INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI®

NOTE TO USERS

The original manuscript received by UMI contains pages with poor print. Pages were microfilmed as received.

This reproduction is the best copy available

UMI

Technologies of Abundance:
Consumer Culture, Government and the Media Arts

Gerry Kisil

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Communication Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

December 1997

Canada

ABSTRACT

Technologies of Abundance:
Consumer Culture, Government and the Media Arts

by
Gerry Kisil

Arts funding provides one of the clearest examples available of the cybernetic metaphor, that is, the role of cultural policy in hierarchically ranking cultural forms and their publics. Justification for the hierarchical control of the cybernetic apparatus in the national cultural interest takes on a rhetorical form because it is, in essence, an ideological argument, reflecting the dominant social beliefs and interests which underpin political action. The objective of arts funding policy is cultural survival in global capitalism through government subsidy and top-down prescription of appropriate social practices. This emphasis on the creative dimension offers not only images of what is, but also those of what might be -- alternatives to the status quo.

The convergence of the home computer, television, and telephone lines as the nexus of a new social machinery -- interactive media, on-line multimedia and their hybrids -- promises new cultural territories for consumer capitalism. The new contexts, technological, commercial, and telesocial, require a reconsideration of methodologies of cultural production and conventions of consumption. The new forms of production and consumption will inevitably generate new cultural institutions. With these potential realities in mind it would seem appropriate to anticipate what kind of art we are going to make in these new social spaces, what kind of audience we will have, and what kind of interaction will occur -- ultimately, to consider what art will become in this context. The era of on-line digital interactivity and virtual communities will evolve a genre that may be unrecognizable in a traditional sense.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate the production of this thesis to my daughter Dinah Anne, who was born on September 22, 1993, two weeks after I started the MA programme at Concordia. And to my son Yuri Michael Clayton, born on September 18, 1995.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

This thesis examines the media arts in relation to developing communication technologies and the processes through which cultural identities are produced and consumed, at both global and local levels. It is an argument for a reconceptualisation of cultural identity -- not as a given object on which new technologies have "effects" but rather as itself a product of specific cultural technologies, which are the site of the contradictory tendencies and interests which form our present day understandings of community and belonging. I suggest that it is through a detailed analyses of the media arts and their related domestic or local activities that we can most effectively grasp the significance of current processes of globalization and localization (homogenization and fragmentation) which are central to our understanding of postmodern culture.

Advanced capitalist societies are in a period of profound structural transformation. What is emerging in this process is a new articulation of spatial scales -- of global, continental, national and local spheres -- associated with the increasing transnationalisation of accumulation. The worldwide organization and integration of corporate activities is bringing about a more immediate and direct articulation of global and local spaces. What is happening through this process is a new global matrix of unevenly developed regions, cities and

1

localities. This process is not only economic, but also political and cultural, and it has an enormous influence on collective organization and identity in the late twentieth-century.

While they should not be seen as the determinant and causal factor, it is undoubtingly the case that new information and communication technologies are playing a powerful role in the emergence of new spatial structures, relations and orientations. What is most apparent and remarkable in this present context is the accelerated formation of global communication empires, such as those of Black, Murdoch, Sony, Disney, Paramount, and so on. Internationalization appears to be entering into a new stage, and the maintenance of national sovereignty and identity are becoming progressively more difficult as the unites of economic and cultural production and consumption become increasingly transnational.

Personal attachment to the nation-state, the principle of citizenship, is increasingly being undermined by consumerism and more specifically consumer access to new communication technologies and services like the World Wide Web. We are witnessing the emergence of both enlarged (NAFTA, the European Community) and restricted (local, provincial, regional) conceptions of citizenship. New forms of bonding, belonging and involvement are being forged out of this global/local nexus. The most apparent tendency in this restructuring is the movement towards a new or renewed

2

localism. The obvious question this activity raises is whether such affiliations will necessarily be conservative, parochial and introspective, or whether it is possible to reimagine local communities in more cosmopolitan terms (Robins, 1989).

What these communication technologies make possible through their capacity to transgress frontiers and subvert territories is a new kind of relationship between place and space. Things are no longer defined or distinguished, in the ways they once were, by their boundaries, borders, or frontiers. We can say that the very idea of boundary -- the frontier boundary of the nation state, for example, or the physical boundaries of urban structures -- has been rendered problematic. Paul Virilio suggests that technological and physical topologies become, in some way, continuous. The boundary has become a permeable, an "osmotic membrane," through which information and communication flows pass. (Virilio, 1991) These global systems -- information networks, satellite "footprints" -- also lay an abstract space over and across concrete and territorial configurations (Wark, 1994). Consequently, older communities and older, localized, senses of community are undone.

One of the key issues in this global/local nexus concerns the role of new technologies in disrupting established boundaries (at the national and domestic levels) and in rearticulating the contemporary private and public spheres. It

3

is at this level that the media arts provide a unique opportunity to examine local responses to questions concerning the relationship between political and cultural aspects of these global post-Fordist social transformations.

However, any examination of the processes at work in the creation of new images spaces and cultural identities needs to be grounded in an analysis of everyday social practices and domestic activities. This analysis must concern the role of new technologies in offering a changed and varying menu of cultural resources, from which we will all be constructing our sense of self-identity. In analyzing those processes, we must attend closely to how cultural identities are produced, both at the macro and micro levels, and ask what role these various media play in the construction of our sense of ourselves -- as individuals and as members of communities at various levels -- whether families, regions, nations or supra-national communities.

The electronic mediascape is going through a profound change of state. Contemporary technological developments, particularly the development of digital technology, and hard-wired consumer access to multinational corporate information flows, have given a new urgency to the debates surrounding the questions of cultural imperialism, information flows and image markets. The exponential growth of digital network communications has sent computer companies, cable TV

companies, and telephone companies scrambling for a piece of the interactive TV market. The "information highway" looks poised to become a gigantic virtual shopping mall.

The context of the enormous changes in communication and information technologies, and specifically television technology, is that the "interactive" capacities of recent technological developments have fundamentally transformed the position of consumer and producer. New telematic products and services, like Internet access, personal computers, video recorders, video disks, DAT recorders, etc., have made a more personal use of media possible.

Individual's access to these digital media promise new territories for artistic and cultural practice. But they also require a reconsideration of art production and consumption. The advent of new consumer electronics and software has complicated both the aesthetics and politics of art production, by implicating artists as producers and consumers of technological commodities (de Kerckhove,1995). The counter-cultural notion embodied in the modernist view that life is a work of art is thus accorded wider currency. The new dimensions and capabilities of the new forms (interactivity, instantaneous multiple distribution, ephemerality) require new aesthetic models, ethical codes, institutions and conventions of consumption.

With this expansion of the role of art, and with the resulting disintegration of artistic cliques, a blurring of genres has occurred which reveals a tendency towards the deconstruction of symbolic hierarchies. This aestheticization of reality foregrounds the importance of style, which is also encouraged by capitalism's market dynamic, with its constant search for new fashions, fads, sensations and experiences. Therefore, within consumer ideology there is the tendency to push culture towards the centre of social life, albeit a fragmented and continually reprocessed culture.

In an electronic environment immersed in new versions and appropriations of cultural icons and images, the entire question of intellectual property must be reconsidered. Pre-electronic cultural ideas like "plagiarism" and "forgeries," and the value systems attached to them, conflict with media designed specifically for precise rapid copying: photography, cinema, videotape, audio tape, photocopying and computer media. Digital technology, applied to texts, images, and music, has created new genres of appropriative creative practice and has simultaneously thrown the copyright/intellectual property law into confusion. This is not simply because the consumer media was full of synthetic imagery, nor just because geography was fully collapsed, but because the techno-utopian rhetoric of the previous generation was collapsed.

Looking back at the intellectual trends and critical legacies of the 1980's it seems necessary to acknowledge the new critical and artistic spaces opened up by women. In their artistic and critical work, feminist artists set out to dismantle the cultural construction of gender and reject any representation of the feminine that could be construed as biological essentialism. They influenced a range of critical and artistic strategies seeking to critique and to sabotage Western and modernist traditions of representation. Deconstructive impulses were manifest in the overt recycling and collaging of images and modes of representation, in the proliferation of attention to frames, narratives, and conventions, often from a stance of self-conscious distancing and elusive irony, and in the blurring of previously assumed boundaries between art, theory, and criticism, and between subjects (selves) and locations (genres, identities, etc.).

This period of activity also led to the constituting of a new orthodoxy in contemporary art and critical practice. At the most fundamental level, this orthodoxy held that the task of feminist art was to interrogate traditional strategies of representation and, in particular, ideological constructions of gender that formed dominant traditions of representation in Western art, visual culture, and the mass media. Because of the consequent emphasis on deconstruction, feminism and postmodernism seemed to some observers to be indissoluble

7

parts of the same (anti)modernist trajectory, whether conceived in negative or positive terms.

The establishment of a critical discourse on and among women, which now circulates in (and between) art, criticism, and feminist theory, is one of the most important and impressive effects of the growing interdisciplinary and institionalization of art.

The cultural logic of new imaging systems such as computer-based virtual reality technologies are rooted in the history of social formations, as well as in economic and political imperatives. If cinema and television can serve to bring into focus a new imaging system's cultural, social, and political logic, if writing can trace the outlines of new forms of sedentary spectatorial consciousness, and if words can be used to trace out the implications of virtual reality's potential impact on the artist's traditional identity and relationship to theory and practice, then this is perhaps because this new imaging system seems to embody, as its condition of existence, an exemplary relationship to the ephemeral.

Rather then just being a symptom of this condition the localized cultural production associated with the media arts are potentially a critical reflection on this space. By understanding the regimes of power which influence local production, the creative applications of communication

technologies can be considered useful as social critique rather than being just decorative.

Community-based media artists can elaborate a creative local response to the invasive influence of global capital. If localities are increasingly nodes in emerging global networks, then local consciousness and action may present new possibilities for global participation by people in local communities (Chardwick,1988).

Like others who are involved in meaningful social intervention, media artists need to be sensitive to how prevailing attitudes, values and practices are influenced by the economic, political and social arrangements of capitalism. They must seek to articulate how middle class values influence their own professional practices and their attitudes towards social inequality, justice and power. From the point of view of community-based arts practices, the theoretical and ideological dilemma is whether one takes the structures inequality of capitalism as inevitable and perhaps immutable, or whether their practices will actively seek to challenge the bases if this inequality. That is, to take knowledge about economic and social inequality and seek to develop projects which actively challenge structures and assumptions about the given social order. This would involve theorizing their "bottom-up" strategies which focus on local community development and challenge existing social and economic

barriers while encouraging participation. These principles of inclusion are based on democratic values and run counter to the "top-down" command prescribed by government or business sponsorship.

There is no doubt, however, that without the development of theoretically informed practices, one can never be sure that we are on the right track towards effecting any social change. If this is so, then practitioners need to forge a close link between their theories and their day-to-day practices. It is not possible to assess the impact and effectiveness of a program of action without the development of such a link. Both art and theory need to look into the experience of everyday life for the practical foundations of a critique of this new terrain.

Artists in Canada have also create a well-developed parallel system, known as the artist-run gallery network, which, in conjunction with avenues of public support for critical and curatorial work, has nourished artistic production and criticism that engage with theoretical analysis. It could be argued that the weakness of the Canadian commercial market in certain art-making areas, like the media arts, has increased the influence of theoretical and critical discourse upon it. This suggests that it is often critical writing that provides the basis upon which the value of this work is established and claimed.

Chapter 1
Postmodern Geographies:
Global Issues, Local Action

In this present period of late-capitalism, we are involved with processes of political economic restructuring and transformation in terms of a shift beyond that historical system of accumulation and social regulation called Fordism. In this instance Fordism is understood in terms of the articulation of a particular "regime of accumulation," centred around mass production and mass consumption, with an appropriate "mode of regulation." Unlike the mode of production, regimes of accumulation are determined by how people consume as much as by how they produce. Regimes of accumulation thus attribute as much significance to the market as they do to the point of production (Lash,1990).

The result is the emergence of new social formations and power relations that do not necessarily fit within the prevailing Fordist/Keynesian model. Advanced capitalist societies are in a period of profound transformation. For some, this marks a shift from industrial to post-industrial society; for others, it is about the transition from organized to disorganized capitalism; and for yet others, it is characterized by the historical trajectory from Fordism and massification to a more flexible post-Fordist era. The social basis is being

prepared, as it were, for a new comprehensive concept of control based on the principles of cybernetics.

The course of these changes is neither obvious, nor pre-determined, but remains a matter of contestation. At the same time a new and very particular kind of space is being produced at the intersection of culture and technology. The penetration of the human body by technology, and the socialization of simulated digital realities are more than signifiers of technological progress. Technological developments are influencing the cultural transformations associated with social restructuring. The evolving communication technologies are increasingly shaping our culture and the subjects within that culture. However, any arguments about the creation of new 'cyber-spaces' and cultural identities must ultimately be grounded in an analysis of the everyday practices and domestic rituals through which contemporary electronic communities are constituted and reconstituted on a daily basis (Kisil, 1995b).

An exploration of these issues must work through the nature of any relationship between the transition from Fordism to some post-Fordist social system, and the trajectory from modernism to postmodernism. Raymond Williams argues that in a world of, "...false and frenetic nationalisms and of reckless and uncontrollable global transnationalism...," the struggle for meaningful communities

and "actual social identities" is more urgent than ever. (1) Following this line of inquiry, issues around the politics of communication converge with the politics of identity: raising questions about the notion of "common experience" and the nature and scope of community. Simon Frith argues that the question of common experience is:

> ...answered in terms of our understanding of 'community', our negotiations of the bounds of 'high' and 'low' art, our ability to make the means (and goods) of mass cultural production serve our own ends. (2)

Whether home is imagined as the nation-state, region, or one's immediate surroundings, it is drenched in the sentiment of wholeness, unity, and integrity. It is about a notion of community centred on shared traditions and memories, and inextricably interlinked with texts and the patterns and flows of modern communications. What assumptions about the nature of our communities need to be revised when the already complex aspects of communications are supplemented by electronic media?

One of the ways of looking at the technological transformation of the cultural industries and markets is by analyzing the decline of the social system of Fordism. What is being suggested is that Fordism as a mode of capitalist development and, as a historically specific coherence of

accumulation and regulation, has now reached its limits. The inherent control problems of Fordism -- rising wages and declining productivity, over capacity and market saturation, competition from low-wage countries, increasing costs for public services, and automation (Roobeek,1987) -- have brought the system into crisis. This crisis is structural rather than cyclical, and it is a matter of political, social, and cultural crisis as much as of economic decline and stagnation. Insofar as the resources of Fordism/Keynesianism have been exhausted, the future of capitalist development demands a fundamental and innovative restructuring of accumulation and regulation. Annemieke J. M. Roobeek argues that:

> Around...new technologies new structural forms of new economic and political power relations will emerge, which will not fit in the existing Fordist structure...this socio-political transformation is reflected in the dwindling power of trade unions, changes in consumption patterns, deregulation, the stepping aside of government and the revitalizing of market powers. The social basis is being prepared, as it were, for a new comprehensive concept of control. (3)

If the historical nature of Fordism and the dynamics of its crisis are becoming clear, the question of its successor regime is more problematic and contentious. What lies beyond Fordism? There are many accounts of post-Fordism which identify a new social coherence centred around an emergent regime of flexible accumulation. So-called flexible

14

specialization, or what Scott Lash (1990) calls "specialized consumption," is the "motor" driving these changes. It is manifest in new forms of decentralized and disseminated production and in design and market niches; demassified enterprises abandon economies of scale in favour of economies of scope; and workers supposedly assume new skills and responsibilities and a new sense of autonomy. Scott Lash argues that:

> The cause...[of specialized consumption] is in all likelihood cultural, and has to do with the individual and collective identities of emergent and receding social groupings. The new 'disorganiz- ed' capitalist conditions of accumulation bring with them a largely modified class structure with a largely modified set of collective and individual identities...[producing] new demand patterns, for both material and cultural goods. (4)

Post-Fordism is, in effect, imagined as anti-Fordism: it is the inverse of the rigid and massified system of Fordism. Roobeek suggests:

> The transition from a social order based on more solidarity and collective welfare to an order where polarization and individualization become central, will not happen easily. (5)

One important aspect of the emergence of post-Fordism

15

centres around the evolving nature and meaning of social space. According to Edward Soja space is of paramount importance in this period of transition and restructuring:

> The current crisis is accentuating spatiality and revealing more clearly than ever before, the spatial and locational strategies of capitalist accumulation and the necessity for labour and all segments of society 'peripheralized' by capitalist development and restructuring to create spatially conscious counter-strategies at all geographical scales, in all territorial locales. (6)

What post-Fordist theorists perceive is the transmutation of a centralized economy into new forms of decentralization and dissemination; they emphasize the increasing importance of localized industrial districts and zones. If the growing significance of local economic districts is, indeed, and identifiable trend, then there are also apparently countervailing tendencies towards a global network economy. Under the neo-conservative banner, western governments have increasingly taken a hands off approach to the economy. At the same time transnational corporations have become more intrusive in the affairs of nations and the nationality of their capital has become more important as the world economy shifts from goods production to knowledge-based services. Manuel Castells has described how what he calls the informational mode of development, based upon new communication systems and information technologies, is bringing about, "...the transformation of spatial places into

flows and channels -- what amount to the delocation of the processes of production and consumption." (7)

Castells argues that corporate information networks are underpinning the expansion and integration of the capitalist world system, realizing the possibility of a world assembly line, and opening up truly global markets. "The new space of a world capitalist system," he argues, "is a space of variable geometry, formed by locations hierarchically ordered in a continuously changing network of flows." (8) What we are moving towards is a fundamentally delocalized world order articulated around a small number of, "...concentrated centres for production of knowledge and storage of information, as well as centres for emission of images and information," (9) nerve centres in the cybernetic grids, command and control headquarters of global financial, industrial and media systems. The consequence, Castells believes is, "...the formation of a new...relationship between space and society." (10)

The elaboration of a new spatial order is a consequence, then, of two contrary dynamics which have always characterized the production of space under capitalism. The historical sequence of capitalist spatialities, which has always manifested itself through the geography of uneven territorial development, has been a consequence of the interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces, between centralization and decentralization, agglomeration and

17

dispersal, homogenization and fragmentation. David Harvey has identified a fundamental developmental logic underpinning this contradictory process. Capital has always sought, "...to overcome spatial barriers and to improve the 'continuity of flow'." (11) It remains the case however, that spatial constraints always exist and persist in so far as, "...capital and labour power must be brought together at a particular point in space for production to proceed." (12) Mobility and fixity are integrally and necessarily related:

> The ability of both capital and labour power to
> move...from place to place depends on the creation
> of fixed, secure, and largely immobile social and
> physical infrastructures. The ability to overcome
> space is predicated on the product of space. (13)

There are, then, forces working towards structured coherence and fixity, but also countervailing forces tending towards the simultaneous transcendence and disruption of immobility and coherence; both are moments of the same total process of spatial development.

