particular—"postmodern"—account of the everyday of television is currently taking over a previous pessimism as regards mass culture, seen solely as degradation and manipulation, and switching it from negative to positive. It is not so much, in this account, that television is not a form of alienation; it is that in the reality of television and its world, alienation no longer has any great meaning, is now without any relevance. The work of Baudrillard has been more than influential here, setting out a description of television, its world, that cannot be avoided in discussion of this question of representing television today.

"Happily . . . the social will not take place," to which can be added the formulation of another of Baudrillard's constant themes: "There is only simulation."³⁵ What we are living now is the end of the social, the end of the political with any social meaning; this conjunction—the social-political—being in fact a creation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Marxism supremely makes the political the representation of a social reality, but there no longer is any such social reality, no social referent as classically defined ("a people, a class, a proletariat, objective conditions").³⁶ In our world of simulacra and simulation, everything is always already and only model, image, spectacle, *television*; and reality is there in those determinations, not in some reality of a social being with an analyzable rationality, a determining history: "the media cause the disappearance of the event, the object, the referential" and "quite simply, there is no longer any social signified to give force to a political signifier."³⁷

What Baudrillard offers is mass culture with a vengeance. In the scenario of total simulation which is our contemporary reality, the only actor is "the mass" or "the masses," the Baudrillard subject-object of postmodernism (but "subject" and "object" do not fit either): a kind of sheer force of insignificance, outside of any meaning, resistant to all reason, the derision of party or movement—of politics. Opaque to the order of representation (it has no representable existence), the mass is a creation of the régime of simulation, the imaginary referent of the opinion poll or the television network, at the same time that it is the point of the permanent attrition of that régime, an unfathomable inertia, sending back simulation for simulation in an ironic circularity: the mass "capable of refracting all models and reversing them by hypersimulation."³⁸

Television is central, "the ultimate and perfect object for this new era."³⁹ Hence it is the prime focus of Baudrillard's McLuhanesque attention as condition of the world of simulation: "dissolution of TV into life, dissolution of life into TV."⁴⁰ "The medium is the message," indeed must be pushed to the limit at which the very notion of the medium itself gives way: "implosion of the medium and the real, in a sort of hyperreal nebula, where even the definition and the specific action of the medium are no longer distinguishable"; no longer any dialectic, any mediation from one reality to another, only "the total circularity of the model."⁴¹ As medium and real implode, so the social implodes in the mass, the end of any such meaningful perspective: "the media are effectors not of socialization but, quite the contrary, of the implosion of the social in the masses."⁴² With no existence other than in simulation, on the circle of media effects, the masses are the ruin of representation: "the masses swallow up the political, insofar as it implies will and representation."⁴³

Baudrillard is scornful of a critical theory "that can only operate on the presupposition of the naivety and stupidity of the masses."⁴⁴ At the same time, the whole of his account depends on a continual characterization of the masses in ways which have the familiar ring of just such theory: "the masses remain scandalously resistant to the imperative of rational communication; they are offered meaning when what they want is spectacle."⁴⁵ The intellectual includes himself in "the screen stage"—"we are in the screen stage . . . one is no longer in a state to judge, one no longer has the potential to reflect"⁴⁶—and in the very moment of that self-inclusion in-

dicates his own judgment and reflection, while turning too to welcome the mass in these his terms by virtue of its absence from judgment, reflection, representation, any political sense. The masses become the heroes of history, except that there are no heroes, is no history, and the masses themselves are merely a black hole in the media, simulation for simulation in an endless disappearing act.

The conjunction of masses and media gives rise to what Baudrillard himself sometimes notes as a paradox: is it the media which neutralize meanings and produce the mass, or the mass which resists the media with its inert absorption of the meanings proposed? "Are the mass-media on the side of power in the manipulation of the masses or are they on the side of the masses in the liquidation of meaning, in the violence done to meaning and in fascination? Is it the media which induce the masses to fascination or is it the masses which divert the media into the spectacular?"⁴⁷ "Today when critical radicalness is useless,"⁴⁸ the response is clear: such either/or questions are unanswerable, irrelevant to the immixtion of media and mass; which means in practice that political analysis is dropped as outmoded. The strategic terrain is not any more that of "the liberating claims of the subject" but that of the radical inaction of the mass, "the refusal of meaning and the refusal of speech—or the hyperconformist simulation of the very mechanisms of the system, which is a form of refusal": "All movements which stake their all on the liberation, emancipation, resurrection of a subject of history, of a group, or speech in some gaining of consciousness, of unconsciousness even, by subjects and masses, do not see that they are going along with the system, whose goal at the present time is precisely the overproduction and regeneration of meaning and speech."⁴⁹ The logic of which is that those who vote for Le Pen and the *Front National* are resisting the system, hyperconformist simulation; those who join and work for *SOS-Racisme* are confirming it, old-style liberation of subjects. . . .⁵⁰