On the basis of new information and communication technologies, capital can now be described as hyper-mobile and hyper-flexible, tending towards deterritorialization and delocalization. But this is not the only characteristic tendency in the present period. Even if capital significantly reduces the friction of geography, it cannot escape its dependence of

spatial fixity. Space and place cannot be annihilated. As Scott Lash and John Urry argue:

> The effect of heightened spatial indifference has
> profound effects upon particular places and upon
> the forms of life that can be sustained within them
> -- contemporary developments may well be
> heightening the salience of such localities. (14)

The increasing mobility of corporations is associated with the possibility of fractionalizing and subdividing operations and situating them in different places, and, in the process, taking advantage of small variations in the nature of different localities. The spatial matrix of capitalism in the period beyond Fordism is one that, in fact, combines and articulates tendencies towards both globalization and localization (or homogenization and fragmentation).

The new forms of spatial deployment very much reflect the changing organizational structure of accumulation, and, particularly, new patterns of combined corporate integration and disintegration. One developmental logic of capitalist corporations is towards both horizontal and vertical integration, expanding the monopolistic logic of concentration that characterized the Fordist regime of accumulation, and this on an increasingly global scale, this continuing integration process is complemented however by certain tendencies toward vertical disintegration, towards the fragmentation of organizational elements into separate and

19

specialized but functionally interlinked units (Scott,1986). This is generally a matter of externalizing non-strategic, specialized, or, perhaps, unpredictable and variable functions and labour processes -- and thereby externalizing uncertainty and risk -- on the basis of subcontracting or market links.

These emerging organizational transformations take place in and through space and have significant implications for territorial development. Vertical disintegration results in the formation of a localized nexus of small units, often centred around one or a few dominant companies, and involve contractor/subcontractor relationships, continuous information exchange and, thus, depend on proximity. The consequence of this dynamic of flexible specialization, with its tendency towards spatial agglomeration, has been to give a new centrality to local economies. It is at the level of locality that important new economic and social dynamics are being worked out. It is precisely this aspect of organizational-territorial transformation that the idealizing champions of post-Fordist industrial districts have identified as decisive. Territorial complexes of quasi-integrated organizations are extremely vulnerable to external disruptions inflicted by globally mobile and footloose corporations:

> The evolution of flexibility within corporations ...means that places are created and used up more quickly for the purposes of production or consumption. (15)

In a context in which, "...regions 'implode' into localities and nations 'explode' into complex global space...", (16) we have, then, an increasingly direct relationship between the local and the global. And, as part of this process, the role and significance of the nation-state has become ever more problematic. As Raymond Williams argues:

> It is now very apparent, in the development of
> modern industrial societies, that the nation state,
> in its classical European forms, is at once too
> large and too small for the range of real social
> purposes. (17)

The politics of space and place is a fundamental issue. The question is whether national and nationalist identities can be transcended in favour of more meaningful identities, or whether they will simply transform in regressive and alienating ways. For Manuel Castells the prospects are bleak:

> On the one hand, the space of power is being
> transformed into flows. On the other hand, the
> space of meaning is being reduced to micro-
> territories of new tribal communities. (18)

He envisages a new, "...space of collective alienation," one in which there is a, "...deconnection between people and spatial form, ...the outer experience is cut off from the inner experience." (19)

Corporate communications networks are playing a central role in the emergence of new global spatial structures, relations and orientations. Media conglomerates, according to Claus-Dieter Rath, are creating a global image space:

> The 'space of transmission' thus cuts across --
> as a new geographic entity, which has its own
> sovereignty, its own guarantors -- the geographies
> of power, of social life, and of knowledge, which
> define the space of nationality or culture. (20)

What the new information and communications technologies make possible is a new kind of relationship between place and space: through their capacity to transgress frontiers and subvert territories, they are implicated in a complex interplay of "de-" and "re-territorialization."

Countries are no longer defined and distinguished, in the ways that they once were, by their boundaries, borders and frontiers. Corporate communications networks have produced a global space of electronic information flows, or vectors, over across and between concrete architectural configurations. A terrain which is neither geographical nor architectural, rather, a "third nature" (21) that according to McKenzie Wark appears:

> ...as a network of information which covers and
> surmounts both prior terrains [natural and
> constructed]. Whether in the form of a 'mirror
> world' of simulation, an intensified 'virtual reality'
> of experience, a 'cyber-space' of interactivity, the
> limits of second nature are supposedly solvable by

wresting a new domain of freedom from necessity
on yet another terrain. (22)

Consequently, older communities and older, localized, senses of community are undone. And the question becomes, how can network and community be reconciled? What is the nature of emerging image markets and spaces produced by the consciousness industries, and what significance do these have for imaginary space, the sense of space and place? What can community be made to mean in this mediated world?

The context for the restructuring of image spaces, in a world in which the image reigns supreme, is a crisis of public service regulation, the broadcasting system elaborated under Fordism/Keynesianism, with its focus on the national arena and nationalist identities. According to Colin MacCabe, while it is increasingly clear that technological and economic transformations are surpassing the regulatory capacities of the nation-state, there is, at the ideological level, still an obsessive and regressive:

> ...desire to reproduce the nation that has died and
> the moral and social certainties which have
> vanished with it...to fudge and forge a false unity
> based on faded images of the nation...Independently
> of the moral and cultural vacuity of such a policy,
> it will fail in its own terms because the economies
> and technologies of television are no longer
> national. (23)

National ambitions and endeavours will not simply disappear. In this context, if there is to be a post-Fordist media system, in what image will it be created? Manuel Castells fears the worst:

> The coexistence both of the monopoly of messages by big networks and the increasingly narrow codes of local microcultures around their parochial cable TVs'. (24)

Is this prospect necessarily and inevitably one of increasing privatism, localism, and "cultural tribalism" within the global village?

What is most apparent about the interplay between globalization and localization is the accelerating formation of global communications empires, such as those of Rupert Murdoch, Conrad Black, Walt Disney or Sony Corporation. Richard Peet argues that:

> The tendency is towards the production of one world mind, one world culture, and the consequent disappearance of regional consciousness flowing from the local spacificities of the human past. (25)

Global media are often seen as unproblematically capturing the hearts and minds of their audiences and producing an increasingly homogeneous global consciousness and culture. Internationization is not a new phenomenon; it was very much a constitutive aspect of Fordist development. But, British

authors Richard Collins, Nicholas Garnham and Garth Locksley suggest it is now entering a new stage, and the:

> ...maintenance of national sovereignty and
> identity are becoming increasingly difficult
> as the unities of economic and cultural
> production and consumption become increasingly
> transnation. (26)

Capital, clearly, has culture too. Knowledge-based services, by their very nature, carry cultural assumptions; and the movements of capital affect the distribution of cultural power. Many observers think that the power of transnational corporations erodes the sovereignty and cultural distinctiveness of countries. As Herbert Schiller pointed out when the Japanese corporation Matsushita bought American entertainment giant MCA/Universal (27) in 1989:

> It has caused the American news media, along with
> government foreign-policy makers, to recognize a
> problem whose existence was steadfastly denied
> for the past twenty-five years -- cultural
> domination by an external power. (28)

It is not the nationality of the buyer that concerns Schiller, but the "...awesome concentration and control, domestically and globally, by private economic power, of the apparatus of human consciousness production." (29)

What is at issue here is the organizational and political power of giant corporations, the knowledge they have exclusive rights to, and their cultural biases. The drive to acquire control over knowledge is achieved by merging with rivals or through take-overs of competitors. If the merger or take-over results in control passing to a foreign corporation, countries stand to lose their repositories of knowledge to foreign firms. Through legal instruments such as patents and copyrights transnational corporations are exclusive guardians of much of the new knowledge being generated.

At the same time, sources of creativity and expression are being assembled into colossal economic groupings, which are increasingly less unaccountable to public institutions or authority. Vast private empires now preside over most of the creative activity undertaken in the United States. We are seeing the emergence of truly global, decentred, corporations in which diverse media products are being combined into overarching communication empires. Co-financed and co-produced products are being made on a global assembly line aimed at world markets. This process of globalization is very much a function of increasing corporate integration. Various forms of horizontal alignment are apparent, at both the national and international levels, with new alliances between broadcasters, film and television producers, publishers, record producers, and so on. But, as Schiller points out, it is the emergence of new media groups on a vertically integrated

scale like Sony and Matsushita that is the most important factor in the nature and spread of the media empire. The progression of Rupert Murdoch, through Fox Broadcasting, 20th Century Fox, and Sky Channel, towards the achievement of integrated control over production, distribution, and broadcasting is another example.

Because of the costs involved, total integration is, in fact, likely to be less significant, and less attainable, than the strategic integration of particular functions. That is, the consolidation of power blocs in the communication industry aiming to achieve vertical integration over some or all of the programmer, broadcaster, carrier, and network operator functions.

The tendency toward vertical integration is not, then, absolute and encompassing. As is the case with the transformation of accumulation beyond Fordism more generally, it is also, in fact, combined with the processes of vertical disintegration. Thus, in the case of the American motion picture industry, while the major studios control and dominate finance, product definition, distribution, and marketing, there has been a clear move towards the externalization of production and the use of small independent producers (Storper and Christopherson,1987). This process of deverticalization is associated with both the externalization

of risk and the attempt to exploit a maximum variety of creative resources.

There are many who see this trend toward vertical disintegration and territorial localization as heralding a benign post-Fordist era of flexible specialization and cultural industrial districts. It is important to emphasize that vertical disintegration applies primarily to the production sector. As Nicholas Garnham points out, it is:

> ...distribution, not cultural production, that is the key locus of power and profit. It is access to distributions which is the key to cultural plurality. (30)

Given this strategic importance, the function of distribution is not likely to be externalized. It is also important to emphasize that the logic of integration and disintegration are not contrary, but, rather complimentary. While disintegration and localization are important integration and globalization remain the dominant and embracing force.

The evolution of community-based, or localized, media production is playing a significant role in the elaboration of distinct and particular forms in specific regional and local identities. The case of Britain offers a good example of partial disintegration and, particularly, of its ambiguous and contradictory political implications. Whereas previously the functions of production, editorial and repertoire, and

28

distribution, had been integrated in British broadcasting, with the opening of Channel 4 in 1982 there was a move towards their desegregation. As with the American film industry, the key innovation was the externalization of program-making, which had as its consequence the growth and consolidation of a small-business sector of independent producers. Many of these companies, often involved in political projects, located their activities away from the metropolitan centre, forming into small and localized agglomerations in regional cities (such as Cardiff, Newcastle, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham). These developments brought real hopes and anticipation for a deconcentration, decentralization, and democratization of the audio/visual production industry.

Recently, a second wave of deverticalization has begun to emerge, in the context of the government's decision that both the BBC and ITV companies should subcontract 25% of their programmes to independent producers. This new wave of transformation, however, severely undercuts idealizing expectations and projections. One aspect of the externalization and subcontracting of production is the creation of a casualized, segmented, and precarious workforce. This external workforce is having a direct effect on broadcast professionals and their unions. Some industry analysts suggest that this policy reflects an effort by government to break the broadcasting unions. They argue that flexible working deals can be used to assert discipline and control over employees

and thereby strengthening profitability and comparative advantage. Flexibility translates into power: through new contractual relationships with internal employees and through the power of market relations with external subcontractors. So-called flexible specialization combines organizational and functional disintegration with the continued integration of control and co-ordination.

What are the political implications of these combined processes of integration and disintegration, globalization and localization, homogenization and fragmentation? What is emerging is a certain displacement of the national frameworks in favour of perspective and agendas appropriate to both supra-national and sub-national dynamics. In this process, new questions are being asked about the interrelation of spaces of accumulation and arenas of cultural consumption and cultural identity. Mike Featherstone argues that:

> ...undermining the cultural integration of the
> nation-state. At the same time, and an important
> part of the process, we have both the incorporation
> of states into larger units [North American Free
> Trade Agreement, the European Community] and the
> transformation effects of global economic and
> cultural flows. Both point to larger and necessarily
> more abstract units: the unity within which
> diversity can take place. (31)

In the context of centripetal tendencies brought about by the globalization of communications, there are also

centrifugal tendencies, which Josep Gifreu points out are use, "...to protect and preserve native languages and culture." The "...globalization of social transactions," experienced as an, "...internationalization process, which is gradually robbing [nations]...of their originality and demobilizing their citizens, so that...cultural differences are disintegrating ..." (32) also produces localized and particularized communities and identities.

As Torsten Hägerstrand argues, working both against and within a supra-national politics of communication and culture, there is a growing sub-national agenda focused around local and urban cultural identities. Hägerstrand believes local media are increasingly being seen as:

> ...regional-building blocks not only in traditional cultural terms (regional awareness, cultural identity, linguistic crystallization), but also in terms of economy (provision of jobs, sensitization of the public to communication technologies, dynamization of local markets, etc.) (33)

According to Hägerstrand, in the context of a system society, in which many activities have, "...released themselves from the bonds and fetters of place," (34) where:

> ...the media have contributed very little to the local and regional content of world-pictures. There is every reason to believe that they have been destructive at these levels...the time people spend with mass-media these days must have reduced

social interaction and also other activities related
to the neighbourhood. (35)

Hägerstrand suggests there arises countervailing
tendencies to explore the "possibility space" of local media, to
establish localized arenas for public debate and cultural
expression, to elaborate a meaningful local public sphere.
Creating:

> ...an amplification of the internal flows of
> communication in regions and localities in order to
> enhance cross-sectoral and environmental
> understanding, mutual aid and cooperation, and
> establish platforms for public debate and
> distinctive cultural expression. (36)

The case of Britain is again instructive. Tendencies in
the organization of audio/visual industries towards partial
disintegration and the externalization of production, have, in a
society historically characterized by a "national" framework
of centralized and metropolitan cultural influence (Robson,
1986), become associated with the elaboration of local
cultural initiatives. In a number of urban and local contexts,
the image industries have been at the forefront of local
economic and cultural restructuring. Following the model of
the Greater London Council in the early 1980s, these
strategies move towards the elaboration of localized cultural
industry districts. Simon Frith explains that:

There were two immediate reasons for this
interest in cultural industries: first, the
general...shift from the manufacturing to the
service sector in terms of capital investment,
profit and employment; second, technological
changes, and particularly the development of new
communications technologies. It was as apparent to
public sector as to private sector economists that
'the economic sectors of leisure, tourism,
broadcasting, telecommunications and retailing are
amongst the fastest growing in the modern
economy'. (37)

Outside of London, the situation was different. In the regions "new" cultural industries were suggested as replacements for dying "old" manufacturers, while, on the other hand, the goal was to stop capital flowing "unnecessarily" to London-based media support companies which could be dispersed just as profitably around the country. And so employment-led cultural industries policies were taken up outside of London too, and were developed with a particular emphasis on the decentralization of media production made possible by new technology (in video and music production, for example, or in desk-top publishing).

But, this local sphere is also a contested terrain. The culture of locality is not only a concern of progressive government; it is also high on the agenda of communications conglomerates seeking to combine global marketing with the targeting of local and regional consumers. The cultural industries are not just about programme-making, but also and

crucially about distribution, and so long as the new conduits of distribution, such as cable and microwave systems, are closed to democratic access, then aspirations for cultural radicalism will remain an unattainable goal.

According to Simon Frith (1991), for these non-London authorities the employment-led policy meant, first, "importing producers," in the hope that they could provide local employment opportunities. Second, the "promotion of tourism" through the development of shopping and entertainment facilities, on the one hand, and museums or "heritage" centres, on the other. And third, a "cosmetic policy" where culture is treated as a sort of urban make-up, as a catalyst for the wholesale regeneration of an area.

Cultural theorist, David Harvey, believes that this new culture of commercial enterprise enlists culture to manufacture differentiated urban or local identities. These are centred around the creation of an image, a fabrication and inauthentic identity, a false aura, usually achieved through the, "...recuperation of 'history' (real, imagined, or simply recreated as pastiche) and of 'community' (again, real, imagined, or simply packaged for sale by producers)." (38) The context is the increased pressure on cities and localities, in the conditions of accumulation emerging beyond Fordism, to adopt an entrepreneurial stance in order to attract mobile global capital. The marketing of local identities and images as

a function of intensified inter-urban competition, and success, as David Harvey argues, "...is often short-lived or rendered moot by competing or alternative innovations arising elsewhere." (39)

Under such conditions, local economies are precarious and local identities and cultures may be false and fragile. Raphael Samuel observes that:

> The more cosmopolitan capitalism becomes, the more it seems to wear a homespun look: the more nomadic its operations, the more it advertises its local affiliations...Geographically, the population may be becoming more mobile; imaginatively, it cleaves to a spirit of place. The pastoral version of the national myth...has never been more widely popular...In the city, the rhetoric of neighbourhood and community has never been more extensively used...The language of patriotism may be unfashionable but the appetite for roots -- even make-believe ones -- is unappeasable. (40)

But localism can also be a more positive force, an attempt to elaborate a creative local response to the invasive influence of global capital. Chadwick F. Alger writes that if localities are increasingly nodes in emerging global networks, then local consciousness and action may throw up new, "...possibilities for more efficacious, and self-conscious, participation in world affairs by people in local communities." (41)

Through the lens of locale the media arts provide a unique opportunity to examine local responses to questions concerning the relationship between political and cultural aspects of these post-Fordist social transformations. Media artists negotiate between tradition, institutionalized aesthetic discourses, and organic emergent forms of social communication. The media arts are an experimental laboratory, not so much for new technologies as for new social relations of communication. In this instance the convergence of the critical tradition with new technology seems to be a dialectic with potential to raise both to a new level of cultural and political salience.

Chapter 2

Public vs. Private Aesthetics:

An Overview of the Media Arts

A curious friction is produced along the edges
where the intentions of video art abut the
conventions of the television industry. The very
anomaly of an encounter with the individualized
signature of art within the homogenized landscape
of corporate culture signals their oppositions and
suggests the challenges inherent in collaboration. (42)

In his essay Sociology of the Set, Gregory Battcock put
forward the concept that the media arts have traditionally
been derived from the subversion of public communication
systems. (43) He argues that an artistic medium like sculpture
or painting initially appeared as a form of public
communication super-imposed or integrated into public
structures and communication systems. An example of this
would be the relieves or murals depicting religious or
historical scenes on ancient buildings. Battcock suggests that
this media becomes art forms when they are detached from
their supporting public systems and used as vehicles of self-
expression. Battcock's theory about the media arts can be used
to make a similar observation regarding the specific
relationship between television and video art.

Because video art is produced and viewed on equipment
similar to television, television has become a reference point

for both the viewer and producer of video art. This shared technology has locked the artist into a permanent dialogue with television. In the past video artists dealt with this relationship in two ways: some developed an anti-television aesthetic, while others acknowledged television practices and program formats. Those artists opposed to television's style of production have attempted to accentuate the differences between television and video art. American artists such as Chip Lord and Michael Smith, and Canadians like General Idea who accepted television formats, used these to create parodies of television and exposed the mediums ability to define its own reality. But regardless of the approach artists have taken in dealing with TV, the common referent continues to be broadcast television. If television plays such an important role in defining what video art is, then it's important to discuss the syntax of television production -- what television programming is.