Alienation has gone, the very term is contemptuous in its suggestion of a perspective of something better; there is anyway no perspective, no depth, no reality in relation to which alienation could be conceived. Cultural pessimism is tipped over into cultural celebration, the better is simply more of the same: more simulation, more repetition of what Baudrillard calls "the system," more mass (the mass is the repetition of the system). It is then no surprise that simulation is exactly the description of Baudrillard's own work. With social analysis out of the question, dependent as it would be on some rational notion of behavior, interests, goals, on some idea of representation, the point can only be to mimic—hyperconformism again—the new era, the media-real implosion. "The mass," in fact, is Baudrillard's term for this: it produces the unity the argument needs, the closure—the enclosure—into simulation. To read Baudrillard is to feel a closeness to aspects of the modern world that goes along with a failure to encounter anything specific, no particularity of contradiction, no real—which, of

course, is the reality of his world of simulation. The mass is the theory of/screen for this nonencounter, and we can pause here on the interchangeableness of "the mass" and "the masses": the mass eliminates the masses who reappear only as its synonym, as the mass of the simulation mass culture, of television, with no possible social-political definition. Hence the brilliant immobility of Baudrillard's work, the fine mix of modern and conservative elements, precisely its "postmodernism."

For Baudrillard, then, the mass that television creates is the agent of its derision but equally itself the very fact of the media-real implosion. The institution and effects of television turn into the totality of the social which then disappears, implodes indeed. The recognition that television dissolves into life and life into television is falsely converted into an account in which life becomes simply television, nothing but simulation, the totalization that the intellectual can only celebrate, mimic, exacerbate ("what 'theory can do is to challenge it to be more so").⁵¹ That it is necessary to recognize and follow through the nature and extensiveness of television has been part of the argument here, was part of the discussion earlier of representation: television is a mass, global phenomenon that does indeed change things, is not to be piously held to given modes of explanation. Which is not the same, however, as accepting its terms: the needed sensibility to mass culture is not some required acquiescence to that culture and some fascinated identification with its mass; the redefinitions and archaicizations that television operates in and catches up from the world in which we live today are not the sole facts of that world; the size of television is not the end of any more reality than itself.

Let us reinsert the more reality, the contradictions, the political: the mass as alienation. Mass culture works with a subject as constituted by the exchange and consumption of commodities, and supremely then as constituted by television, the ultimate commodity *form*. Television is a spectacular deflection: not false needs, even less empty simulation, but real needs, taken over in a version of the social and the social-individual which is nonreciprocal, atomizing and not representing the individuals it contains as mass as they receive back meanings that have been appropriated and constructed from their own signifying activities as groups, from their own lives. Television is effective, functions, insofar as we find in it some matter of our actual or virtual human-individual-collective experience, of our reality (thus Raymond Williams talks of a popular culture clearly persisting in television: "its direct energies and enjoyments are still irrepressibly active, even after they have been incorporated as diversions or mimed as commercials or steered into conformist ideologies").⁵² The crux is that experience, reality are not separate from but are also determined by television which is a fundamental part of them, and increasingly so (the whole extension of television). This is not to say that media and real implode, end of the social, but that experience, reality are complexly defined, mediated,

realized in new ways in which the power of the media is crucial. The assertion of the former, of the end of the social, with the media then some more or less total determination, is exactly a prime demonstration of the alienation of television, mass culture, and current postmodern theories—nothing but television and its terms.

The new ways need new ways of understanding and so a critical attention to the available concepts and modes of analysis which are not merely to be carried over and on; but which are neither to be merely jettisoned, as though critical attention could be just to assent to television's terms and effects, its archaicizations or whatever. Ideology provides the necessary example here, a concept that is now much less used than it was a decade or so ago and that has, indeed, fallen into discredit; this at once because of its supposed dismissiveness of other people's beliefs and pleasures and because of its supposed theoretical inconsistencies now that "we know" that there is no grounding of any discourse, only more of the same, an endless proliferation of discourses that leaves the conceptual framework of ideology—for instance, any paradigm of real/ideological—with object. Thus there is absolutely no need for Lyotard in his pamphlet explaining the postmodern to children to tell them anything whatsoever about ideology; all we have are "billions of little and less little stories, the weft of everyday life."⁵³ Everyday life here is once again an alternative to political, ideological analysis, with notions such as "complexification" replacing ideology and with room then only for "minimal resistance." In the mainstream of television studies, ideology is likewise dissolving away, both, as in film studies, in response to academic routinization and in response to the desire positively to value programs (remember the asserted nonelitist concern with mass culture mentioned above).