Although the cinema might seem to be the media closest to television, it isn't. Television technology developed as an extension of the radio, and consumer applications of TV technology have always been controlled by commercial broadcasters. Developing this technology into broadcast systems, as opposed to decentralized home receiver/broadcasting units, offered the broadcast developers a double subsidy. First, broadcast systems could be used to efficiently gain access into every household with a receiver in order to

advertise goods -- in much the same manner as a newspaper. Advertising space could then be sold to not only offset the costs of developing the technology, but to also make a profit. Secondly, advertising revenue could subsidize the development of receivers allowing them to be mass produced cheaply. The low-cost receiver would in turn guarantee a large audience for advertisers and increase the value of advertising time.

Using the economic logic of existing print media radio developed as a vehicle for advertising. The subsequent introduction of television was patterned after the broadcasting system in place. It was not technological imperatives that determined the development of radio and television as broadcast systems, but rather the economic interests of their developers. Consequently, radio and television were designed to exploit the individual as a consumer. No provisions were made for the individual to act as a producer. The broadcast network was a one-way communication system.

The tradition of artists' practice in time-based media grew out of subverting the contexts of the commercial control over mass media (still photography, publishing, television, radio and film). By their nature, these media have discouraged two-way communication, personal interpretation and group discussion. They have been strictly one-way, vertical conduits of information from the elite and ordained experts to the rest

39

of us. The pervasive and dominant nature of commercial broadcast media make it imperative that artists comment upon and provide a critical context for their activities. This tradition of appropriating public media (Battcock,1977) now extends to the use of the computer within various artistic practices for many of the same reasons, the significant difference being that the one-way nature of broadcasting is being eroded by artists in favour of interactivity.

In 1965, the field of independent video production was to open up dramatically with the introduction of the Sony portapak, a portable video recorder and player. This technical development served to release video recording from the confines, both physical and economic, of the commercial broadcast studio. From the beginning, small format (portable) video production has challenged televisions monopoly over the production and interpretation of information. Placing the means of production in the hands of artists and social activists allowed for the development of an oppositional position to the existing mass media environment. In keeping with the idealism of the 1960s which infected all forms of contemporary media, video became the vehicle for a revolution of consciousness raising. The intention, right from the beginning, was to present an alternative interpretation of the official culture being broadcast on television.

The rapid pace at which video caught on in the 1960s is indicative not only of the accessibility and potential of the medium, but also of its appropriateness for the political situation of the time. In the political turmoil and heady social optimism of the late 60s, the video camera was quickly perceived as not only a viable social tool, but also a primary weapon of the communications revolution. In the art world, which had decentralized into various movements with an emphasis away from art as a commodity and a movement towards performance and conceptual art, the video camera seemed to be an appropriate and intimate tool. Furthermore, in the 1950s and early 60s television had infiltrated almost every household and had taken on new meaning as a powerful social influence. This omniscient element of popular culture bred a new found cognizance of the power of mass media, and anger at the ubiquitous role of television in a consumer society. The first video artists (who were part of a generation raised on television) pursued a deconstruction of television as their primary intent, and reacted strongly to the fact that their work, by nature of its technology, was ultimately allied with TV.

The technical limitations of this first generation of portable video equipment were quickly transformed into advantages. Video's blurry resolution was immediately raised to aesthetic status. Its use as a vehicle for "gorilla" or

underground documentation led to numerous recordings of social, personal and artistic events. As David Ross noted in his history of video in the United States:

> Until 1965 television tools were used almost exclusively by large corporations...no provisions existed for the use of the same tools...relating to the needs of the individual. The 1/2 inch revolution ...adapted to minority needs in a pluralistic society: it also greatly expanded the potential of video as a medium for art making. (44)

The first videomakers naively believed that the technical capacities of the portapak would allow this change to occur. They did not understand that technological innovation alone could not alter the economic system in place for broadcasting. Radical changes could only be accomplished through change in the ownership of the system and consequently a change in the use of television. Realistically the introduction of consumer technology could not have affected change in the status quo. David Antin in an article on video art noted that:

> In this sense the social structure of the medium is a matrix that defines the formal properties of the medium -- since it limits the possibilities of a video communication genre. (45)

In addition to the socio-economic factors which limited and directed the development of television technology, Antin identifies another controlling factor -- televisions mystique of professionalism. The industry presents the impression that

television production is a complicated process requiring years of training and large amounts of money. But more then the skills required to operate the equipment, television's measure of professionalism is tied to the notion of "broadcast quality;" broadcast quality being a standard set by government and the industry for the video signal's quality. In comparison to the video signal generated by consumer or industrial equipment the quality standard of the broadcast signal is quite high. To achieve broadcast standard the costs of equipment are correspondingly high. As a result there is a tendency, on the part of the public and TV industry, to equate the measurement of professional quality with expensive equipment and high production costs.

The extremely high cost of professional television equipment imbues items, such as TV cameras, with an "aura" of prestige. In this respect a television camera is not unlike an expensive car. Furthermore, the notion that one needs specialized training to operate the equipment and the aura of prestige attached to the TV camera, effectively combine to influence the manner in which an unfamiliar public reacts to the presence of television equipment. Removing professional equipment from a television context does not necessarily remove the notion of professionalism and prestige associated with them.

Television's socio-economic matrix does not only determine the medium's superstructure and how people relate to it, but also determines the syntax of its programs. This is most evident in television's structuring of time -- television's only salable commodity. The smallest unit of TV time is logically the least amount of time required to advertise a product. Lasting an average of 10 seconds, the station break or program note is the shortest distinguishable segment found on television. Consequently most television advertising is constructed in 10 second increments. This unit forms one of TV's two characteristic time formats. Antin refers to these as time signatures and points out that programs, base on a truncated hour -- 48 minutes -- forms the other. The program time signature, like the advertising time signature, is built in specific augmentations. Instead of 10 seconds these signatures are evenly divided sections of the truncated hour -- 12, 6 and 3 minutes. All broadcast material is based on one of these two time signatures. A television programming hour is therefore tightly structure and divided into many small units of time. A typical half hour segment can contain up to 14 distinct and separate segments -- each half hour program being designed with 4 distinct breaks to allow for 6 minutes of commercials, 10 to 30 seconds long.

Compounding this segmentation is the television producer's fear of losing his/her audience. This situation has produced a reluctance on the part of broadcast producers to hold a single

shot on the screen for more than a few seconds. This approach has ultimately created a strict formula which producers have arbitrarily applied regardless of the subject matter. According to Antin this approach is:

> ...based firmly on the social and economic nature of the industry itself and has nothing whatsoever to do with the absolute technical and phenomenological possibilities of the visual representation by the cathode ray tube. For television, time has an absolute existence independent of any imagery. (46)

While superficially the advertising and program time signatures seem different, they are in fact complimentary. The programming delivers an audience to the commercials, which subsequently provide funding for the programming. Tied into this arrangement television's commercial signature tends to dominate. After all it is the most important commodity to the broadcast industry. Furthermore there is less structural difference between programming and advertising than might be at first apparent. This is most obvious in programs produced "live", such as the news. Without exception, television reduces news to a series of short unrelated stories. The typical news program consists of a string of headlines followed by the individual news items -- approximately 30 seconds long. Two minutes is reserved for the full or lead story. These are read in groups of three to 4 and are bracketed by commercials. Each item on the news follows an almost identical -- head shot of the announcer explaining the story followed by a short edited

45

video clip. The program is held together by the personality of the anchor person and the loose categorization of the stories into international, national, local, weather and sports. Beyond this the format is no more than a series of unrelated events not unlike a string of commercials.

In the intense political atmosphere of the anti-Vietnam war movement, many early video artists and video art collectives began recording subject matter that was being ignored by commercial television -- counterculture, the Black Panthers, anti-war demonstrations, communes. They used a gritty, real-time, exhaustive style that was intended to be more informative than the fragmented nature of commercial production.

In 1975, Ant Farm, a multimedia collective in San Francisco, produced an important tape that exemplifies the anti-television, anarchic intent of these earlier alternative television tapes. Media Burn was an event staged by Ant Farm in which they drove a remodeled El Dorado Cadillac through a wall of burning television sets. In documenting the event, they parodied television conventions of news coverage using slow motion and instant replay and then juxtaposing their version with the news coverage of the event by local TV stations. The message of both the videotape and event are clear -- the news media because of its brevity and fragmented style, cannot adequately report about complex issues, and television as it

exists must be destroyed. As the actor/artist impersonating John F. Kennedy at the 4th of July event stated:

> Television, because of its technology and the way it must be used, can only produce autocratic political forms, hierarchies and hopeless alienation. Mass monopolies control people by their control of information. (47)

Ant Farm's experience demonstrates how media's use of an image, alters its meaning through editing and voice-over. As one of the Media Burn performers noted:

> Much has been made of television as a visual medium, but the all important contextualizing, which generally occurs in a voice-over or in a reporter's introduction is often beyond the control of the artist...The images are without fixed meaning, particularly when edited, with voice-over, and sandwiched between Anacin and Alka Seltzer commercials. (48)

Rather than creating a spectacle, as Ant Farm had done, Labowitz and Lacy, two California-based feminist artists, attempted a different strategy in a performance piece entitled In Mourning and Rage, 1977. This performance created not a parody, but as an actual news item based on the Los Angeles Hillside Strangler story. By employing an actual news story Labowitz and Lacy had hoped that its didactic nature would not allow the political meaning of their event to be altered by being located in a commercial structure. In Mourning and Rage,

47

was planned to accommodate the limitations of the news formats. The performance took place in the morning to allow plenty of time for the event to be shot and edited for the television news. Scripts were handed out to reporters and camera crews so they could position themselves appropriately to get optimum coverage. The event did not start until the TV crews had taken up their positions. Finally, city officials were included to lend authenticity to the event. Labowitz and Lacy's performance was successful in having its message transmitted, but this was achieved through the acquiescence of the news format. No different than any other news story, In Mourning and Rage, was under cut by the event's integration into the endless stream of evening news items. Its intervention (49) into the news was lost in the process.

Television has developed as an instrument of commerce, and as such, its objectives are fulfilled with the passive public consumption of packaged entertainment. Ultimately, there is very little flexibility within the commercial confines of the television format. On the other hand, in using video technology as an instrument of personal and creative expression, artists have undertaken a more intense and interactive approach to communication. Indeed, "video art" as a term generally refers to work produced outside the specifications of the television industry. So, if common technology unites video and television, the crucial difference appears to be in their motivating points of view. As Lorne Falk

points out, "The terms of reference for this relationship could be called a private aesthetic and a public aesthetic." (50)

In the 1960s, proponents of the new consumer technology were quick to predict an optimistic future of unlimited potential. These communication revolutionaries idealistically proclaimed that new technology heralded the imminent obsolescence of magazines, books, and newspapers. Like over zealous parents, writers, producers and community activists naively heaped unachievable expectations onto the new medium. Thus, in the late 60s, video in combination with the introduction of new delivery systems offered a decentralized and democratized communication system. The apparent democratization of communication systems was of importance to social and politically oriented video artists. Artists/ activists saw this medium as a tool for social change. For these groups and individuals video offered the possibility of reaching a mass audience with their alternative points-of-views. With these technological developments came the need for a new means of program delivery, to allow for the diversity of programming required to accommodate these tapes.

Many of the first video artists came from other media, such as sculpture, painting, film and performance. The result was that much of the early work reflects their explorations of the properties of video which distinguish it from these media.

49

From the outset, however, video artists attempted to draw parallels between video art and traditionally accepted art practices because they wanted the medium validated as an art form. To legitimize such a comparison video artists adopted art's formalist discourse. Communication theorist Marshall McLuhan's ideas did not contradict these formalist notions, and if anything re-enforced them. As Jonathon Millet writes, McLuhan's ideas about the global village could only be realized by, "...stressing the immediate mental effect of the various media at the expense of neglecting the messages the actually convey." (51)

The emphasis placed on effect by McLuhan parallels art critic Clement Greenburg's theories on painting. Both were concerned with the formal aspects of the mediums over their subject matter. Thus most of the original dialogue about video was formalistic. After all was there really much difference between Douglas Davis broadcasting an image of himself apparently touching the inside of a television screen and Woody Vasulka experimenting with electronically generated images? Davis' broadcasting project, The Austrian Tapes (1974) experimented with television's potential for interactive communication. While Vasulka was interested in reprocessing and electronically manipulating video images. Looking objectively at both artists it is clear that subject matter played a secondary role to their primary intent, the

exploration of the specific possibilities or expressive qualities, inherent in the medium.

The formalist exploration of video attempts to work with the medium's inherent qualities: the glow of the electrons against the back of the screen -- as compared to film which is reflected light -- the format of the screen, the electronic colours, the medium's capacity for instantaneous/ simultaneous playback and the scanline imagery. Work dealing with these qualities was produced by a diverse range of American artists, e.g. Nam June Paik, Dan Graham, Woody Vasulka, Douglas Davis, Ira Schneider, etc.

As this type of exploration was heavily reliant on access to expensive equipment it forced artists to become dependent on funding agencies, benefactors and patrons. In the U.S. one such patron was Howard Wise. Wise, supported experiments in art and technology through exhibitions of media oriented work at his New York gallery. In 1969 Wise organized the influential show TV as Creative Medium. This show validated the young medium as an art forum and inspired many artists to use it. The work in the show acted as an indicator of the directions video would take. It was presented as an extension of kinetic sculpture, a demystifier of television, a potential interactive art form and as a powerful social tool. Possibly one of the best pieces from this show, which epitomized the then current eclectic mix of formalism, McLuhanism and revolutionary

fervour, was Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider's Wipe Circle (1969-70). Wipe Circle attempted to integrate the audience into the work's information field. To accomplish this Gillette and Schneider shifted the audience's own image in time and space; incorporating it as live image and prerecorded image. All the information was switched between nine monitors, mixing the viewer's image with other pre-recorded and on air signals. Another contemporaneous work was Nam June Paik's Participation TV (1971). Like Gillette and Schneider's piece, Paik's installation required that the audience become involved. To make Participation TV work the viewer had to manipulate video images using Paik's video synthesizer.

While Paik, Gillette, Schneider and similar artists explored the creative possibilities of electronic media, they attached to their explorations rhetorics about the revolutionary potential of video. To these artists an interactive piece, like Davis Douglas' Austrian Tapes, demonstrated the dormant ability of video to create a two-way communications system, where artist and viewer could interact to produce media art works. But being primarily produced for art gallery settings their work lacked any real consideration for broader distribution to the general public. Ironically, while the art work of these artists displayed the alternative possibilities of electronic media, the development of electronic art exclusively within the confines of the art world was mostly ineffectual. These artists ignored the social and political realities which

inhibited any alternative development of television. In this regard the work discussed exemplifies the naiveté of many early video artists.

When the predicted access to equipment, and more importantly to distribution, did not occur in the 1970s, most video artists found that they were literally talking to themselves. Many artists who had been initially attracted to video by its panacea of promise returned to more traditional media such as painting. Those who continued to work with video retreated into a system of alternative media centres. In Canada, Renée Baert writes:

> The problem of accessibility had to be central for the arts, galleries, gallery alternatives and the art audience alike. Seven or eight years after artist videotapes were first produced, very few people have seen the tapes or installations that they have been able to read about at length. (52)

The trend away from the medium may have been compounded by the changing social, political and economic climate, but whatever the cause, community and cultural television studios did not appear on every street corner. The reverse has been closer to the truth. Artists' access to production/distribution was tied to strict guidelines set out by government, the hostility of the broadcasters, censorship by cablecasters and no access to newer mass delivery systems, such as satellites.

The broadcaster's excuse of inferiority, in refusing to televise artist's productions, made some video artists seek out more expensive broadcast production equipment. This escalated the cost of production in the late seventies and early eighties, partially nullifying some of video's original attractions -- its low cost, simplicity and intimacy. Larger production budgets became the norm which in turn created more dependent on granting agencies and institutions. The rising costs, diminishing equipment access and limited audience potential combined to make it difficult for most individual artists to continue to produce videotapes without the aid of production crews. Many of the artist began replicating some of the features of commercial television production to which they were initially opposed.

Although disillusioned artists dropped away from the medium in the 70s some continued to experiment with it. The work of these artists can be roughly categorized as synaesthetic, new narrative/documentary and social realism. The first of these categories, synaesthetic video, involved the creation and manipulation of video images through electronic image processing. American artists such as Nam June Paik and Woody Vasulka and Canadian's like Rick Raxlen and George Lessard have continued to work in this area. But synthaesthetic video has remained a subtext of the art scene in Canada and the United States. Simultaneous to the production of this kind of work was a movement by artists to

use video as a social tool, a weapon in the communications revolution. As is evidenced by the diversity of work in the TV as a Creative Medium show, most artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s did not distinguish between video as an art form and using video as a social tool; these kinds of distinctions came later as the participation of funding organizations and art institutions increased.

Video art production in Canada began in the early 70s and has been tied to support by the state through programs offered at The Canada Council. The Video Program was created within the Visual Arts Section of the Council to provide support in the form of production grants to individuals and awards for organizations to purchase equipment. During this same period The Canada Council was also developing policies of support for the various artist-run centres that were appearing across the country. The long term effect of this situation has been that video art production, distribution and exhibition in Canada is tied closely to government funding and the artist-run movement.

For a variety of reasons video artists in Canada have been influenced by events in the United States. In spite of government regulations our geographic proximity to the U.S. has meant easy access to American mass media and entertainment industries and has resulted in Canada being a destination of choice for many American dissidents. In fact,

several of the first videomakers in this country were ex-patriot Americans who left the States in the early 70s to avoid the Vietnam draft or as a political/moral protest. Tom Sherman and Lisa Steele are two Americans who came to Canada and have had a direct and significant effect on the development of the video art scene in this country. Sherman, as a writer, video and performance artist, as well as a video officer at The Canada Council; and Steele as a pioneer feminist videomaker and social activist. The result is that video art production in Canada has tended to be politically motivated and socially oriented.

In terms of stylistic approaches narrative, documentary, and to a lesser extent social realism, has occupied most of the attention of video artists in this country. The reasons for the dominance of narrative is hard to isolate but it is influenced by, among other things, the type of the work being supported by funding agencies. Additional reasons could include the lack of the knowledge and equipment required to process video signals, a general swing away from formalism in the art world, or it may have just been that narrative/documentary were the forms best suited to a time-based medium like video.

Artists/activists employed documentary's established codes of narrative realism to create new social meanings. As Martha Gever suggested in an article on early feminist video, the adoption of the documentary style by feminists and

political artists, may have been due to the notion that this genre represents the truth accurately. (53) The narrative/ documentary approach is particularly evident in the work of early feminists like Lisa Steele and Kate Craig; and more recently in the work of Sara Diamond and Lorna Boschman. The Gloria Tapes (1980), by Lisa Steele, follows a fictitious young single mother who is on welfare. The artist suggests that the main character, Glorie, depicts a crisis of language, as she lacks the ability to speak on her own behalf. The character relies on the words of those in positions of authority within her life: her father, her social worker, doctors, judges, etc., to construct her circumstances into a form of communication that is about her and not for her. This is only a part of Gloria, however, because in spite of the escalating catastrophes that befall her, Gloria reveals her ability to literally get hold of the language that has been oppressing her. First through repetition and retelling and finally by "breaking the silence" of her own painful childhood, she shows herself to be capable of surviving and changing. Another example of the work of early feminists is Delicate Issue (1979), by Vancouver artist Kate Craig. In this instance a video camera slowly scans the surface of the artist's nude body at close range. The audience never sees the entire body, only a macro view of the connected female body parts which fills the screen. At the same time a voice-over comments on the artist's relationship with media and the audience. Community and cultural groups used these videotapes as a way to change women's views of themselves. The

perception of video as a tool for social change is common amongst these community and cultural groups.

In Canada, the context in which video art has been exhibited is consequently the context in which it has been produced. The national network of artist-run galleries and media centres, also know as the parallel gallery system, is the predominant source for the production, distribution and exhibition of artists' media work. Although there has been a considerable amount of video related activity occurring within artist-run centres, the same can not be said outside of this network. The commercial broadcasting industry for example has ignored the work for primarily technical reasons and museums are not active in the promotion of contemporary forms of art. This situation creates an interesting contradiction in that video art has existed in relative obscurity within the isolation of the parallel galleries, when by virtue of its technical character-istics, it has the potential to reach a much broader audience.

In video arts formative period most activities were considered oppositional because virtually all video activity was in some way connected to the counter-culture through underground production and exhibition centres. Secondly, any use of television outside of broadcast television environment was perceived as alternative and therefore oppositional. If there were specific lines drawn between various practition-ers, they were also held together by the common bond of

operating outside of mainstream structures. Yet within this amorphous situation two defining approaches emerges from the common perception of video as a tool for change. For the majority of artists, it was revolutionary art, and for the social activists, it was a catalyst for social change.

The problem encountered with video and then initial reasons for using it were similar for people who worked outside the art structure, as for those who worked within it. In Quebec the direction of community video was shaped by its patrons and proponents. In the case of Quebec the strongest influence on early video came from the National Film Board's (N.F.B.) Challenge for Change/Societe Nouvelle program and Robert Forget, who initially worked for the N.F.B.

Societe Nouvelle was an experimental program setup in the late 60s by the N.F.B. to encourage citizen participation in the social changes effecting society and to accelerate the understanding of the need for constructive change. While the project originally attempted to accomplish its mandate by using film at the community level as a catalyst for dialogue and change, video was adopted in 1969 for many of the same reasons artists had first appropriated the medium. It was found that film production was too cumbersome to use with community groups that had no technical background with the medium. The "rushes" took up to a week to be returned and the skills necessary to operate the equipment became a barrier to

community members. On the other hand video was cheap, immediate, and relatively easy to use. Video was thus employed to develop internal community communications and the community's abilities to express its problems to government and corporate bodies. This was accomplished by training community members to produce their own tapes and screen them at local public events. The tapes were not didactic and functioned as a means to generate discussion between community members about their mutual experiences.

Because of the political and social situation in Quebec the Societe Nouvelle program was eagerly endorsed by the Quebec cultural community. Robert Forget, who had pushed the N.F.B. to set up a video program, was able, under the auspices of Societe Nouvelle, to set up a splinter group called Videographe. Because of the creation of Videographe under this program, video came into the hands of the Quebec cultural worker -- artist -- as a tool to further their specific cultural and political aims. (54) As with their more formally art oriented counter-parts, expectations were high. Jo-Anne Birne Danzker writes:

> The possibility of alternative modes of communications (even broadcast), of alternative information, the power of the medium to develop an image of another identity, a proud Quebecois identity, provoked heady dreams. (55)

Like video production in general, production in the province declined in the seventies. During that period the Quebec videomakers were confronted with two problems: the inability to distribute their work and actual political change. These factors aggravated the crisis video faced elsewhere. Videomaker Pierre Fabordeau remarked in an interview in 1978, that Quebec videomakers had failed to gain access to broadcast television. (56) This rendered ineffectual the Quebec videomaker's desire to use video as a tool for social change -- such a social/political agenda could only be achieved through mass distribution. This dilemma was further compounded by the election of a government devoted to the same ideological agenda as the cultural community. Quebec videomakers were faced with a thorny issue. Once a specific goal for social change is achieved, what do artists who have predicated their work on that change do? Do they reflect the now accepted ideology or do they return to the fringe and start the critical process once more? Faced with these problems video lost its appeal.

The experience of the Quebec video community was not unique. Other video production centres, such as Inter-media in Vancouver and A Space in Toronto experienced similar declines in their activities. Video's so called state of malaise was caused not so much by any inherent weakness in the medium, as it was by the utopian hopes of it's practitioners. The medium's decline was actually a kind of maturing process. As

61

it was quickly discovered that video could not deliver the panacea of hopes placed upon it, expectations were thrown out and a more realistic outlook was adopted.

The patterns in which Canadian video has developed were established in the late 1960s and early 1970s in three cities known at the time as "centres of excellence" (57): Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. Although artists in these communities have been producing video since the early 1970's, it was not until the late 1970s and early 80s with the establishment of artist-run production facilities in Winnipeg, Calgary, Thunder Bay, Guelph, Ottawa and Halifax that there has been a focus for artists' production activities in the less populated regions of the country. It is interesting to note that these developments occurred with the support of The Canada Council at the time American dissident, Tom Sherman, was the officer responsible.

Video Pool, an artist-run production and regional distribution centre located in Winnipeg, offers a good example of the local circumstances that influenced these regional centres. Soon after the creation of Video Pool it became apparent to the founders that to facilitate the growth of a video art community there would have to be support for all aspects of production activity. Given the population base of Winnipeg (58) the organization could not be passive in its efforts to encourage the use of video as an expressive medium. This goal was achieved through technical workshops and

special programs designed to support, or initiate, local production activity. The interesting thing is that these programs attracted people from various backgrounds, some with no formal art training. The result was an emphasis on participation which in turn creates an interesting dynamic within the local media arts community, one which is contributing to the stylistic quality of the material being produced.

Limited human resources combined with geographic isolation and a harsh climate contributed to the development of a unique quality in Winnipeg productions. It would seem that this parochial environment is having a direct effect on the artists that are living and working in that city. The sense of isolation, the need to be self-reliant, to be tough, are elements that are entering into their work. This can be seen in the early work of Vern Hume and Al Poruchnyk, 2 of the 4 founders of Video Pool. In <u>Obsessively Imminent</u> (1982), Vern Hume talks about the insecurity which results from isolation. Two friends are shown sitting facing each other on the frozen surface of Lake Winnipeg engaged in an endless discussion on the merits of leaving their environment. The actors attempt to relax while sitting on directors chairs on a sunny, but bitterly cold, winter afternoon. The frozen beach scene is juxtapositioned with interior shots of an unseen person watching a television news weather station. Both locations isolate the actors within their landscape.

Isolation from a psychological perspective is the issue in Live Wire (1981), by Al Pouchnyk. In this tape the artist is tightly framed in low light as he is hunched over an electric wire plugged in a wall socket. The artist, using a large hunting knife, slowly peels off the insulation on the wire while explaining what he's doing and giving instructions to the camera operator about how to shot the action. The performance ends dramatically with the artist lunging at the bared wires which in turn abruptly disconnects the video equipment. The screen image instantly turns to static and we hear a loud hissing noise.

Clearly harshness and isolation are facts of life for artists living and working on the western grasslands; it exists in the terrain, the climate, the social life and economic fabric of the area. This reality requires that people work co-operatively in the pursuit of individual goals. The result is an emphasis participation and the importance of interpersonal relationships.

At the same time, technological developments continue to bring more technical opportunities to these artists who chose to stay and work in regional centres. These developments have narrowed the gap between television and video technology. The initial foundation of production established by the federal government in the 70s has stabilized and a marginal public support system has offered this network a level of funding

adequate to sustain its operations. The ethos has however gradually shifted from that of a counter-culture of engagement, to a parallel culture with its accommodation to marginality.

In the past, while artists have undertaken to compete for a place within the information flow of commercial television, they have had to rely on alternative exhibition resources. Closed-circuit venues such as artist-run production and exhibition facilities, public galleries, festivals, educational institutions, special events, clubs and bars have been effective in providing an audience for video art work, and in transforming the viewing experience from a private to a public activity.

Today, video artists are standing on the threshold of what appears to be a completely new generation of communications technologies. Electronic, cellular and optical networks are being designed that blur the distinction between public and personal as well as between one and two-way communications. These developments are most often characterized as an explosion of "new" media such as: direct-broadcast satellites; personal computers; digital, high-definition, and interactive television; video phones; electronic mail; high-speed computer networks; as well as, a variety of enhanced services for an expanding digital telephone network. The irony is that, in the end, the new media will be one -- a single, high capacity,

digital network of networks that will bridge what we now know as the separate domains of computing, telephony, broadcasting, motion pictures, and publishing.

On balance these new technologies tend to shift control of the communication process from the producer to the audience member and the distinction between producers and audiences begins to break down. Audience members who are so inclined can take advantage of their new ability to store, filter, edit, reformat, and fast forward information to others, as frequently practiced by those who participate in electronic networks. The new technology significantly enhances the natural two-step or multi-step flow of communications from the commercially controlled mass media through various opinion leaders and interested parties to the population at large (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1948). It is a critically important, though informal, process of community and group life.

Chapter 3
Virtual Identities:
The State of Statelessness

There is a particular view of the world that comes with being Ukrainian and growing up on the Canadian prairies. One of the most distinctive cultural landscapes to emerge in western Canada was created by Ukrainian immigrants. Their thatched cottages, tight-knit communities and onion-domed churches sprang-up across the mid-west. Statelessness is the dominant theme of Ukrainian history. The Ukrainian past is largely the story of a culture that has had to survive and evolve without the framework of a national state.

I was raised in the Orthodox Church, a Byzantine religion, that reflects the Old World values of a feudal society. I have vivid recollections, as a child, of the exhausting services that required me to be still for over an hour. Fidgeting and whispering were not tolerated. It was an authoritative environment, patriarchal and ceremonial. The interior of the church was covered in iconographic murals, there were large stained glass windows, plenty of lit candles and the air was thick with incense. The predominantly male choir stood on a balcony at the back of the church, and the acoustics caused their baritone voices to resonate above the heads of the congregation. They sang rich Slavic hymns that sounded like thunder -- under these circumstances -- it was as if God was

speaking from heaven. Historian John Lehr explains:

> To Ukrainians...the church was the bearer of national aspirations as well as the guardian of the cultural identity of a people. Thus, the church had both a spiritual and secular role. Its form symbolized the elements of Christian belief, but also signaled the presence and distinction of the congregation it served. (58)

The various European cultures that invaded and settled in Canada did so using naval technology. They turned the Atlantic Ocean into an abstract space of movement, migration and trade. My mother's parents crossed that ocean in 1926 and then traveled for days by train before settling on a patch of land in the north-western part of Manitoba. With ax and hoe they hewed their way onto the plains by clearing their land of poplar, birch and willow trees. Stones, sandy soil conditions and climate required that farmers in this area be resourceful in order to survive economically. Farmers who grew crops in the summer, worked in the bush cutting lumber in the winter, and raised livestock year-round in order to make financial ends meet.

Pressure to assimilate was applied to the Ukrainian pioneers who settled on the flatlands. Success for these immigrants was measured by the degree of their social conformity achieved through economic integration. The economic opportunities of large urban centres continually

emptied agrarian space of its cultural and social substance. Traditional patterns of life were quickly discarded in an attempt to be seen as "modern," progressive and successful.

In 1950, my grandparents sold their land and moved to Winnipeg where my mother met my father. Winnipeg is situated at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers on the eastern rim of the central grasslands. The most distinguishing architectural feature of this Prairie community, besides the noticeable absence of tall buildings, is the size of its warehouse district. When I was growing up these brick structures were left to small manufacturers, import/export companies and eccentric artists. They were relics of a by-gone age -- a forgotten economy -- they were the remains of a regime of accumulation now pasted.

When I was twelve I won an Arbor Day essay writing contest. Arbor Day is the day in spring set aside for people to plant a tree. My prize was a bird watching book, presented to me by His Worship the Mayor of Winnipeg, Steven Juba. It was a hard-cover, pocket-sized, bird watcher's field book, entitled <u>A Field Guide to the Birds</u>. The book itself was well designed: it had all the information necessary to engage in ornithological voyeurism. It had beautiful coloured pictures of the various species of feathered vertebrates that were indigenous to western Canada, east of the Rockies, and the north-western United States. At the back of the book each bird was listed

separately, and in alphabetical order, with an underlined space accompanying the entry. The intention here was to use this listing when out in the woods to record encounters with a simple check mark. It was fun. I was involved in an activity that required investigation, there was the gratification associated with the sightings, and I was also encouraged to maintain a record of my accomplishments.

When I was growing up in Winnipeg my family lived on Home Street, near the Assiniboine River, in an area of the city called the Westend. The banks of the Assiniboine were rich in terms of habitat for the variety of wildfowl that would migrate there during the summer and winter months. On my many excursions along the river's edge, I would from time to time notice Eastern Belted Kingfishers flying high above the water. Even better yet, on occasion, I'd see one literally throw itself at the muddy expanse, entering the flow with a clumsy splash, and in a second it would be off again. I can't remember ever seeing one come away from that reckless plunge empty-handed.

The Assiniboine is not a very deep river and the debris floating downstream would often get hung up in its many shallows. I can still remember seeing that crown of head feathers and that scissor-like bill sitting peacefully on the branch of one of the logs resting against the shore. They seemed to me to be pretty solitary creatures.

The afternoon light can be very bright on the prairies. Sometimes, I would have to squint so hard in order to see that I would literally be looking through my eye lashes. On these occasions I noticed an interesting thing would happen to my visual perception, objects became flatten out, colours were virtually eliminated, and the sun formed ribbons of white light moving across the water. I remember standing still for quite awhile looking at those head feathers and that impressive beak silhouetted against that flat gray current, thin white lines moving slowly across the surface. Then, suddenly, I realized -- I was watching television.

A new regime of accumulation was taking hold of the by-ways and tributaries of the Canadian heartland while I was growing up in Winnipeg -- a regime not based on boats or trains but of satellites and data flows. Thanks to these technological advances the cathode-ray window of my television set brought me the harsh light of each and every day. As Manuel Castells (1983) puts it, we now live not in a space of places but in a space of flows. Unanchored from the space of places and cast into the space of flows, images become ambiguous, revealing a visual poetic that the surrealists could only imagine but that the vector has now rendered as a philosophy made concrete. The passage from modernity to postmodernity involves the passage from one form of abstraction to another -- from the second nature of social spaces defined by water and rail networks to the more

abstract electronic spaces created by telecommunications. As Marshall McLuhan argued:

> Electronic circuitry has overthrown the regime of 'time' and 'space' and pours upon us incessantly and continually the concerns of all other men...Ours is a brand new world of 'allatonceness'. 'Time' has ceased, 'space' has vanished. We now live in a global village... (59)

What does it mean to become more abstract, even more abstracted from the boundedness of territory and subjectivity? Is the concept of the public sphere adequate to the requirements of mediation in an electronic world, or does mediation itself have to be reinvented within the electronic apparatus? McKenzie Wark maintains:

> One can imagine a delirious future beyond cyberspace. A future of rhizome made concrete: where every trajectory is potentially connected to every other trajectory, and where all trajectories are equal and equally rootless. Where we no longer have roots, we have aerials. Where we no longer have origins, we have terminals. (60)

While the arts can map and display an image of this new space of vectoral relations, it cannot theorize it. Both art and theory need to look into the experience of everyday life for the practical foundations of a critique of this new terrain (Kisil,1995b).

At the end of the twentieth century, urban spaces are losing their geopolitical influence to the benefit of electronic systems of instantaneous deportation whose technical intensity upsets our social structures. Just as the prairie landscape suffered from the mechanization of agriculture, the urban topography is paying the price for the atomization and disintegration of surfaces and references that tend towards all kinds of transmigrations and transformations. These systems include the deportation of people in the redeployment of modes of production, the deportation of attention, of the human face-to-face and the urban vis-á-vis encounters at the level of human/machine interaction. What appears is a global matrix of unevenly developed regions, cities and localities, where economic and political regulations at the national level becomes increasingly questionable.

The fundamental principle of political attachment in capitalist societies has been through national and nationalist identities, through citizenship of the nation state. This allegiance is now being increasingly undermined by corporate communications networks which have produced a global space of electronic information flows. What new technologies make possible is a new kind of relationship between place and space: through their capacity to transgress frontiers and subvert territories, they are implicated in a complex interplay of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The very idea of boundaries -- the frontier boundary of the nation state or the

physical boundaries of urban structures -- has been rendered problematic.

Proliferating information flows and mass human migration have progressively provoked confrontations between different cultures and identities. Anthony Giddens argues that the effect of these dynamics has been to, "...disengage some basic forms of trust relation from the attitudes of local contexts." (61) In pre-modern times he maintains, this sense of trust and security was rooted in kinship systems, in local community, in religious beliefs, and in the continuity of tradition. Eric R. Wolf believes that where it was once the case that cultures were demarcated and differentiated in time and space, now, "...the concept of a fixed, unitary, and bounded culture must give way to a sense of the fluidity and permeability of cultural sets." (62) Through the intermixture and hybridization of cultures, older certainties and foundations of identity are continuously being undermined. Michael Rustin argues, that there is an increasingly felt need for, "...some expressive relationship to the past," and for attachment to particular territorial locations as, "...nodes of association and continuity, bounding cultures and communities." (63) The notion of continuity which is central to our understanding of identity is also disrupted. Places are no longer the clear supporters of our identities. The "community" is transformed: living physically near to others is no longer necessarily tied into mutually

74

dependent communication systems; conversely, living far from others is no longer, necessarily, communicationally distant.

In No Sense of Place, Joshua Meyrowitz examines the impact of electronic media on social behaviour in transforming the "situational geography of human life." Meyrowitz expresses concern over the way in which electronic media have undermined the traditional relationship between physical setting and social situation, to the extent that we, "...no longer 'in' places in quite the same way." (64) As these technologies, "make us...audiences to performances that happen in other places and give us access to audiences that are not physically present." (65) Meyrowitz's central argument is that electronic media redefine notions of social position and place, divorcing experience from physical location. In this way, these technologies, according to Meyrowitz, create new communities across their spaces of transmission, bringing together otherwise disparate groups around the common experiences of media, in a process of cultural, "...homogenization of here and there." (66)

It is in this sense that he argues, that electronic media are destroying our sense of locality, and relativize our sense of place -- so that locality is no longer necessarily seen as the centre stage of life's dramas. (67) That centre stage is being taken by national and international information networks and communication technologies, bringing us news from elsewhere

about non-local people and their simultaneous experiences --
thus undermining any sense of the primacy of locality as a
unifying rhetorical space of daily existence. The point is that
access to non-local people is nowadays often faster and
simpler than access to people in our physical neighbourhoods.
The community is thus liberated from spatial locality and
many intimate ties are supported by technologies like the
telephone rather than by face-to-face interaction. Therefore,
Meyrowitz argues, it would seem that we should no longer
conceive of community so much in terms of a local clustering
of relationships but in terms of types of social relationship,
whether local or distant -- a 'psychological neighborhood' or a
'personal community' as a network of often non-local ties.
According to Meyrowitz:

> The separation of people into different situations
> (or different sets of situations) fostered different
> world views, allowed for sharp distinctions
> between people's "frontstage" and "backstage"
> behaviours...Such distinctions in situations were
> supported by the diffusion of literacy and printed
> materials, which tended to divide people into very
> different information worlds based on different
> levels of reading skill and on training and interest
> in different "literatures." The isolation of different
> people in different places also supported this
> distinction. This led to different social identities
> based on the specific and limited experiences
> available in given locations. By bringing many
> different types of people to the same "place,"
> electronic media have fostered a blurring of many
> formerly distinct social roles. Electronic media
> affect us, then, not primarily through their content,

> but by changing the "situational geography" of social life. (68)

As we enter the era of narrowcasting and audience segmentation it may well be that less of us will have less broadcast "experience" in common with anyone else -- and any way video technology allows us both to time-shift broadcast materials so as to consume them at times that fit our 'private' schedules, and to consume non-broadcast materials -- so the model of a "necessary simultaneity" of shared social experience, provided by broadcasting, becomes problematic. However, at the same, new developments in broadcasting begin to combine us into not just national but international collectives, especially as the supply of programmes to national broadcasting systems is increasingly dominated by a small number of transnational corporations.