Ideology has, however, to be brought back into the understanding of television, reccredited, as it were, but this is not to be done in any single, unified way. Television serves to mediate ideologies in the classic sense of defined expressions of class and interest (so many messages communicated) and is simultaneously indifferent to any such mediation, beyond it: the investment is in the universalization of reception and the circulation of capital, not in particular meanings—or not in the first instance in meanings other than those of that circulation (so that commercials are the meanings of television, programs merely the filling in of the gaps between them). Television is involved in Althusser's cramming *and* is not at all the simple expression of class, *at the same time that* it is fundamental in the elaboration of a ruling culture, the whole social-cultural grounds of reality, *and that* it inevitabilizes over and over again a basic economic order.

Clearly analysis needs to pose questions of ideology, of what kinds of necessity it has and how it is to be understood, at different levels: from this or that particular program through to the fact of television in its overall institution as medium.⁵⁴ In respect of this latter, we can come back to the sense of a loss of the ideological, its discredit, for one of the things to which

television crucially contributes is a certain *erasure* of ideology. Take the importance of talk already described: the interminabilization of talk, its teletrivialization (talk all the time, all over the place from this topic to that, in all directions without reference to particular structures of address and response—just chat shows precisely), is the wearing away of speech, elaborated discourses of representation (what counts is the performance of talk, not its sense). More generally, the cultural saturation to which Jameson refers and to which television first and foremost tends gives the constant difficulty of separating out and identifying ideological effects: ideology is overloaded with culture which is television (and in reverse: television is culture is ideology which disappears in the saturation, in the social extension of television). But then when ideology drops out of the analysis of television, it is as blind spot to this overloading, to this erasure that is exactly part of the ideological work of television: its dissolution of positions into the event of the medium, its continual production of a temporality that goes against history and utopia (television holds past and future to its own perpetual present), its recasting of representation into circulation (of receivers, meanings, objects, capital).

Incorporation is a more appropriate concept here than indoctrination (although, stressing the complexity of levels and particular realizations that has always to be recognized, the latter is not to be lost sight of, can have its appropriateness too). We have our distances but we cannot escape television, and we move easily, naturally in its world, on its terms. What is at stake is television's colonization of everyday life which it becomes and defines, its possession of social time and space as we watch and read the *TV Guide* and have the commuter-train conversation and put the set in this room or that and plug into the network and . . . (there is a whole television geography to be described: the new multinational regions created by the development of satellite distribution, the specific territories—commercial, local, and so on—that can be produced with cable, the electronic transformation of space into network). The saturation of signs and messages is now the fact of television's dominance culturally, and that fact is the neutralization of signs and messages, their erasure into television (this is to agree with Baudrillard: the medium is more than medium, cannot just be identified as such). Television has an exclusive-inclusive functioning: exclusion straightforwardly (positions simply not seen/heard: the PLO on US networks: but then also less organized groups: there is opposition to military service in France, but conscientious objectors are never on television); exclusion quantitatively (gays get to appear with gay viewpoints now and then on the US networks but as a drop in the ocean of heterosexism); exclusion-inclusion (from the positive censorship of filling the screen, making up the world and keeping it *these* images, not all those possible others, and of constructing the terms of debate, the range of "points of view," to the saturation and the dissolution of everything into television, hence television as everything); and it is in this range of its functioning that television works

affirmatively and persuasively, with the persuasion first and foremost to itself, not to this or that, to itself as capital investment and cultural production, as vital part of the economic order and as crucial elaboration of culture, the two together.