The globalization of trade and cultural flows made possible by information technology reopens the old cultural wounds, rupturing the skin of identity at unexpected places. The volume and velocity of cultural products in circulation keeps rising. Commercial music, cinema, and television, the raw materials of pop culture, are sold in global markets in accordance with transnational financing and marketing plans. Suddenly cultural identity is in a state of flux and differences are no longer tied to the experience of the particularities of place. Locality, ethnicity, and nation are determined not by being rooted in a

particular place but by being plugged into a particular circuit. Forms of difference are rapidly dissolving and reorganizing along other axes. This new experience of difference is an experience of an active trajectory between places, identities, and social formations, rather than the drawing of borders -- psychological or physical.

Kevin Robins argues that, "Where the modernist imagination was centred around questions of time and duration, postmodernism is preoccupied with space and spatiality." (69) If there is a qualitative change in the social relations of culture that deserves the title of postmodern, perhaps this is it. The salient point in this transition is the development of telecommunications and telegraph technology. What is distinctive about the telegraph is that it begins a regime of communication where information travels faster than people or things. This situation alters the relationship between movement and space: from a space of places, we move to a space of flows.

These considerations highlight spatial processes and structures, but also the subjective side of space, orientation within space, and experience of space. According to Jameson, "What is wanted is...a new relationship between a global culture style and the specificity and demands of a concrete local or national situation." (70) How do we reconcile ourselves within the new global cultural space? How do we

reconcile our cognitive existence in hyperspace, in the virtual space of electronic networks, with our bodily existence in localized space? Can we reposition ourselves in local space without falling into nostalgic sentiments of a community rooted in kinship systems and based on tradition? What new forms of bonding are possible and appropriate? What can community be made to mean in a postmodern society?

Most contemporary discussions of postmodernism are concerned with the disorientating experience of global spaces, and the impact of global image spaces. What Richard Kearney calls a "civilization of the image" where, "...reality has become a pale reflection of the image...The real and the imaginary have become almost impossible to distinguish." (71) With, "...the omnipresence of self-destructing images which simulate each other in a limitless interplay of mirrors." (72) Kearney argues that, "The psychic world is as colonized as the physical world by the whole image industry." (73)

If this globalization of image flows and spaces is transforming spatiality and our sense of space, it is also, through its impact on the electronic arts and architecture, transforming the nature of place. Art and architecture are constructed and reconstructed out of the transformation of nature by socialized labour. In the collective struggle to wrench freedom from necessity, organized human labour creates a more hospitable terrain which becomes a new

necessity -- a new sphere of alienated experience. Thus, postmodern Los Angeles is, according to Mike Davis, "...a city where architecture and electronic image have fused into a single hyperspace." (74) When Los Angeles, according to Davis (1991), sells itself as a destination for footloose global capital, it sells not only as a sound business investment but a prestigious storehouse of cultural capital. The art gallery is an investment in attracting attention in the global space of flows. Therefore, it is art's proximity to the emergent vectoral relations that makes it interesting, not its relative detachment. Cultural power is unevenly distributed, like economic power, it now has many centres many flows and currents which are not subordinated to Hollywood.

John Portman's Bonaventure Hotel, located in Los Angeles, has been taken up as a symbol of the postmodernization of the urban form. Fredric Jameson argues that, "...the glass skin achieves a peculiar and placeless disassociation of the Bonaventure from its neighborhood...when you seek to look at the hotel's outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it." (75) Mike Davis suggests that, "...the distorting and fragmentary reflection of one enormous exterior glass surface to the other can be taken as paradigmatic of the central role of process and reproduction in postmodern culture." (76) Jameson refers to the, "...existential bewilderment in this new postmodern space,...[a] culture in which one cannot position oneself." (77)

This new decentred and global world of images, surfaces, simulacra, creates new experiences of space. A style that looks forward at the same time as it looks back, making use of classical and ornamental motifs within an overall conception that is avowedly populist in tone; a kind of rococo-retro that, "...without principle but with gusto cannibalizes all the architectural styles of the past and combines them in overstimulating ensembles." (78) For Jameson, this particular imperative lies in the forefront of the transformations postmodernism might be seen to effect: a "shock of the new," with the emphasis less on the new and more on the shock; a kind of electronic overload or excess that mixes up familiar elements into something pleasurable and disorientating.

Just as these key postmodern features -- a promiscuous pastiching of styles, the "de-centring" effect (in the viewer) of such a turn-around of images, a collapsing of the distinctions between "high" and "low" culture, a stress on surface rather than depth -- might be said to increasingly mark the direction of the fields of architecture and design, so might they be seen to configure salient aspects of the media arts and the creative application new technologies. This "postmodern aesthetic" can be seen in the electronic constructions of contemporary media artists like Sandra Vida and Fitsum B. Wegayehum.

In Autonomous Eye (1992), a collaborative videotape, between Irish artist Pauline Cummins and Calgarian Sandra Vida, the two middle-aged women are standing completely nude with a video camera in front of a full-length mirror. The single channel tape consists of a series of close-up and medium shots of the artists' aging bodies juxtapositioned with the slick and shiny surfaces of the high-end video production equipment which often shares the same frame. The tape employs the paradox which exists between reality and the unreal media images of women perpetuated by the advertising, fashion and cosmetic industries. In this instance, however, the artists take control of the means of representation to reveal an identity which exists outside of the constructed mass media view of "woman-as-object," or "woman-as-consumer" -- the fetishized body which for most women is a confining cage.

The various reflections, and the fragmented, un-fetishized bodies, achieve a disorientating disassociating effect. The work confronts the viewer with frames within frames, mirrored images within images, inviting the viewer to participate by looking again, by reconsidering "points-of-view," by re-examining the limitations of existing frames.

Carcass Juicer (1994), by Toronto-based black artist Fitsum B. Wegayehu, is an intense, fast-paced, narrative that has the feel of a video arcade game. The main character is watching TV when an acquaintance interrupts the broadcast

and threatens him. The main character then gets his gun, goes looking for his enemy and kills him. The action is primarily shot in close-ups and extreme close-ups. The shots consists of low-resolution black and white images, sometimes reshot from a monitor which enhances the scan lines and crudeness of the image resolution, then edited with overlaid texts and graphics. The audio is loud and aggressive consisting of industrial sounds, street slang and swearing. The harshness of the tape is enhanced by the *mise en scéne*, production techniques and use of low-end consumer production equipment. The experience of watching this tape is unsettling and somewhat disorientating because of its aggressive, fast-paced and layered style.

This disorientating aesthetic can also be seen in the writings of Jean Baudrillard. In the society of the image, Baudrillard argues, the individual is, "...now only a pure screen, a switching centre for all the networks of influence." (79) With the television image, "...our own body and the whole surrounding universe become a control screen." (80) Baudrillard contends that:

> ...the simple presence of the television changes the rest of the habitat into a kind of archaic envelop, a vestige of human relations whose very survival remains perplexing...as soon as behaviour is crystallized on certain screens and operational terminals, what's left appears only as a large useless body, deserted and condemned. (81)

A world of, "...absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things..." (82)

Mediated by the television monitor differences between subject positions blur, resulting in fusion and confusion. Deprived of objective limits, architectural elements begin to drift, floating in an electronic ether devoid of spatial dimensions yet inscribed with a single temporality of instantaneous diffusion. From this moment on, no one can be considered as separated by physical obstacles or by significant "time distances." With the interfacade of monitors and control screens, "elsewhere" begins her and vice versa. Paul Virilio writes, "...constructed space now occurs within an electronic topology, where the framing..." of the point of view and the scan lines of digital images give new form of urban planning. Replacing the old distinctions between public and private, habitation and circulation is what Virilio explains as an overexposure "...in which the gap between 'micro' and 'macro' disappear through electronic microscope scanning." (83) The cathode-ray screen has become the city square -- the crossroads of all media.

Manuel Castells sees this postmodern hyperspace as the cultural echo of that logic of transnational networks and communications flows which characterizes the globalization and cybernation of accumulation. However, while Castells sees the consequence of this as, "...the destruction of human

experience, therefore of communication, and therefore of society," (84) Baudrillard celebrates, "...a state of fascination and vertigo linked to this obscene delirium of communication." (85) He is seduced by the new communications networks, by the information and image flows, and by the decentred and disorientated identities associated with them. This new space of image flows is shaped and controlled by transnational capital: it is the space of Matsushita, IBM, Murdoch, Disney, Black, and Sony. It is their evolving network marketplace of commodity flows and advertising spectacle that generates Baudrillard's "ecstasy of communication." It is their screens and networks and simulations and cybernetic systems that produce his cybernetic awe and sense of the technological sublime.

Postmodern culture in Baudrillard's sense does, of course, engage with important developments in the late twentieth century. It is articulating something that is going on:

> If the subject is lost in it, and if in social life
> the psychic subject has been decentred by late
> capitalism, then this art faithfully and
> authentically registers it. (86)

As Richard Kearney argues:

> It is not sufficient to merely know that the
> technological colonization of images is a symptom
> of a globally computer network of 'third stage'
> multinational capital. (87)

Knowing this, where are we to find a place of critical distance where we may begin to imagine alternative projects of social existence capable of counteracting the paralysis which the 'technological sublime' induces in us? On this point McKenzie Wark maintains that:

> ...the displacement of hope on to an emergent terrain of third nature is the key...for it is also a terrain upon which new metaphors and methods of rethinking the problematic interaction of nature and second nature are formed. Now nature itself is rethought in terms of the tools of third nature. The use of simulation models to create scenarios of global warming are a striking example, and the most obvious one where third nature comes to have social and political effects. (88)

What is significant about this kind of postmodernist culture and theory is its preoccupation with mediation: image, simulation, network, screen, simulation, spectacle. Francois Brune has argued that contemporary media has brought about a kind of devalourization of reality, a "dispossession of the real," which serves to disorient ate viewers and to inhibit their access to political consciousness. What they do is, "...make us purely spectators, that is to say powerless...In the face of what is presented as the order of things, we can only listen, watch and keep silent." (89) While Marike Finely suggests that postmodernism is, "...a psychotic defense against the loss of referential identity." (90) From either perspective,

however, technological mediation is associated with estrangement from the real.

In philosophical terms, this "psychotic" derealization is an ultimate consequence of the logic of science and administrative rationality -- what James Beniger (1986) calls the "Control Revolution" -- the totalizing ambitions of abstract and formal reason. In more social terms, it is what Craig Calhoun calls a "culturally generalized psychosis" appropriate to a rationalized, bureaucratic, and technocratic society of indirect relationships and large-scale system integration, now on a global scale; a society in which space-transcending information and communication technologies allow:

> ...the creation of organizations sufficiently complex and 'impersonal' that they are readily reified...[and conceived] not as products of human action but as autonomous systems. (91)

Rationalization in both its bureaucratic and "psychotic" forms is characterized by what Michael Rustin calls "abstract universalism," with its, "...denial of the particular location of human lives in place and time..." (92) its placeless and non-referential sense of identity. Rustin argues that cultural and political intervention beyond modernism needs to take account of social texture, density, and difference. In this sense, a postmodern theory would counter against the abstract

universalism of modernity, "...a new particularism...[a] recognition that collective identities are formed through the common occupancy of space, and are constituted in relations of particularist kinds." (93) In this sense, Kevin Robins suggests that, "...postmodernism is about the (post-Enlightenment) reclamation, or reimagination, of a sense of referential identity, the revaluation of concrete and particular experience." (94) And it is about the elaboration of a new form of collective subjectivity, what Jameson refers to as, "...decentred but not schizophrenic." (95). What McKenzie Wark interprets:

> ...as formed within two sets of exterior relations, both external to the individual subjects and their 'consciousness', both equally real. Those two relationships are the map and the territory upon which people locate themselves and form their sense of place...The territory is a set of social relations...the map is composed of broadcast areas, satellite footprints, telephone networks, and the signs and images which accumulate through interaction in the abstract, placeless space. (96)

Where the territory generates conflicts and identities which are rooted in particular place, the map generates quite different forms of interaction, one not rooted, but tuned to an abstract space mapped over the territory. In the territory, people know who they are because they have roots there. On the map, people know who they are by tuning in. "They no longer have roots, they have aerials (Wark,1990)."

Michael Storper argues that under the conditions of postmodernity the local cannot be severed from the global, simply to, "...identify the local with the politically reactionary is to miss the essential revolution in the relationship of the local and the global in this fin de siècle." (97) But solidarity and collectivity must also have aspirations directed beyond the locality. In terms of the global image space, Richard Kearney calls for a practice of imagination capable of responding to the postmodern call of the other reaching towards us from the mediatized gaze:

> On the far side of the self-reflecting looking glass, beyond the play of masks and mirrors, there are human beings who suffer and struggle, live and die, hope and despair. Even in those televisual images which transmit events from the furthest corners of our globe, we are being addressed, potentially at least, by living others...Are not those of us who witness such images...obliged to respond not just to surface reflections on a screen but to the call of human beings they communicate? (98)

What does this mean for identities and notions of community? It is clear that socio-spatial transformations in the late twentieth century call for new orientations and new forms of bonding. The most obvious response to these new conditions has, of course, been the implementation and expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the attempt to build a North American "common market." The attempt to cope with simultaneous fragmentation

89

and globalization here produces a political compromise whereby national cultures are subsumed and preserved in a spurious, administrative-bureaucratic internationalism. NAFTA is defined against the European and Pacific threats -- a kind of supra-nationalism.

But what, then, are the conditions and requirements for genuinely reimagined communities? As Raymond Williams argues in <u>Towards 2000</u>, we must explore new forms of variable societies and variable identities. Postmodern culture must be elaborated out of differential and plural identities, rather than collapsing into some false cohesion and unity. It must be about positions and positioning in local and global space: about contexts of bodily existence and about existence in mediated space. At one level, it is about bounded and localized spatial arenas which bring individuals into direct social contact, about revaluing public spaces and recreating a civic culture. As Craig Calhoun argues, "...however desirable decentralized communities might be, they are at most complements to system integration and not alternatives to it." (99) It is necessary to improve the way large-scale systems work, and this means learning how to use the mass media and the new information technologies to create "a new forum for public discourse."

Meaghan Morris (1993) , in her critique of David Harvey, argues that one broad social consequence of what Harvey calls time-space compression is not the "fragmenting" of a European sense of history, but rather a proliferation of heterogeneous temporalities between and in terms of a global struggle over history. The world is not European. European events and experiences are not indicative of global tendencies, although they do have global effects. It is critical to begin to understands that historically European discourses that deployed, as universals, certain power-saturated and generative oppositions like "modernity" and "tradition" are actually limited -- or "place-based," even parochial -- in their descriptive, let alone their predictive, value: they help to produce, from a particular position, the phenomenon they claim to describe.

In this respect, it is interesting to observe how the social face of Canada has changed since the Second World War, an increasing number of the immigrants come from non-English speaking backgrounds. These people do not share the historical experiences, cultural identity or political aspirations of western European traditions. According to Meaghan Morris:

> Any political 'future' which is not open to radical
> change by those whom the historic values
> of...nationalism may hold no obvious appeal is a
> future which already has no future. (100)

The electronic media are destined to play an significant part in the development of a New World Order, "...[reflecting] the dreams and the aspirations of the politicians and the bureaucrats for these industries which produce the dreams and desires of us all." (101) Emerging transformations in the space of accumulation and in the spatial disposition of cultural forms, create some new possibilities for reimagined solidarity's. The recent growth in decentralized film and television programme-making, byway of co-production activity, opens up the possibility of local media spaces. It is possible to envisage, as Torsten Hägerstrand suggests, "...an amplification of the internal flows of communication in regions and localities...," that might, "...establish platforms for public debate and distinctive cultural expression." (102) Public discourse, grounded in a spatial framework, could be elaborated in a local public sphere. In this context, audiovisual culture can be seen as part of a broader strategy for local development through the stimulation of cultural innovation, identity, and difference (Frith,1991).

The key issue, according to Kevin Robins (1989), is whether such affiliations will necessarily be conservative, parochial and introspective, or whether it is possible to reimagine local communities in cosmopolitan terms. Whether differences are disavowed and repressed, or whether they can be accepted -- and accepted, moreover, in their difference. As Derek Gregory argues, acceptance of ethnic (and also gendered) differences

92

must be in the spirit of, "...comprehending the 'otherness' of other cultures," and of reevaluating the specificity's of places and of people. "There are," Gregory emphasizes, "few tasks more urgent in a multi-cultural society and an interdependent world." (103)

New conditions of mobility make local attachment, not a manner of ascribed and determined identity, but increasingly a question of choice, decision and variability. Local cultures are, moreover, permeated and suffused by external influences. As Kenneth Frampton (1983) argues, local cultures can only be constituted now as locally inflected manifestations of global culture. What is called for, in his view, is a strategy of Critical Regionalism, "...to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place." (104) A critical regional or local culture must necessarily be in dialogue with global culture.

Just as these conditions of identity increasingly mark the direction of the social sciences, so might they be seen as very influential in culture and the media arts. For example, in a recently exhibited CD-ROM installation entitled Undiscovery (1994), by Calgary media artists Vern Hume and Don Stein, the artists explore the discovery and subsequent colonization of Banff, Alberta, and the surrounding national park area, in the context of changing perceptions of space, movement and

identity brought about by advances in digital technology and the increasing tendencies toward globalization. With Undiscovery, Hume and Stein raise questions about the interrelation of spaces of accumulation, arenas of consumption and cultural identity. Rather than a drawing of borders, this new experience involves an active trajectory between places, social formations, and identities

Undiscovery embodies a peculiarly twentieth century preoccupation with art and revolution playing themselves out in a realm of amusements and commodities. Constructed like an interactive video arcade game, the software invites "cyber-explorers" to navigate their own way through a multimedia database -- a virtual geography of cultural and historical hypertexts. The database utilizes archival photographs, promotional films, video clips, original poetry, printed texts and a pastiche of sounds to build digitized mediascapes of the Banff area against the backdrop of localism, migration and colonization. The information hierarchy of the CD-ROM is intentionally shallow to allow for easy access by multiple untrained users over a short period of time. The associative links, in and between the video, audio and print texts, form pathways through the data which allow for various, unique interpretations of the archival material uncovered.

This electronic kiosk prompts the user by first offering five buttons correlated to five thematic regions of the

database: explorers and conquerors (colonization); the garden (wildlife); tourist's gaze (tourism); machine in the garden (industrialization); and constructing histories (artifacts and museums). By navigating the digitized information, electronic mariners are given the impression that they are organizing a personal version of the data, a unique identity. Although the user is offered choices, the fact is that no real choices exist, they are discovering what is already there.

The artists' use of consumer electronics complicates both the aesthetics and politics of the CD-ROM by implicating the artist as consumer, and the consumer as artist. The counter-cultural notion embodied in the modernist view that life is a work of art is thus accorded wider currency. With this expansion of the role of art, and with the resulting disintegration of artistic cliques, a blurring of genres occurs which reveals a tendency towards the deconstruction of symbolic hierarchies. This aestheticization of reality foregrounds the importance of style, which is also encouraged by capitalism's market dynamic, with its constant search for new fashions, fads, sensations and experiences. Therefore, within consumer ideology there is the tendency to push culture towards the centre of social life, albeit a fragmented and continually reprocessed culture.

This fragmented condition, like the incorporation of various texts in <u>Undiscovery</u> reflects a pluralist stance towards the

notion of taste, a stylistic promiscuity, and a mixing of codes which undermines the basis of the high/low cultural split. Generally, databases stress the leveling of symbolic hierarchies and a general impulse towards cultural declassification. It could be argued that these circumstances represent a movement beyond individualism, to the "new aesthetic paradigm" that Marshall McLuhan prophesied. Digital technology, with its ability to access and animate, augment and amalgamate any number of individual components from our vast cultural storehouse of images, is instrumental in articulating this postmodern reflection on contemporary art production.

While looking through the lens of locale, in this instance the town of Banff, it becomes possible for the artists to address crucial questions concerning the relationship between political and cultural aspects of these transformations. Hume and Stein negotiate between tradition, institutionalized aesthetic discourses, and organic emergent forms of social communication.

For Hume and Stein identities are centred around what David Harvey (1987) called the creation of an image through the recuperation of "history" and of "community" in a local context. As the installation points out, one key issue concerns the power of mass media technologies to involve people in a common sense of identity, and its capacity to work as an

inclusive symbol which provides integration and meaning as it constructs and conscripts public images and interpretations of the past.

Cultural identities at the end of the twentieth century are about internationalism in a direct sense, about our positions in transnational and transcultural spaces. What is at issue, then, is the question of communication technologies and community. The media industries have been assigned a leading role in the culture of countries: they are supposed to articulate the "deep solidarity" of a collective consciousness and common culture; and, at the same time, they are asked to reflect the rich variety and diversity of nations and regions. The discourses of "art," "culture," "quality," and "national identity" have been mobilized against the outside threat (Hollywood) and used to justify various nationally specific economic systems of support and protection for indigenous audiovisual production activities.

In terms of the construction of collective identities an interesting perspective is provided by modernist thinker Philip Schlesinger. He has argues that in communication research we now need to turn the terms of conventional assessment around, that is:

> ...not to start with communication and its supposed effects on national identity and culture, but rather to begin by posing the problem of national identity

itself, to ask how it might be analyzed and what importance communications practices might have in its construction. (105)

As James Donald has argued, we should focus on the apparatus of discourse, technologies and institutions which produce what is recognized as "national culture." The nation he explains,

> ...is an effect of these cultural technologies, not their origin. A nation does not express itself through its culture: it is cultural apparatus that produces the 'nation'. What is produced is not an identity or a single consciousness -- nor necessarily a representation at all -- but hierarchically organized values, dispositions, and differences. This cultural and social heterogeneity is given a certain fixity by the articulating principle of 'the nation'. 'The nation' defines the culture's unity by differentiating it from other cultures, by marking its boundaries; a fictional unity...because the 'us' on the inside is itself always differentiated. (106)

Donald argues for reconceptualizing the production of the national culture in terms of the effect of cultural technologies. This is not an abstract process:

> 'Literature', 'nation', 'people'...are never...purely conceptual. They exist only as they are instituted through education, publishing, the press, the media, the Arts Council and other such institutions. (107)

Therefore, according to Donald, difference is constitutive of identity. While Schlesinger argues that identity is as much about exclusion as about inclusion and that the,

> ...critical factor for defining the ethnic group
> therefore becomes the social boundary which defines
> the group with respect to other groups...not the
> cultural reality within its borders." (108)

Schlesinger's argument is that collective identity is based on the (selective) processes of memory, so that a given group recognizes itself through its recollection and articulation of a common past. Thus he argues, we can develop a dynamic view of identity -- focusing on the ability of social and ethnic groups to continually recompose and redefine their boundaries. From this perspective, national identity is a specific form of collective identity:

> All identities constituted within a system of
> social relations and require the reciprocal
> recognition of others. Identity...is not to be
> considered a 'thing' but rather a 'system of
> relations and representations'...the maintenance of
> an agent's identity is...a continual process of
> recomposition rather than a given one, in which the
> two constitutive dimensions of self-identification
> and affirmation of difference are continually
> locked...identity is seen as a dynamic emergent
> aspect of collective action. (109)

It is a matter of the relative power of different groups to define their own identities, and of the ability to mobilize

these definitions through their control of cultural institutions. Here we enter the terrain of what is referred to as the invention of tradition.

Tradition is not a matter of a fixed and given set of beliefs or practices which are handed down or accepted passively. Rather, as Patrick Wright (1985) has argued, tradition is very much a matter of present day politics and of the way in which powerful institutions function to select particular values from the past and to mobilize them in contemporary practices. Through such mechanisms of cultural reproduction, a particular version of the collective memory and thus a particular sense of national and cultural identity, is produced.

It is a question of recognizing the role of the stories we tell ourselves about our past in constructing our identities in the present (Kisil,1991). One key aspect of this narrative function concerns the power of the media arts to involve people in a common sense of history and its capacity to work as an inclusive symbol which provides social integration and meaning as it constructs and conscripts public images and interpretations of the past, "...to re-enchant a disenchanted everyday life." (110) Whether in the form of a mirror world simulation, an intense virtual reality experience, a cyberspace of interactivity, the limits of physical space are solvable on yet another level. These technologies provide the consumers with a space of identification; not just an evocation of a

common memory, but the experience of encounter and solidarity. The displacement of identity on to this emergent terrain of image and information flows is the territory upon which new metaphors and methods for rethinking the interaction between physical space and social organization is being forged.

Chapter 4

Cyber Spheres:

Technologies of Abundance

Capitalism perpetually strives...to create a social
and physical landscape in its own image and
requisite to its own needs at a particular point in
time, only just as certainly to undermine, disrupt
and even destroy that landscape at a latter point in
time. The inner contradictions of capitalism are
expressed through the restless formation and
reformation of geographical landscapes. (111)

Unless artists are in direct contact with research labs,
their access to technology is through the commodities of
consumer capitalism, and their product, as a product of those
tools, fall within the context of that system. Technological
innovation provided the opportunity for art to extend into the
domain of industry, separating off from its traditional ritual
(or "cult") value a new and distinct market (or "exhibition")
value. According to Walter Benjamin this transformation also
strips art of its "aura" (or authenticity) -- its attachment to
tradition. Technologies have been brought to the market place
amid a complex rhetoric that prescribes to them scientific
virtues such as speed, precision, and labour saving potential;
while at the same time, calling upon utopian ideals of
democracy and leisure. Artists, as members of consumer
culture, are immersed in and subject to these same systems of
persuasion.

Artists are also influenced by the liberating and democratizing rhetorics surrounding the introduction of consumer technologies. They hear, like everyone else, that video puts the power of television in the hands of the people; that VR is the manifestation of your wildest dreams; or that one must reach out and touch someone. One of the classic techno-utopian myths of the computer is that access to information will be liberating, and its results will be, by definition, democratizing. However, the reality of this technology is that it further facilitates the centralizing of corporate and government power.

When the portable video camera became available in the 70s, there was a great deal of excitement among artists and social activists: the tools of production were finally in the hands of people who could make non-commercial community-based programming. But two problems immediately arose. First, while production tools were available, the technologies of processing and distribution remained inaccessible. Terms like "broadcast quality" were used by the industry to keep the "amateurs" out. Secondly, radical video practice was nearly impossible, because those who attempted it had already absorbed the codes of commercial media production on TV and in the cinema. So, although the means of production were in new hands, the codes of production and reading were already instilled in peoples consciousness. It was apparent that independent video producers could not engage with technology

103

without simultaneously engaging with consumer ideology and capitalist economics.

There are four features of capitalism that are important contexts for the rise of the new information technologies. They are, according to Kevin Robins and Frank Webster (1985), the extension of corporate capital throughout and between societies; the growth of the state and its increased involvement in social and economic activities; the post-war boom, leading to the era of consumer capitalism; and then the recession, that led to a search for escape by means of the "free market." Underlying these trends is the spread of what James Beniger (1986) calls the "Control Revolution," that is, the rationalization of social control. This spread of calculated, methodical, and deliberate ways of conducting social affairs has been largely undertaken by capitalism seeking out how best to further its own interests, and by the interventionist state that supports it. This situation has meant that different aspects of contemporary life have become more consciously and systematically regulated, more distinctly managed than in the past in order to predict and take advantage of people's motives, desires and needs.

Perhaps most pervasive of all rationalization is the increasing tendency to regulate interpersonal relationships in terms of a formal set of impersonal, quantifiable, and objective criteria, changes that greatly facilitate control both

by government and business. By market strategy and state plan, the management of human life has qualitatively and quantitatively extended far beyond military organization where it began and is most refined. The creative application of information technologies, the generating, analysis and dissemination of cultural information requires situating within these development since they are responsive to it as well as essential to the perpetuation of control.

Taylorism was a decisive stage in the mechanization of humans activities with its corollaries of work-fragmentation, specialization, precise measurement of labour, and insistence on the separation of the mental and physical, with knowledge and planning becoming the prerogative of "scientific management." Its founder, F. W. Taylor, treated the organic body like a machine. By observing, photographing, and through experimentation, he broke down the physical gestures of workers to find which were the most efficient in time and labour power. These models became the standard for all workers and they were installed by coercion or habit. To do this argues Bernard Dory, it was,

> ...necessary to objectify the human subject, to
> reduce its complexity and to regard it not as
> something which speaks to another subjectivity,
> but as a concrete and desubjectivizing
> manifestation of laws revealed by natural
> abstractions. (112)

Les Levidow and Kevin Robins argue that:

> The consequence is an alienating condition,
> 'Taylorist man', is characterized by a '...divorce
> between that part of his body which has been
> instrumentalized and calibrated and the remainder
> of his living personality'. (113)

With the development of Fordism, that mind/body split was further structured by the assembly line, a continuos-flow production system. In effect, Peter Wollen writes, "...Fordism turned the factory into a kind of super-machine in its own right, with both human and mechanical parts." (114) At the same time Sloanism, applied the principles of Taylorism to the customer with its refinement of techniques for selling and advertising and the penetration of capital into the domestic sphere. According to James R. Beniger, these strategies, which co-ordinate manufacturing, distribution and marketing represented the systematization of relations throughout society.

In The Control Revolution Beniger writes that the industrialization associated with the Industrial Revolution precipitated, "...a crisis of control, a period in which innovations in information-processing and communication technologies lagged behind those of energy and its application to manufacturing and transportation." (115) As economic and political control was lost at the local level, this crisis called

106

up new forms of communication "to control an economy shifting from local segmented markets to higher levels of organization -- what might be seen as the growing 'systemness' of society." (116)

The Control Revolution is a complex of rapid changes in the technological and economic arrangements by which information is collected, stored, processed, and communicated and through which formal or programmed decisions can effect societal control. From its origins in the late nineteenth century the Control Revolution has closely followed the Industrial Revolution because of capitalist market economics. National economies constitute concrete open processing systems engaged in the continuous extraction, reorganization, and distribution of environmental inputs to final consumption. The need for greater system control increased correspondingly to the development of the modest bureaucratic structures required to monitor the production, distribution and consumption of consumer goods. Society becomes a cybernetic machine, a programmed and programmable processing system. Beniger argues:

> Because both the activities of information
> processing and communication are inseparable
> components of the control function, a society's
> ability to maintain control... [is] directly
> proportional to the development of its information
> technologies. (117)

The science of cybernetics has colonized both physical and psychic space. John Broughton has written:

> The systems approach simultaneously dismantles
> self and culture, assisting precisely that collapse
> into biology on the one hand and bureaucracy and
> technology on the other that is so desirable from
> the point of view of authority...The stress on
> functional organization has a doubly homogenizing
> effect: Both psychological and cultural specificity
> are occluded. (118)

Authority operates by becoming internalized -- not only in technological systems, but also in the self-discipline of each human entrusted with operating them. The mechanization of self is intensified through an ontology which assigns a common basis to biology and cybernetics. As the mind is conceived of as a computer program, as something estranged, modeled on mechanical virtues, so the remainder of human subjectivity become further amenable to discipline.

In the nineteenth-century development of public art galleries, museums, and concert halls, we can see the formation of a new social orientation to culture, one in which specific forms and arrangements of culture are harnessed to governmental programs aimed at the transformation of popular thought, feeling, and behaviour. The desired effect is the result of the way in which specific forms of culture are instrumentalized -- fashioned into useful vehicles for governing -- rather than from their intrinsic properties. This

inscription of culture into government programs supplies the conditions for, and is assisted by, the development of essentializing aesthetic discourses.

The state's part in this social/economic equation is complex and ambiguous because it responds to, functions for, and was developed by numerous, often contentious, forces. Originating and operating in an unequal society, government has never acted in the interest of fairness. It has consistently favoured the more powerful because an overriding aim of the state is to achieve and maintain order and stability. Therefore, most state activity can be regarded as seeking stability. An important aspect of this situation is that the populace is as informed as the state deems appropriate.

A central feature of the modern state is that it accumulates information about people (social security records, residency, educational performance, criminal records, drivers licenses, etc.), supervises a great deal of everyday life (in school, health and social services), and disseminates large amounts of information to and about the public so that social relations can be better managed. The observation and recording of the citizen's activities and habits so that they might be better managed materially (in housing and transportation for example) and ideologically (the control of information by the state).

Kevin Robins and Frank Webster refuse to endorse the idea that this state surveillance is a neutral activity for two reasons, first because:

>...the state has developed in an unequal society and to this extent the surveillance it practices is influenced by the realities of power; where information is gathered, on whom and in what circumstances, depends very much on whose interests its agencies pursue and who has the greatest influence on these agencies. The second is that...state expansion has paralleled the rise of corporate capitalism which has in turn exercised influence on the state's efforts to regularize life...the state endorses the world view of capital because without a healthy market economy, the state itself is in crisis... (119)

The state's supervision and monitoring of social relations -- which has been an important stimulant for the development of information technologies such as computer networks -- has entailed both an intrusion into the everyday lives of people and a centralization of power. This is the roots of the modern "panopticon" -- a society in which people are seen and observed but are unable to communicate with each other -- the monitoring, processing, plotting to control people so that industry will thrive. What E. P. Thompson explains as, "...a 'managed' society, whose managing director is money and production manager is the police." (120)

Museums, galleries, displays and cultural expositions play a pivotal role in the dissemination of information in the modern state, and are fundamental to its conception as, among other things, a set of educative and civilizing agencies. Since the late nineteenth century, they have proved remarkably influential in the degree to which they have recruited the interest and participation of citizens. According to Tony Bennett:

> Culture is more cogently received...when thought of as a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which the forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation...via the extension through the social body of the forms, techniques, and regimes of aesthetic and intellectual culture. (121)

It is, then, as a set of "cultural technologies" concerned to organize a voluntarily self-regulated citizenry that results in the formation of what Tony Bennett (1988) calls the "exhibition complex." The exhibitionary complex is a response to the problem of social order, but one which worked to transform that problem into one of culture -- "...a question of winning the hearts and minds as well as the disciplining and training of bodies." (122) As such, its constituent institutions reversed the orientations of institutions of confinement -- the asylum, the clinic, and the prison -- in seeking to render the forces and principles of order visible to the populace rather than vice versa.

The peculiarity of the exhibitionary complex is its incorporation of aspects of the panopticon together with those of the panorama. Forming a technology of vision which served not to atomize and disperse the crowd but to regulate it, and to do so by rendering it visible -- by making the crowd itself the ultimate spectacle. The exhibitionary complex is a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged, where the crowd comes to commune with and regulate itself through interiorizing the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling vision of power -- a site of sight accessible to all. In democratizing the eye of power, expositions realized a system of social regulation through self-observation. As Manfredo Tafuri puts it:

> The arcades and department stores of Paris, like the great expositions, were certainly the places in which the crowd, itself become a spectacle, found the spatial and visual means for a self-education from the point of view of capital. (123)

If access to the world of rational recreations were expected to change behaviour and habits, this was because that contact was planned to take place in a technologized environment -- the concert hall or department store -- in which the desired behavioural effect was to result not from contact with 'culture' but from the deployment of objects within a specific field of social and technological relations.

112

The civilizing virtues of the museum rests less on the intrinsic properties of the objects on display than on the manner in which they are displayed. The knowledge acquired as a result of contact within the specialized environments (museums, department stores, theme parks, etc.) is less important then the new habits to which it gives rise -- ideally, a self-activating desire for the pursuit of knowledge that form different habits.

Robins and Webster (1985) believe that since the mid-1970s industry in the Western world has been restructuring with new technologies while market forces have been given increasing free rein. To facilitate this, they argue, it has been necessary for governments, "...to adopt a policy of 'cut and control' whereby public funding in key areas was reduced while being expanded in disciplinary spheres such as the police." (124) Another aspect of this capitalization of the public sector is, according to Nicholas Garnham (1983), a shortages of public funds and the insistence that commercial practices are more efficient. This situation comes as no surprise since according to Robins and Webster:

> ...the purpose of the state's [instrumentalization]...
> is to substitute market organization for public
> services so that corporations can, wherever
> possible, enjoy more avenues for sales. That is so
> that capital can enter where hitherto it has been
> excluded in order to introduce its criteria of
> control. (125)

Under these pressures the information sources of the public sphere (libraries, schools, museums, etc.) have sought out sponsors from private capital and other ways of increasing revenue (i.e., by charging fees). Jody Berland argues that:

> The effects of these changes are evident...in the erosion of social services, medicare, unionized jobs, native communications, funding for women's organizations and services, cultural and education subsidies, public broadcasting, public transport-ation, public hospitals, public control of natural resources, and other services previously conceived as unprofitable rights; in a whole range of measures designed to expand the political and spatial reach and legitimation of corporate interests and initiatives in conjunction with growing impoverishment and disenfranchisement of much of the population. These effects are also visible in the concerns and practices of musicians, journalists, cultural producers, and community activists. (126)

This assault on the public sphere has consolidated social arrangements best understood in terms of the self-monitoring exhibition complex. Adapted to the characteristics of television -- which reverses the direction of vision, permitting those who are being spied upon to see without being seen, and which functions no longer by disciplinary control but by fascination and seduction -- the panopticon becomes the inverted tele-panopticon. Where the individuals regulate themselves through internalizing the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling images of power.

It is increasingly evident that as public sector institutions decline so do the areas that are, however inadequately, accountable and committed to presentation of information about issues in as comprehensive a way as is possible to the whole population. What is replacing them, is corporate capital, increasingly centralized, able to examine and entice the consumer at home while being bolster by a state apparatus that is not as publicly answerable as it might be and which watches over the populace to ensure order so that capital might thrive.