To talk of alienation in this context is not to refer to some loss of essence or to indicate some permanent condition of individuals today, an exhaustive fact of their existence, but to acknowledge the reality of the constant production of the individual in this television culture, its occupation of him or her in these politically neutralizing terms (the vice-president of a French advertising agency commented recently on a colleague who has run publicity election campaigns for both right and left: "Jacques has worked fantastically to depoliticize political communication";⁵⁵ which is exactly the description of television's work). As I watch *The Newlywed Game* or one of its European carbon copies (say, *Les Mariés de l'A2*) or *Wheel of Fortune* or one of its such copies (say, to stay with France, *La Roue de la Fortune*), I am being asked to assent not to anything in particular beyond television itself, to its energy of meaning-time-entertainment (the first sense of which is occupation); indeed, I am not being asked, there is no address, no identity of representation, it suffices that we switch on to these and all the other games, that I become part of the network, the circulation that game programs so excessively enact, with their incessant permutation of people and prizes in a never-ending present of self-congratulatory demonstration that television exists, that it works. Of course, game shows, along with the others, are in tune with the capitalist societies of their origin (they do not, after all, express or support socialism), but they are primarily in tune with television, expressive and supportive of that, which is also their origin—hence the ease of their international circulation, the carbon copies, the degree of indifference to the specificity of any actual society. We can see this, we have to, as the divergence between the political order of the nation-state and the economic force of multinational investment and development, with television more and more object and agent of the latter, and then as the combination of the most powerful realization of that economic force, the United States still (France buys and copies programs from the US, not vice versa; European programs that are sold to the US are often from an old version of culture, "quality television," as with BBC adaptations of literary works); but we can also see it, at the same time and in consequence, as the fact of a certain autonomy of television in its reality as saturation of signs and messages, as cultural occupation: the political-social is elided between the economic order and a massive cultural production which is itself part of that order and which offers a totalizing fragmentation, the television coherence of a moment-by-moment flow that relativizes any and every identity, meaning—and relative to television and its circulation, to the network (pluralism, to come back to that, can now be seen as a concept from an older style television inasmuch as it can suggest a certain political-social coherence, so many identifiable and valid points of view; relativism rec-

ognizes a different television: anything equals anything else, saturation, overloading, neutralization—what counts is television, which is the reality of this economic-and-cultural movement).

To recognize this is to recognize that television cannot be grasped as "subject-system," by which is meant here a system tending to construct and gather its effects on some unitary model of human being.⁵⁶ Systems of this kind are bound up specifically for us with the history of technology from the seventeenth century on, and their characteristic conceptualization is in terms of some extension-of-the-human-body perfection of "man," what Habermas calls the projection of "the elementary components of the behavioral system of purposive-rational action . . . primarily rooted in the human organism."⁵⁷ The success of film theory in the 1970s was related to the possibility of holding the institution of cinema to just such a subject-system (eye, gaze, imaginary signifier, all-perceiving subject). The difficulty of television is then the impossibility of simply doing likewise: it and electronic information/communication media more generally are changing the history. Developing his account of the idea of the projection of the human organism, Habermas writes: "At first the functions of the motor apparatus (hands and legs) were augmented and replaced, followed by energy production (of the human body), the functions of the sensory apparatus (eyes, ears and skin), and finally by the functions of the governing centre (the brain)."⁵⁸ That "finally" marks the close and the change: electronic media can be grasped as augmentations and extensions of the brain, but they also shift the terms of this history of man and mastery in which technology can be understood anthropomorphically rather than socially, rather than historically indeed; technology given a natural development and a certain autonomy thereby, following the body as it does in a steady and inevitable progress. The progress may then bring difficulties of control, machines versus men, mastery threatened, but not difficulties of reason, of the identity of the subject (the technologies are predicated on that identity, subject-systems, even when they challenge it).

From the perspective of that history, however, the electronic information/communication media displace the very assumptions of subject, reason, and the image of technology in their terms. When Lyotard stresses in his account of "the postmodern condition" that we must "anticipate a heavy externalization of knowledge in relation to the knower,"⁵⁹ he asserts precisely this displacement: "the governing center" is no longer within or augmented from the brain, and knowledge is in the capacity and speed of the information/communication circuits, those circuits in which the individual is now an element, a function, a point of transition and circulation. But the truth of the displacement is not convertible into a new form of determinism where the fascinated imagination of an overarching computer and communicational network takes over reality, takes over as reality. Which then again, however, does not mean that it can be pulled back into some sole determinism by and from the economic sphere, a reflection of the

world-system of contemporary multinational capitalism, for instance. The latter envisaged thus is itself not easily distinguishable from the network imagination of which it can equally seem the reflection, and its reality is anyway bound up with the new reality of the information/communication media in ways that give the fact of a unity (economic-informational) that is not available for analysis according to old models of the economic base, of production, and so on.

Television, to return to that, is evidently, technologically-economically, part of this electronic information/communication media conglomerate, within which it represents a specific area of investment and development. Its institution as "television," TV, has a potentially subordinate existence in all this; symptomatically enough, the television screen is increasingly occupied by something other than TV, from video games to elaborate information display systems (for example, British Ceefax), not to mention rented movies, home video material, and so on (and we should mention, too, the other screens now competing with the television screen—for example, those of the home computer or of systems akin to that of the French Minitel). This potentially subordinate existence is entirely compatible with television's simultaneous dominance, which is cultural and cultural-economic (the production and circulation of images-commodities). It is as though television has its place within a crucial and ever-expanding sphere of economic activity that vastly exceeds it and that is transforming social life in ways that are diverse and not easily predictable (think only of the range of possibilities opened up by the "personalization" of computers, even though that can be understood at once in relation to basic forms of capitalist profit-maximization strategies—expansion of market for sale of machines, realization of new facilities for the transmission of information regarding goods and services and of new modes of buying and selling and the whole range of financial transactions) while also serving as the overall expression of the new imagination of network, social link-up, as the institution of the society of that: universalization of reception and saturation of messages and signs.