The colonization of the life world by instrumental reason, and the decline of the public sphere mediating private experience and the state, permit the direct unmediated penetration of commodification into individual desire. What happens to the process of legitimation by rational consensus in an age of information capitalism, where the invention, distribution, and application of information replaces the industrial manufacture of goods and the provision of services as the predominant economic social force?

In North America, first with the radio, then with television, broadcasting was designed as an adjunct of corporate capitalism, as a means of further controlling markets by both advertising goods and services and generally extolling the virtues of the market. From the outset then radio and television were developed reliant on corporate capital and as a

means of best serving its interest. To this extent television has to be regarded as a means of extending the reach of capital, as another aspect of its search for control. To educate the populous in the modern ways of living, and to create in consumers the desire for goods and the lifestyle of consumption.

It is significant that all the new technologies for the domestic market are enhancements of the television. Market outlooks are present in their planning, production and sales, and a consequence is the consolidation of the trend towards privatization of life, the retreat into the home, that television has done much to encourage. As this occurs the isolated consumer is further subject to the panopticon of centralized corporate capital which monitors patterns of behaviour and puts out salable information and more of the same technologies.

Capital is mediating more social relations than ever, it intrudes further into our everyday lives in the name of "choice" and "freedom" with subtle advertising and high-tech products for consumers whom it observes, analyses, and schemes about. Behind and in front of this centralized corporate capital is arrayed the disciplinary state, equipped with the latest surveillance technologies, able and willing to contain dissent from those unwilling to accede to capital's controls, or unable through unemployment or poverty to participate in its

technologies of abundance. In this more intensively market driven and individualistic society, public service institutions have little or no place (other then perhaps as charities). Public service institutions, television included, are becoming remnants from a past age unable to withstand capital's intrusion or assaults from government.

Technological progress, the relentless arrival of new and better models, is not necessarily fueled by social need, but, rather, by corporate need for profit. Artists who utilize technologies also simultaneously engage commodity economics. They are induced to continually upgrade, creating both a financial burden and pressure to continually retrain -- to learn new versions of the software. The need to upgrade is not necessarily a product of the artists' aesthetic development and they become trapped in a cycle of unrequited technological consumption.

One of the pitfalls of this fascination is that artists who lack some required skills, get bogged down in technical problems and the less tangible aesthetic and cultural aspects of the work gets lost. Simon Penny argues that:

> ...this technological system may prohibit art
> practice, or at least any sort of art practice that
> takes a critical position. If rapidly increasing
> standards make the computer artist feel forced to
> continually upgrade and retrain, then little time is
> left to do the work of artmaking: the creative

analysis and questioning of the relationship
between these technologies and culture. (127)

Beneath this situation lies the possibility that although the
tools change, the underlying value systems do not. We are
confronted with a paradox where we are challenged to keep up
with changing technology whose philosophical agenda is
stagnant or retrogressive. That this technology, moreover,
reifies a value system that precludes art practice.

In his Bar Code Hotel interactive video installation,
exhibited at the Walter Phillips Gallery, in Banff, Alberta,
from June 17 to July 16, 1994, New York media artist Perry
Hoberman uses cyberspace technology to dissolve the
boundaries between nature and technology. Virtual reality
environments like Hoberman's are reformatting the sensorial
architecture of the human body in powerful, computer-
generated, digitized spaces. This does not mean that nature and
technology are mixed, but rather, that technology becomes
natural and nature becomes technological. In these electronic
worlds users benefit from new interfaces with artificial
intelligence and develop new perceptions of reality.

Guests wishing to check into the Bar Code Hotel enter
through an observation deck at the rear of the gallery. Just
beyond the observation area there is a long bench-like table
covered with product bar code symbols of various sizes. Five

118

evenly spaced, red-tipped laser pencils dangled from the ceiling above the bench. Instead of trying to knock over milk bottles, or break balloons, participants at the Bar Code Hotel generate and manipulate consumer goods by scanning product bar codes. With the stroke of a laser pencil familiar commodities, like sun-glasses, padlocks, and hats, are created and controlled by each player. Different bar codes will trigger modifications in products by expanding, contacting, trembling, jittering or bouncing the object around a projected stereoscopic environment. Various codes affect the motion and the physical interaction of the disparate products, while still others have more general effects like changing the lighting, background, or point of view.

Players can choose to stay in constant contact with commodities by scanning them instructions continuously, or they can decide to intervene only on occasion. Since the bar codes cover much of the surface area of the gallery, players are free to move and interact within the reach of the coiled cable that tethers the pencils to the computerized tracking system. The most significant feature that computers make accessible to artists like Hoberman is the ability to assign behaviours to objects within a hyperlinked environment. There is already a commercial application of this technology -- the World Wide Web -- which assigns behaviours to objects in this way, but which has to date enjoyed very little creative or critical development.

As an interface, the product bar codes connect Hoberman's virtual habitat with the consumer reality of our daily existence. They represent a ideological shift towards consumption as a central social, economic and cultural process. Bar Code Hotel makes connections between communication technology, rapidly growing consumerism, and the avant-garde's historical attempts to collapse art onto real life.

Since the invention of photography, the means of picturing the world has changed from manual skills, like painting, to photographically-based technologies -- still photography, film, and video. It was Walter Benjamin who, in his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," first makes the point that it is this mechanical reproducibility which has completely changed the nature of art, transforming the conditions of its production, distribution, and consumption. Photography was developed as, and remains, primarily a commercial medium of mass communication. Yet it also boasts a well established tradition of artistic use and a growing grey area of cross-over between commercial and artistic activity.

With the help of the mass media technologies, monopoly capitalism has succeeded in homogenizing various cultural discourses, and stifling, through co-option, any emerging resistance to the rule of the commodity. Environmental simplification corresponds to the reduction of human diversity

articulated by mass markets. Social and natural life are simplified to the inorganic for the convenience of market society. The prospect is for us all to be alike, with identical needs and desires, around the world, all touched by the technology of industrialization. Culture has been reduced to a product bar code, standardized, organized, and administered for the purpose of social control. Bill Nichols writes:

> Just as mechanical reproduction revealed the power of industrial capitalism to reorganize and reassemble the world around us, rendering it as commodity art, the automated intelligence of chips reveals the power of post-industrial capitalism to simulate and replace the world around us, rendering not only that exterior realm but also interior ones of consciousness, intelligence, thought and intersubjectivity as commodity experience. (128)

It is ironic that Western art's historical aspirations for ideological autonomy, its uncoupling from church and state, only became possible when it was organized around the principles of a market economy. From its beginnings, therefore, the autonomy of art has been related dialectically to the commodity form. Modernism's distancing of art from reality, the art for art's sake movement, that once freed art from the shackles of church and state, had worked to push art and artists to the margins of society. The historical avant-garde's project became the transformation of art from the

121

isolation of self-criticism into an engaged social critique that would influence and inform social change.

When Pop artists exhibited their commodities in the 1960s, they were not simply presenting reproductions of mass produced reality. Pop art's closeness to the objects of everyday life stimulated debates about the relationship between art and life, image and reality. Pop became synonymous with the youth subculture that rebelled against authority and sought liberation from existing social norms. As the art of a new cultural revolution, pop stood for the emancipation of forbidden desires like rock music, flower power, free love, and the drug scene. Conservative art critics saw it as another example of the decline of Western civilization, but big business embraced these symbols of moral protest as sources of big profits.

Like other modernist art currents (Dada, surrealism, futurism) Pop drew our attention to the images of "real" life, demanding that the separation between high and low art be eliminated, and contributed to a critique that would inform social change. With the Bar Code Hotel, Perry Hoberman suggests that the question of ancestry in culture is not artificial. Investigations like the Bar Code Hotel reveal the foundations of our "modern" belief-systems and help clear the ideological ground for new intellectual constructions that do not dismiss the past. New technologies provide opportunities

for new discoveries in the contexts of previous ages. According to Marshall McLuhan, "...the 'content' of any medium is always another medium." Hoberman exhibits a strong desire to expose the deep structures, assumptions, interests, and relationships that passed unnoticed through the iconographic jumble of the past. His 3-D interactive environment provides us with an opportunity to re-think art, technology, and consumerism.

Formerly unconscious desires are now being articulated in the commodities of consumerism, in the advertisements and the packaging as much in the goods themselves. Psychoanalysis shows us that these desires are not biological, rather they are the consequences of the social and cultural reality that surrounds us. But as Hoberman's installation shows, these same desires may find alternative symbolic forms en *route* to a redistribution of capital in the social economy of art.

Bar Code Hotel is a parallel world of digital information where alter-human agency takes on form -- sights, sounds and presence in a three-dimensional electronic landscape. It is a habitat of and for the imagination, a place where conscious dreams meets subconscious dreaming. And for Perry Hoberman it is also a place where postmodern human identity is being reconstituted in the universal product bar code, as part of consumer ideology, and the evolving mass media technologies.

There is a strong populist stance in <u>Bar Code Hotel</u>, as well as, in the written perceptions of Benjamin, McLuhan and Baudrillard. They all point to the enhanced role of culture in contemporary Western cities, increasingly centres not only of everyday consumption but also of a wider range of symbolic goods and experiences produced by and through the cultural industries (the arts, entertainment, tourism, heritage sectors). Within the postmodern city urban dwellers engage in a complex sign play which resonates within the proliferation of signs in the built environment and urban fabric.

It is primarily the young who most often interface, manipulate and celebrate the artificial randomness and superficiality of the various fictions and strange values which are found in the fashions and popular cultures of the city. This demographic group crosses, re-crosses, and transgresses the boundaries between art and everyday life on a regular basis. Featherstone argues:

> ...subcurrents and subcultures have displayed
> a fascination with the popular, the
> carnivalesque, the wild, the savage, the
> undomesticated, the part which the order-
> establishing drive of civilizing processes has
> sought to contain and exclude both on the
> social and individual levels. The democratic,
> populist impulses, the fascination with 'the
> other', the tolerance of popular pleasures, the
> interest in intense, disconnected affect-
> charge experiences which are associated with

postmodernism, can be located within this tradition. (129)

While Walter Benjamin celebrated the fragmented images of mass culture and the shocks and jolts of the perceptions in everyday city life from a theoretical perspective influenced by Surrealism, Dadaism and montage. McLuhan prophesied about a "new aesthetic paradigm" in which people would come together temporarily in fluid "postmodern tribes." And for Baudrillard, Mike Featherstone writes:

> Consumer culture...is effectively a postmodern culture, a depthless culture in which all values have become transvalued and art has triumphed over reality. (130)

Advertising and the display of goods in the "dream-worlds" of department stores, expositions, shopping malls, art galleries and mass media play upon the logic of the commodity-sign to transgress formerly separate meanings and create unusual juxtapositions which effectively rename goods. Mundane consumer goods become associated with luxury, exotica, beauty and romance with their original "use" increasingly obscured. The triumph of signifying culture leads to a simulated world in which the proliferation of signs and images has effaced the distinction between the real and imaginary where cultural disorder and stylistic eclecticism become common features of spaces in which consumption and leisure constructed as experiences.

125

Leisure, says Guy Debord, the by-product of material abundance, is central to any definition of negationist politics because it threatened the status quo by giving people the opportunity to contemplate the true poverty of their condition. Capitalism responded to this situation by turning leisure into a commodity -- creating "the society of the spectacle." "'The spectacle,' Debord said, was 'capital accumulated until it becomes an image.' A never-ending accumulation of spectacles -- advertisements, entertainment, traffic, skyscrapers, political campaigns, department stores, sports events...made the modern world..." (131) Culture-as-spectacle thus became the ideological foundation rooting the capitalist social formation and holding it in place, a world reproducing and reaffirming its values in one direction -- from the powerful to the powerless.

The convergence of the home computer, television, and telephone lines as the nexus of a new social machinery -- interactive media, on-line multimedia and their hybrids -- promises new cultural territories for consumer capitalism. The new contexts, technological, commercial, and telesocial, require a reconsideration of methodologies of cultural production and conventions of consumption. The new forms of production and consumption will inevitably generate new cultural institutions. With these potential realities in mind it would seem appropriate to anticipate what kind of art we are going to make in these new social spaces, what kind of

audience we will have, and what kind of interaction will occur -- ultimately, to consider what art will become in this context. The era of on-line digital interactivity and virtual communities will evolve a genre that may be unrecognizable in a traditional sense.

One of the cultural artifacts already revealed by the World Wide Web in its current archaic form is the imploding attention span. The constant refrain is to keep image, video, sound and animation files small because if any of these can't be downloaded in a matter of seconds, the visitor surfs away to a more instantly gratifying location. The concept of microscopic perceptions of time and information assessment once again brings an angry response from cultural critics who believe that it signals the final stages of complete cultural decay. But it is just as much a part of a two-stage set of new survival skills that curious young people quickly learn: subversive free access to networks and the ability to skim and sort vast databases to find and create unique sets of information -- personal microcultures, sharing them with others of like minds with whom they may never physically interact in what amounts to a proliferation of virtual cultures.

With the continuing collapse of modernist distinctions, different media cross-over into or evoke each other in an ever changing play of relations that might act as the measure of a new kind of "media art." Similarly, as literary criticism

continues to influence more documentary-based art forms they become more open to different techniques and less tied to linear, traditional conventions. Under these circumstances new tactics of bricolage or deconstruction might come to be adopted by critical artists in making different textual or political points; a way of showing or breaking down received ideas or everyday perspectives of interest to a broad range of spectators.

Attempting to make art with these technologies may require redefinition of precisely what we imagine art to be. According to Mike Featherstone:

> ...we need to inquire into the specific ways in which beliefs, especially those produced by specialists in symbolic production such as priests, intellectuals, and artists, play a central role in holding together everyday life. (132)

The process of adopting new ways of seeing that consequently propose new forms of social organization continues today as cultural workers benefit from new interfaces with artificial intelligence. We might ask in what ways our "sense of reality" is being adjusted to, and by, new means of electronic computation and digital communication? Do these changes introduce new forms of culture into the relations of production at the same time that technology helps to emancipate us from acceptance of social relations and cultural forms as natural,

obvious, or timeless? Have cybernetic systems brought about changes in our perception of the world that hold liberating potential? And might cybernetic tools themselves be used to break open "closed" systems?

Arts funding provides one of the clearest examples available of the cybernetic metaphor, that is, the role of cultural policy in hierarchically ranking cultural forms and their publics. Justification for the hierarchical control of the cybernetic apparatus in the national cultural interest takes on a rhetorical form because it is, in essence, an ideological argument, reflecting the dominant social beliefs and interests which underpin political action. The objective of arts funding policy is cultural survival in global capitalism through government subsidy and top-down prescription of appropriate social practices. This emphasis on the creative dimension offers not only images of what is, but also those of what might be -- alternatives to the status quo.

In Canada, the majority of limited financial resources for the arts go to well-established -- "mainstream" -- western European cultural activities. This practice jeopardizes experimental and unconventional forms of artistic expression, and the interests and influence of non-dominant groups. As a result, women and cultural or racial minorities are excluded from the definition of national cultural identity. According to Joy Cohnstaedt:

> Proponents of a populist cultural policy in Canada argue that it is only through the aggressive application of human rights laws or the radical restructuring of our federal institutions that arts and cultural policies, and their results, will be truly democratic. The systems which prevent people from finding their own expressive forms are to be dismantled. What is sought is justice as equality, not just as uniformity. (133)

In this sense the cultural sphere is seen less as a privatized realm of personal enrichment and more as a place where social reality is organized and rendered intelligible. This populist approach allows for new constituencies, methods, and purposes for art.

Chapter 5

The Possibility Space:

Conclusion

Cultural democracy has a great deal of appeal for individuals and groups who see themselves as involved in the empowering of marginalized communities. It is a term which implies the opportunity for further cultural development and suggests the redistribution of scarce financial resources. The classic liberalist position -- the focus on individual accomplishment as the basis for cultural production rather than on collective expression and aspirations -- subverts community-based art activity because it narrows the concept of artistic pursuits and denies various communities the ability to define the essence of their "culture." As Alan Petersen points out:

> It simply takes as given and unchangeable the
> dominant definitions that equate culture with
> the content of intellectual and artistic life...
> [leaving] unexamined the structures which
> constrain individual opportunity in the first place;
> for example, those based on class, ethnicity, and
> gender. (134)

Contesting the special status of the arts in cultural policy must therefore be one of the key objectives of any democratic reform.

Consumer culture is accompanied by a greater leveling-off of balances of power (between the classes, men, women, parents and children), as the less powerful are able to emulate, within the limits of mass fashion, the consumption practices and styles of the more powerful. Featherstone argues:

> The tendencies towards emulation, equalization and imitation on the one hand and differentiation, individuality and distinction on the other are central to the dynamic of fashion, which is seen as a compromise between adherence and absorption into the social group and individual differentiation and distinction from other group members. (135)

Nationalism, the tendency towards centralization, in which attempts were made to eliminate differences in order to create a unified integrated culture for the nation, has given way to decentralization and the acknowledgment of local, regional and subcultural differences in the Western world.

We are also standing on the verge of a new generation of communication technologies, broadcasting will be replaced by narrowcasting and view-on-demand, multi-media will flow interactively over large bandwidth networks and young people will be the most prolific multi-media producers commenting on culture -- their own culture -- in this new environment. Derrick de Kerckhove writes:

> The shift of controls from the producer/

132

broadcaster to the consumer/user will turn a
sizable minority of users into becoming their own
producers, or 'prosumers.' The decentralizing of
broadcasting will be accompanied by the
decentralizing of production technology. As the
prices go down on video and computer equipment,
the quality and performance go up. (136)

We now have a far greater capacity to collect information
artifacts that reflect whatever state we may be in at any
given moment and display them to our community as badges of
our identity. It is an ancient cultural activity, essential to our
well-being. The only difference is that a much greater amount
of information is now available, making possible far more
precise and volatile depictions of personal identity. We can
communicate to a huge population, enabling people to locate
and participate in global communities that are much more
unconditionally accepting of their members because they have
much more specifically common purposes.

Whatever art is to become in the realm of consumer
electronic culture and data networks, it is clear that the
privatization of pleasure -- driven by basic economics -- has
become a fundamental issue, while traditions of civic,
municipal and public cultures are being swept away. In their
place, fragmented cultures are being formed by the market.

The recognition of community-based art practices
supported by consumerism produces an on-going tension around

what could be considered art, and who can produce and appreciate it. In opposition to aesthetic discourses structured around the notion of "excellence," the community arts movement promotes "access and participation." It is a cultural practice rather than a cultural form. It is the process of production rather than the outcome that is valued.

There is probably as many ideas about what a community art practice is as there are people who practice. Ultimately, it's about people with training, knowledge, or experience in an art form entering into a collaborative production process with people with a wish for creative expression. The participants have some social bond -- a neighbourhood, a common cause, a cultural background, etc. They may have extensive knowledge of art making, some knowledge, or none, but certainly they have "culture." The results are often evaluated by different criteria: did the participants change during the course of the collaboration, did the artist change, did the community change? Process, in other words, takes precedence over product. The artist/non-artist distinction once again blurs, the artist begins to act and identify as a citizen, and the citizen acts and identifies as an artists. In art theory, community art shares certain features of the epitomes of both modernism and post-modernism, while at the same time breaking decisively with others.