Making up and figuring the network, television offers the coherence of its visibility (its mass) and the homogenization of its time-space (its neutralization). It runs exhaustively across the variety of given modes and energies, capitalizes and recycles them in an effect of randomness that is quantitative—the size of television, its insatiable demand for material to fill the screen and create audiences—and from there qualitative—this equals that in the interminable flow and its endless present, the extraordinary repetition of television. Television gives a *content* to the network of which it is a part but which it also precedes (its institution, after all, is now quite old, a little dated in its modernity nevertheless); *in between*, it negotiates the breakdown of the subject-system unity through the assembly of meanings, voices, sights, viewer-moments into the continuum of its functioning (that as "unity") and negotiates the radical future, the world today in its

contradictions and transformations, including those of the social development and consequences and possibilities of the new information/communication media, through the continual recasting of assembly into old forms, old unities, all its repetition (there is always a basic television in television, its same stock TV). Television is paradoxically conservative (the "in between" again): reworking a hegemonic ground of social intelligibility—of culture—while relating simultaneously a fragmentation that goes against any hegemony understood as coherent world-view beyond that of the imagination of media and network—no world-view but television which is today ground and knowledge; but then too while having its economic place in an order that it equally reflects and figures, supports and enacts, saying that over and over again.

The mass swallows up the political insofar as it implies will and representation. Or, the as always necessary redirection of such formulations, television makes a mass in those terms, pulls away from representation and the political. Baudrillard eliminates the subject, will; the mass is nonsubject, nonwill (involved in no calculations), "is" only in simulation. As opposed to which can be put assertions of the subject as initial given, whether alienated by television from authentic being (a degraded mass culture) or not (a mass culture that takes up the components of a popular culture to which it contributes and that can be received in their own ways by individuals and groups). Television, ungraspable as subject-system, offers no choice between these assertions or between them and Baudrillard's elimination; it participates in all three, any of which might then need to be privileged—but never exclusively—in the analysis at this or that moment, and each of which must be understood and followed through in respect of the emphases that have been given here as to representing television. Alienation is produced as the occupation of the political as mass, the erasure of ideological struggle, the neutralization of representation, but this occupation and erasure and neutralization are not the sole reality even if they do have large and determining effects. The masses of people in our societies, all of us, are implicated in a mass culture, a television, that they, we, traverse in ways that are continually similar and different. The cultural occupation of television, its saturation, works and does not just work, and in complex formations, complex interlockings, with a particularity for such and such an individual or group. The coverage (to use television's word for this saturation) includes from the material it picks up fundamental asymmetries (class, racial, gender differences) which then come back as the *figures* of the culture, of the mass, produced and reproduced, appearing as so many images in the rhetoric of commodification (note immediately the assurance with which commercials mobilize asymmetry as consumer desire), as so many inevitable components of the world television makes and monitors and molds (these figures come back too in the world, which

is to say again that there is no simple separation between television and some other reality of social life).

It is for a critical television studies to break the fact and assumption and effect of television. The attention to televisions in the world is necessary here, other televisions than television (thus the study of the varying articulations of resistance to external control, complicity of common interest between national and transnational forces, political debate around State and access and participation, initiation of cultural production in, say, the development of television in different African countries). So too is the attention to video that thinking about television so often leaves aside, in the image of the latter's institution (Jameson has argued for the study of video as the crucial hold on television, the point from which to work through a valid account).⁶⁰ In neither case, evidently, is it a matter of "alternatives": other televisions, video are at grips with television, and it is just this struggle, this process of conflict and contradiction, that is important, allowing of critical reflection. Equally, though, the break is to be achieved directly within the study of television, the institution we know. The task is to go against the normalization of the media, of television—something of what has been at stake here in the insistence on the terms of television, of television itself. Particular readings of particular programs can indeed be valuable, but they can also contribute to the very normalization that needs to be countered, to the extension of television, taken for granted and continued. There is a necessary struggle for meaning, but that struggle has effectively to take up television, cannot proceed as though it were just a question of more texts to be read, deconstructed, revealed in their radical contradictions; the unity of the program after all is precisely a unity—a term—of television, which latter needs then to be as much (and more) in the analysis as it is in the program.

Nothing is more depressing in academic discourse today, indeed, than the word "interesting" in television studies as these are now developing: this or that and every other program is "interesting," meaning usually that *I* can "do a reading" of it. What is then being avoided and replaced, however, is *evaluation*. The readings done are quickly indistinguishable, because their sole demonstration is of a complexity and multiplicity common to any program (they can all be made interesting, opened to plurality) or—but the two can as well go together—because their impetus is the commitment to the necessary value of any program as genuinely popular (they are all interesting, offer authentic experiences). But the requisite sensibility to mass culture mentioned earlier, to television, is not a required acquiescence, even less the mimicking of its forms and the celebration of its effects. Nor is it just the reverse: an automatic negation, a blind rejection that recognizes only degradation. And yet that reverse is not without *some* necessity. In one of the pieces shown in the first Deep Dish TV series (Deep Dish is a public-access satellite network), Flo Kennedy, who is perhaps best known to readers of this piece for her appearance in Lizzie Borden's film *Born in Flames*

(itself, among other things, a political statement about the media), refers to television as one of "the most racist, sexist, exclusivist" institutions in the US, and this is something we cannot afford to forget. Evaluation is not exhausted in that not-forgetting, but it has also to depend on it: the task is to make the critical distance that television continually erodes in its extension, its availability, its proximity—all of which is played out on its screen from show to show in the endless flow. The struggle for meaning is here, and it is a struggle of *and for* political criticism; not against television in the old global terms, but not in defense of it either, outside of any such impasse: a criticism that is responsive to the heterogeneity of television and to the overall determinations of its specific institution within which—at times in contradiction with which—that heterogeneity manifests itself, that responds to the reality of television today in—as—late capitalism and to the complexity of its social functioning.

Television is an occupation, in both senses: it takes up our time, employs us, and it holds the ground, defines the terrain; television works as overrepresentation, again in two senses at once: it goes to excess, over any stable representing, and it multiplies sounds and images, over and over, the cultural saturation. To make critical distance is not to reduce television to ideology: it is to recognize it at any moment as in ideological process. Much of television, our experience of it, is *also* not ideological, not to be brought down to the production-reproduction of oppressive social relations and their validation—occupation here is wider than such production-reproduction, television is not just in essence the agency of the latter; we watch and react in different ways to a multitude of things, and the extent of those things, television's extension, its "everything" (its proposal of life as on screen), goes beyond any possibility of its being read off according to some single functionalization of it as ideological transmitter (the heterogeneity, there are more logics to television than ideology). Simply, we have to take the "also" seriously (this is the appropriate criterion for "serious discussion"): television is always at the same time bound up in our societies in the work of ideology, the expression of given ideologies and, exactly and specifically, the saturation of signs and messages and the erasure of the ideological—struggle for meaning—into fragmentation as the world in action, the indifferences of merely differences, the perpetual flow of a constant present without any hope beyond its repetition. Occupation is ideological operation, the generation of an all-embracing cultural space-time as unity and sense of reality, the holding definition of the existing and the possible, versus the conflict of groups and classes, the forging of political meanings, contradictions of representation.

"Everyday life defeats the representative institution," comments Lyotard.⁶¹ Certainly. Inasmuch as the representation of parliamentary liberalism, the crucial historical establishment of democracy, is challenged by—and often, necessarily, on the basis of an appeal to that very tradition of representation—the forces that it marginalizes, denies, excludes in its

forms of power, decision, majority, with a professionalization of "politics" and "representatives" that derides any active democracy. "A screen does not represent anything," writes Baudrillard; to think the contrary is the illogical projection of "an operational, statistical, informational, simulational system" into the terms of "a system of representation, will and opinion."⁶² Certainly. Inasmuch as television in its institution is effectively involved in the occupation and erasure described. Yet, it has to be repeated, television is not the beginning and end of reality, whatever its symbiosis with a late capitalism—a multinational world-system—that it mirrors and creates in a totality that is powerful, yes, but not totally powerful; and which is anyway pervious to the oppositional interests and values with which it must always negotiate (part of ideological process, the work of constructing unity, trying to resolve contradictions), as the democracies of its institution are open to counterforces to the given consolidation of power, to representations that require more or less accommodation. Everyday life defeats the representative institution, and "everyday life" in this conception is itself quickly defeat, assent to the system, the totality which becomes precisely its definition; everyday life, television, and the postmodern condition fuse into an inescapable destiny that does then, indeed, archaicize political terms, social(ist) values—the future is here now in the technology, the network, the system as the fact of a society in which these terms and values have come to an end.

So the fight is against any such end; not against television but against the institution of that ending. So the fight is for, let us still say, representation but in new forms; forms that are bound up more with participation than delegation, dependent on significant associations of people rather than recorded majorities, moving toward the development of a nonrepresentative representation: the achievement of modes of presentation and imaging and entertainment and argument that are realizations of collective desires, group aspirations, common projects, shared experience at the same time that they refuse all ideas—all expression—of standing in for and subsuming the heterogeneous individual-sociality/social-individuality of the actual lives of actual men and women. The pressures today from the contradictions of different identities, and in movement (not static givens), across the individual as well as the society (the individual no one identity either), challenge the old conceptions of and faith in representation with its assumptions of the representative, x for y, like and in place of, a democracy of substitutes in which the social is never ours. A nonrepresentative representation will be as good as its moments of use, its particularity at any time in this or that context; with no claims to be representative beyond those moments, guaranteed not by some prior settled referent but by the reference it finds in its production in use, needing an institution not of representatives but of representings (exactly that production in use as opposed to the repeated generalization of fixed identifications), and specifically here a representing television. Something of which is suggested by

the versions now being developed of the operation of television as publishing house, with mobile and participatory access, plus freedom from the institutional norms of "good television," rather than the—nevertheless valuable—more limited and traditional openings of "public television" (that very label is indicative). Deep Dish TV, mentioned earlier, is one such developing version; with nothing utopian about it, it exists and works, and everything utopian, bringing back alternative values to "television" and envisaging the radical future that the latter makes up and figures as its present, utopia already here in technology and capital, that end of the political, the social. . . . Deep Dish TV is about the renewal of representation, is involved in the idea of a fundamental redemocratization, is concerned with the reclaiming of literacy as an issue and a project.⁶³

Literacy, that is, is more than a theme from the right, a worry about the loss of the mainstream of the nation and the proposal of some fixed standard of an oppressive culture; as it is more than just another anachronism in a world of everything as culture, the false equality of a relativism that is quickly itself a disarming conservatism, an anything-goes confirmation of the existing system hymned as liberation (often informed by and informing the accounts of the technology-network-circulation utopia). What must be worked for is literacy as a culture that is truly equal to all, differential (aware of and articulated from differences) and inclusive (for each of us and offering the basis on and in relation to which differences can be created, perceived, and lived nonoppressively), without coercion and shared, about identities and identity. As regards television, this as issue and project is now urgent. Alongside those institutions which have been historically and are crucially the sites of the production of hegemony (religion, law, education, and so on), television, interacting with and relaying these, is also today this occupation, this screening of intelligibility as cultural saturation: contemporary hegemonic social ground as neutralization, literacy as that, the adherence of our viewing, television's terms; for which the accounts of "the postmodern" give us the familiarizing theory and of which Baudrillard spells out in complementary fashion the political sense, "the end of the social." But the social has not ended, as real struggle and future imagination: to reclaim literacy is to say that and to strive for new relations of representations, new possibilities. The importance of television studies, its role, will surely be there, questioning television in that struggle and imagination, toward a politics of representing television.

NOTES

1. See Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974).
2. Herbert I. Schiller, "Electronic Information Flows: New Basis for Global

- Domination?" in *Television in Transition*, ed. Phillip Drummond and Richard Paterson (London: BFI, 1985), p. 19.
3. Cited in *TV Quarterly* Fall 1979:17.
 4. For a detailed account of the economics of programs/ratings, see David Atkins and Barry Litman, "Network TV Programming: Economics, Audiences, and the Ratings Game, 1971–1986," *Journal of Communication* 36.3 (Summer 1986):32–50.
 5. Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr., and Theodore Berland, "Nielsen Defends His Ratings," in *Television Today*, ed. Barry Cole (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 194–95.
 6. Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* 1 (Winter 1979):139.
 7. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), p. 95; C. Jacobsen and B. Grundfest Schoepf, trans., *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic, 1963), p. 83.
 8. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 153.
 9. Stuart Hall, "Theories of Mass Culture," paper to the International Conference on Mass Culture, Center for Twentieth Century Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 25 April 1984.
 10. Vladimir Popov, cited in Terry Doyle, "Truth at Ten? Some Questions of Soviet Television," *Sight and Sound* Spring 1984:108.
 11. Jürgen Habermas, *Jürgen Habermas, Autonomy, and Solidarity: Interviews*, ed. Peter Dews (London: Verso, 1986), p. 201.
 12. Jean Baudrillard, *A l'ombre des majorités silencieuses* (Paris: Denoël, 1982), p. 115.
 13. Maurice Blanchot, *L'Entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 364. Susan Hanson, trans., "Everyday Speech," *Yale French Studies* 73 (1987):18–19.
 14. Blanchot, pp. 361, 364; Hanson, pp. 16, 18.
 15. Stanley Cavell also draws attention to the talking-meeting reality of television in his "The Fact of Television," in *Themes out of School* (San Francisco: North Point, 1984), pp. 235–68.
 16. Eduard Zimmermann, cited in Claus Dieter-Rath, "The Invisible Network," ed. Drummond and Paterson, p. 201.
 17. Nick Ross and Sue Cook, *Crimewatch UK* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987), p. 115. (Ross and Cook are the presenters of the *Crimewatch UK* program.)
 18. Ibid., p. 29.
 19. See Gilles Deleuze, "Trois questions sur 'Six fois deux,'" *Cahiers du cinéma* 271 (Nov. 1976):8.
 20. Earl Hamner, interviewed in Horace Newcomb and Robert S. Alley, *The Producer's Medium: Conversations with Creators of American TV* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 164.
 21. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-aesthetic: Essays on Post-modern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), p. 125.
 22. For discussion of the issues raised around representation and identity in the debates over women's suffrage in Britain, see Denise Riley, "Am I That Name?" (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 67–95.
 23. John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), *Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 457.
 24. Ibid.
 25. Ibid., pp. 476–79.
 26. Ibid., p. 455.
 27. Guy Debord, cited in Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July-Aug. 1984):60.

28. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (New York: Vintage, 1988). For a recent example of the "so much so good/so bad" account of television, see Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, *What Do Our Seventeen Year Olds Know?* (New York: Harper, 1988).
29. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," in *Society of Mass Communications*, ed. D. McQuail (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 113.
30. Louis Althusser, "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État," in *Positions* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1976), p. 94; Ben Brewster, trans., "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971), p. 154.
31. Althusser, p. 121; Brewster, p. 187. For discussion and critique of Althusser's account of ideology and the subject, see Stephen Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," *Cinétracts* 7–8 (1979):32–48.
32. Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross, "Introduction," *Yale French Studies* 73 (1987):3; Michèle Mattelart, *Women, Media, Crisis* (London: Comedia, 1986), p. 7.
33. Félix Guattari, *La Révolution moléculaire* (Paris: Recherches, 1977), pp. 241–90 ("Pour une micro-politique du désir") and passim.
34. Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1960), p. 367.
35. Jean Baudrillard, *Amérique* (Paris: Grasset, 1986), p. 84.
36. Baudrillard, *A l'ombre*, p. 24.
37. Ibid., pp. 24–25.
38. Ibid., *A l'ombre*, p. 45.
39. Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," in Foster, p. 127.
40. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Galilée, 1981), p. 54.
41. Ibid., pp. 126–27.
42. Ibid., p. 125.
43. Baudrillard, *A l'ombre*, p. 28.
44. Baudrillard, *Simulacres*, p. 124.
45. Baudrillard, *A l'ombre*, p. 15.
46. Jean Baudrillard, interview (1984), cited in André Frankovits, ed., *Seduced and Abandoned: The Baudrillard Scene* (Glebe, NSW: Stonemoss, 1984), p. 48.
47. Baudrillard, *Simulacres*, p. 129.
48. Jean Baudrillard, *Les Stratégies fatales* (Paris: Grasset, 1983), p. 272.
49. Baudrillard, *Simulacres*, pp. 130–31.
50. Baudrillard indeed sees in the "Le Pen effect" an event born of the indifference of the mass, with no ideology behind it, "not a fascist movement"; *La Gauche divine* (Paris: Grasset, 1985), pp. 118, 130. This book is devoted to an account of the French Socialist government of 1981 onwards and its "rehabilitation of a tired social history" (87).
51. Jean Baudrillard, *L'Autre par lui-même* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), p. 86.
52. Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1983), p. 146.
53. Jean-François Lyotard, *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), p. 40.
54. For an initial attempt at developing a television analysis through consideration of a particular program, see Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow, "Television: A World in Action," *Screen* 18.2 (Summer 1977):7–77.
55. Bernard Roux, interview, *Le Nouvel Observateur* 1239 (5/11 Aug. 1988):45.
56. The term "subject-system" is adapted from Lyotard who uses it somewhat differently in his account of "the postmodern condition"; see Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne* (Paris: Minuit, 1979), p. 67.
57. Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" in *Towards a Rational Society* (London: Heinemann, 1971), p. 87.
58. Ibid.

59. Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne*, p. 14.
60. Fredric Jameson, "Reading without Interpretation: Postmodernism and the Video-Text," in *The Linguistics of Writing*, ed. Nigel Fabb et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 199-223 ("Thinking anything adequate about commercial television may well involve ignoring it and thinking about something else: in the instance experimental video" [202]).
61. Lyotard, *Le Postmoderne expliqué*, p. 53.
62. Baudrillard, *Les Stratégies fatales*, pp. 124-25.
63. Deep Dish TV, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012.

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