Community-based art practices line up with the 2 great emancipatory ideals of early high modernism (1900-1920), namely, the beliefs that art is, or should be, an agent of social change, and that everyone is an artist. Social change meant everything from social revolution to vague dreams of internationalism. The constructivists aligned themselves with Lenin and the Third International, the surrealist with Trotsky. Kandinsky believed that the use of pure colour would create a universal language and unite all mankind. Art would serve the revolution by propagandizing for it, or changing consciousness through formal experimentation. Duchamp's notorious fountain and subsequent ready-mades proclaimed art to be the result of wit, not craft, and anyone could do it.

Many would cite the naiveté and the failure of these ambitious objectives. Nonetheless, the ideals surface in community art actvities in ways that are maybe less grandiose and more realizable. Change may not result in political reforms or increase "brotherhood," yet although evidence may be anecdotal, there is no doubt in the minds of community art practitioners that social change takes place -- for artists and community members alike. In a culture where creativity consists largely of consumer choices, and art making is confined to a group of individuals defined as "artists," creation -- the product of art by people who don't define themselves as artists -- is a radical, and transformative act. People, singularly and in groups, see themselves differently.

Community art's departure from some of the tenents of modernism is equally significant. The flip side of the romantic notion of the artist who stands outside of society in order to be able to tell us what we can't know about ourselves, is an alienating, lonely and unhealthy position to maintain. Community art also counters that other modernist cornerstone -- the sanctity of art as the highest and most unique expression of a particular individual -- with shared creative output, with exchange: creators are spectators and vice versa. Community art is about collaboration; it is a humble enterprise. The result, is a celebration of the uniqueness of each participant.

And what of the conventions of postmodernism: irony, parody, pastiche, collage, appropriation, and fragmentation? The decentred subject, the fascination with popular culture? If modernism in all the arts is characterized by the search for formal purity, then both postmodernism and community art incessantly mix media and genres. Formal purity is the least of community art's concerns. While eschewing the self-conscious stance of post-modernism, community art acknowledges the multiple identities of its constituents. Participatory art practises recognize the fragmented nature of people's psyches, where exigencies of urban Canadian life may contrast sharply with the histories that different people bring with them to the table.

Community art can be seen as a development of some of the major trends in Canadian social history. Canadian communities have almost always been hybridized, they have always had conflicting allegiances. Witness my own ethnic and cultural background. In modern Canadian cities our tribes are polyglot. Identities are so complex, we have no choice but to attempt to live in harmony, and community-based art practices can play an important role in facilitating that effort.

Cultural workers, like others who are involved in meaningful social intervention, need to be sensitive to how attitudes, values and practices are influenced by the economic, political and social arrangements of late capitalism. They must seek to articulate how middle class values influence their own professional practices and their attitudes towards social inequality, justice and power. This involves theorizing their bottom-up strategies which challenge existing social and economic barriers and encourages participation. These principles of inclusion are based on democratic values, in both the socialist and liberalist traditions, which runs counter to the top-down command prescribed by government sponsorship.

While the media arts can map and display an image of the new cultural space of vectoral relations, it cannot theorize it. Without the development of theoretically informed practices, one can never be sure that one is "on the right track" towards effecting tangible social change. If this is so, then

137

practitioners need to forge a close link between their theories and their day-to-day practices. It is not possible to assess the impact and effectiveness of a program of action without the development of such a link. While it is generally recognized that technologies have substantially transformed life in the twentieth century, it is less widely acknowledged that experiences of an increasingly instrumentalized world have also radically transformed art. Both art and theory need to look into the experience of everyday life for the practical foundations of a critique of this new terrain.

Endnotes

Postmodern Geographies Notes

1. Raymond Williams, Towards 2000 (London: Chatto & Windus/Hogarth Press, 1983), 198-9.

2. Simon Frith, "Knowing One's Place: The Culture of Cultural Industries," Cultural Studies From Birmingham, no.1 (1991), 136.

3. Annemieke J. M. Roobeek, "The Crisis in Fordism and the Rise of a New Technological Paradigm." Futures 19, no. 2 (1987), 142.

4. Scott Lash, Sociology of Postmodernism. (London: Routledge, 1990), 41-2.

5. Roobeek, 150.

6. Edward J. Soja, "Regions in Context: Spatially, Periodicity, and the Historical Geography of the Regional Question," Society and Space 3, no. 2 (1985), 188.

7. Manuel Castells, "Crisis, Planning, and the Quality of Life: Managing the New Historical Relationships Between Space and Society," Society and Space 1, no. 1 (1983), 5.

8. Ibid., 7.

9. Ibid., 6.

10. Ibid., 3.

11. David Harvey, "The Geopolitics of Capitalism," in Social Relations and Spacial Structures, ed. Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: McMillan, 1985), 145.

12. Ibid., 145.

13. Ibid., 149.

14. Scott Lash and John Urry, The End of Organized Capitalism (Cambridge: Polity Press,1987), 86.

15. Nigel Thrift, "The Geography of the Late Twentieth-Century Class Formation," in Class and Space: The Making of Urban Society, eds. Nigel Thrift and Peter Williams (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 221.

16. Niels Albertsen, quoted in Kevin Robins, "Reimagined Communities? European Image Spaces, Beyond Fordism," 149.

17. Williams, 197.

18. Castells, 4.

19. Ibid., 7

20. Claus-Dieter Rath, "The Invisible Network: Television as an Institution in Everyday Life," in Television in Transition, eds. P. Drummond and R. Paterson (London: British Film Institute, 1985), 203.

21. In "Third Nature" McKenzie Wark refers to the natural world as first nature, the architectural environment (cities, towns, regions and nations) as the second nature, and the information flow of communication technologies as third nature which overlaps the previous two.

22. Wark, 120.

23. Colin MacCabe, "Those Golden Years," Marxism Today 32, no. 4 (April 1988), 29.

24. Castells, 16.

25. Richard Peet, "The Destruction of Regional Cultures," in A World in Crisis? Geographical Perspectives, ed. R. J. Johnson and P. J. Taylor Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 169.

26. Richard Collins, Nicholas Garnham and Garth Locksley, The Economics of Television: UK Case (London: Sage, 1988), 55.

27. On April 9, 1995, CBC television reported that the Canadian multi-national Seagrams bought MCA/Universal from Matsushita for $8 billion.

28. Herbert I. Schiller, "Sayonara MCA," The Nation 31, (December, 1990), 828.

29. Ibid., 829.

30. Nicholas Garnham, "Concepts of Culture: Public Policy and the Cultural Industries," Cultural Studies 1, no. 1 (1986), 31-2.

31. Mike Featherstone, Consumer Culture and Postmodernism. (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 145.

32. Josep Gifreu, "From Communication Policy to Reconstruction of Cultural Identity," European Journal of Communication 1, no. 4 (1986), 465.

33. Torsten Hägerstrand, "Decentralization and Radio Broadcasting: On the 'Possibility Space' of a Communication Technology," European Journal of Communication 1, no. 1 (1986), 7.

34. Ibid., 10.

35. Ibid., 16.

36. Ibid., 18.

37. Frith, 137.

38. David Harvey, "Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanization: Reflections on 'Post-Modernism' in the American City," <u>Antipode</u> 19, no. 3 (1987), 247.

39. Ibid., 278.

40. Raphael Samuel, "Little Englandism Today," <u>New Statesman and Society</u> 1, no. 20 (1988), 30.

41. Chardwick F. Alger, "Percieving, Analysing and Coping With the Local-Global Nexus," <u>International Social Science Journal</u>, no.117 (1988), 322.

Public vs. Private Aesthetics Notes

42. Renée Baert, "Video in Canada: Process and Production," <u>Video '84: International Video Conference Catalogue</u>, (Montréal: Artexte,1984), 19.

43. Gregory Battcock, "The Sociology of the Set," in <u>The New Television</u>, ed. Douglas Davis and Allison Simmons, (New York: Electronoc Arts Intermix, 1977), 16-23.

44. David Ross, "A Provisional History of Artists Television in the U.S.," <u>Studio International</u>, (May/June,1983), 265.

45. David Antin, "Video the Distinctive Features of the Medium," in <u>Southland Video Anthology</u> (Long Beach: Long Beach Museum of Art, 1975), 60

46. Ibid., 60

47. Micki McGee, "Artists Making the News/Artists Re-Making the News," <u>Afterimage</u>, (November 1982), p.6

48. Ibid., 7.

49. Labowitz and Lacy felt that their work intervened in the newsmaking process by appropriasting the news format for their own purposes. The notion of intervention originates in the 60s counter-culture movement.

50. Lorne Falk, "The Second Link & The Habit of TV," <u>The Second Link: Viewpoints on Video in the Eighties</u>, (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1983), 5.

51. Jonathon Millet, quoted in Lucinda Furlong, "Notes Towards a Brief History of Image Processed Video," <u>Afterimage</u>, (December, 1983), 13.

52. Renée Baert, "Artists' Marking in the TV Landscape," <u>Prime Time Video</u>, (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery,1984), 21.

141

53. Martha Gever, "Video Politics: Early Feminist Projects," <u>Afterimage</u> 11, no. 5 (1984), 12.

54. In the early seventies the term "Cultural Worker" was preferred by Quebec video artists over the term artist. Their term "Cultural Worker" reflected the Quebec video artists desire to integrate his/herself into the community in which he/she worked.)

55. Jo-Anne Birne Danzker, <u>Montreal Tapes</u>, (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1978), 2.

56. Ibid., p. 68.

57. "Centres of excellent" was a term coined in the '70s to described the national arts funding strategy of the governing Liberal Party. The Liberals spent the vast majority of limited cultural dollars on activities in the 3 largest urban centres in Canada at the expense of smaller communities.

58. According to Statistics Canada's 1991 census the population of Winnipeg is 616,790, it is the 4th largest city and the 7th largest metropolitan area in Canada.

Virtual Identities Notes

58. John C. Lehr, "The Ukrainian Sacred Landscape: A Metaphor of Survival and Acculturation, " <u>Material History Bulletin</u> 29 (Spring 1989), 4-5.

59. Marshall McLuhan, quoted in Marjarie Ferguson "Electronic Media and the Redefining of Time and Space," in <u>Public Communication</u> (London: Sage, 1989), 163.

60. McKenzie Wark, "Third Nature," <u>Cultural Studies</u> 8, no.1 (1994): 120.

61. Anthony Giddens, <u>The Consequences of Modernity</u> (Cambridge: Polity, 1990),108.

62. Eric R. Wolf, <u>Europe and the People Without History</u> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 387.

63. Michael Rustin, "Place and Time in Socialist Theory," <u>Radical Philosophy</u> no. 47 (Autumn 1987), 33-4.

64. Joshua Meyrowitz, <u>No Sense of Place</u> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 333.

65. Ibid., 7.

66. Ibid., 145.

67. Joshua Meyrowitz, "The Generalized Elsewhere," Critical Studies in Mass Communications 6, no. 3 (1989), 330.

68. Meyrowitz, <u>No Sense of Place</u>, 5-6.

69. Kevin Robins, "Reimagined Communities? European Image Spaces, Beyond Fordism," <u>Cultural Studies</u> 3, no. 2 (1989), 157.

70. Anders Stephanson, "Regarding Postmodernism - A Conversation With Fredric Jameson," <u>Social Text</u> 17 (1987), 40.

71. Richard Kearney, <u>The Wake of Imagination: Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture</u> (London: Hutchenson, 1988), 1-2.

72. Ibid., 5.

73. Ibid., 1.

74. Mike Davis, "Chinatown, Part Two? The 'Internationalisation' of Downtown Los Angeles," <u>New Left Review</u> 164 (1985), 67.

75. Fredric Jameson, <u>Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</u>, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 42.

76. Davis, 67.

77. Stephanson, 33.

78. Jameson, 42.

79. Jean Baudrillard, "The Estacy of Communication," in <u>The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture</u>, ed. Hal Foster (Washington: Bay Press,1983), 133.

80. Ibid., 127.

81. Ibid., 129.

82. Ibid., 133.

83. Paul Virillo, "The Overexposed City," in <u>Lost Dimension</u> (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 13.

84. Castells, "Crisis, Planning, and the Quality of Life: Managing the New Historical Relationships Between Space and Society," 4.

85. Baudrillard, 132.

86. Stephanson, 39.

87. Kearney, 380.

88. Wark, 124.

89. Francois Brune, quoted in Kevin Robins, "The Politics of Silence: The Meaning of Community and the Use of Media in the New Europe," <u>New Formations</u>, no. 21 (Winter 1994), 81-2.

90. Marike Finely, quoted in Kevin Robins, "Reimagined Communities? European Image Spaces, Beyond Fordism," 159.

91. Craig Calhoun, quoted in Kevin Robins, "Reimagined Communities? European Image Spaces, Beyond Fordism," 159.

92. Michael Rustin, "Place and Time in Socialist Theory," Radical Philosophy 47 (1987), 31.

93. Ibid., 34.

94. Robins, 159.

95. Stephanson, 45.

96. McKenzie Wark, "Europe's Masked Ball: East Meets West at the Wall," New Formations, no. 12 (Winter 1990), 36.

97. Michael Storper, "The Post-Enlightenment Challenge to Marxist Urban Studies," Society and Space 5, no. 4 (1987), 425.

98. Kearney, 387-8.

99. Calhoun ,160.

100. Meaghan Morris, "Future Fear," in Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Changes, ed. Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson and Lisa Tickner (London: Routledge, 1993), 35.

101. Vincent Porter, "Film and Television in the Single European Market - Dreams and Delusions," Journal of Media Law and Practice 13, no. 1 (April, 1992), 148.

102. Hägerstrand, 18.

103. Derek Gregory, quoted in Kevin Robins, "Reimagined Communities? European Image Spaces, Beyond Fordism," 161.

104. Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 21.

105. Philip Schlesinger, "On National Identity: Some Conceptions and Misconceptions Criticised," Social Science Information 26, no. 2, (1987), 234.

106. James Donald, "How English Is It? Popular Literature and National Culture," New Formations, no. 6 (1988), 32.

107. Ibid., 35.

108. Schlesinger, 235.

109. Stephen Heath, quoted in Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," Screen 30, no. 4 (1981), 236-237.

110. Patrick Wright, On Living in an Old Country (London: Verso, 1985), 24.

111. David Harvey, "The Geopolitics of Capitalism." in Social Relations and Spacial Structures, ed. Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: Mcmillan, 1985),150.

112. Bernard Dory, quoted in Tony Bennett, "The Exhibition Complex," New Formations, no. 4 (1988): 403.

113. Les Levidow and Kevin Robins, "Towards a Military Information Society?" in Cyborg Worlds: The Military Information Society, ed. Les Levidow and Kevin Robins (London: Free Association Books, 1989), 169.

114. Peter Wollin, "Cinema/Americanism/The Robot." New Formations. no. 8 (Summer 1989): 8.

115. James R. Beniger, The Control Revolution: Technology and Economic Origins of the Information Society (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 116.

116. Ibid., 116.

117. Ibid., 8-9.

118. John Broughton , "Machine Dreams: Computers in the Fantasies of Young Adults," in Individual, Society and Communication, ed. Robert Relber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 229.

119. Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, "'The Revolution of the Fixed Wheel': Information, Technology and Social Taylorism," in Television in Transition, ed. Phillip Drummond and Richard Paterson (London: British Film Institute, 1985), 45.

120. E. P. Thompson, Writing by Candlelight (London: Merlin, 1980), 221.

121. Tony Bennett, "Putting Policy into Culture," in Cultural Studies, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (London: Routledge, 1992), 26.

122. Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex." New Formations. no. 4 (Spring 1988): 76

123. Manfredo Tafuri, Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), 83.

124. Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, 57-8

125. Ibid., 58

126. Jody Berland, "Angels Dancing: Cultural Technologies and the Production of Space," in Cultural Studies, ed. Grossberg, Lawrence, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (London: Routledge, 1992), 50.

127. Simon Penny, "Consumer Culture and the Technological Imperative: The Artist in Dataspace," in <u>Critical Issues in Electronic Media</u>, ed. Simon Penny (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 50.

128. Bill Nichols, "The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems," <u>Screen</u> 29, no. 1, (1992) 33.

129. Mike Featherstone, <u>Consumer Culture and Postmodernism</u> (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 145.

130. Ibid., 85.

131. Greil Marcus, <u>Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century</u> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 99.

132. Featherstone, 117.

133. Joy Cohnstaedt, "Shoulder to Fingertip: Arm's Length and Points Between in Canadian Cultural Policy," in <u>Culture and Democracy: Social and Ethical Issues in Public Support for the Arts and Humanities</u>, ed. Andrew Buchwalter (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 177.

Possibility Space Notes

134. Alan Petersen, "Community Arts and Cultural Democracy," <u>Culture and Policy</u> 3, no. 2 (1991) 28.

135. Mike Featherstone, <u>Consumer Culture and Postmodernism</u> (London: Sage Publications, 1991), Featherstone, 115.

136. Derrick de Kerckhove, <u>The Skin of Culture</u> (Toronto: Somerville House Publishing, 1995), 58.

146

Bibliography

Alger, Chardwick F. "Percieving, Analysing and Coping With the Local-Global Nexus." International Social Science Journal, no.117 (1988): 321-340.

Antin, David. "Video the Distinctive Features of the Medium," in Southland Video Anthology. Long Beach: Long Beach Museum   of Art, 1975.

Battcock, Gregory. "The Sociology of the Set," in The New Television. eds. Douglas Davis and Allison Simmons, 16-23, New York: Electronoc Arts Intermix, 1977.

Becker, Howard S. Art Worlds. Berkley: University of California Press, 1982.

Beniger, James R. The Control Revolution: Technology and Economic Origins of the Information Society. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Bennett, Tony."The Exhibitionary Complex." New Formations, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 73-102.

_____. "Useful Culture." Cultural Studies 6 (1992): 395-408.

Bird, Jon, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson and Lisa Tickner, eds. Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Changes. London: Routledge, 1993.

Birne Danzker, Jo-Anne. Montreal Tapes. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1978.

Brode, Steven. "All That is Solid Melts on the Air: Art, Video Representation and Postmodernity." in Media Representations of Visual Art and Artists. ed. Philip Hayward, 63-75, London: John Libbey, 1988.

Broughton, John. "Machine Dreams: Computers in the Fantasies of Young Adults." in Individual, Society and Communication. ed. Robert Relber, 216-231, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Castells, Manuel. "Crisis, Planning, and the Quality of Life: Managing the New Historical Relationships Between Space and Society." Society and Space 1, no. 1 (1983): 3-21.

Collins, Richard, Garnham, Nicholas and Locksley, Garth. The Economics of Television: UK Case. London: Sage, 1988.

Cohnstaedt, Joy. "Shoulder to Fingertip: Arm's Length and Points Between in Canadian Cultural Policy." in Culture and Democracy: Social and Ethical Issues in Public Support for the Arts and Humanities, ed. Andrew Buchwalter, 169-180, Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.

Danzker, Jo-Anne Birne. Montreal Tapes. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1978,

Davis, Douglas and Simmons, Allison, ed. The New Television: A Public/Private Art. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977.

Davis, Mike. "Chinatown, Part Two? The 'Internationalisation' of Downtown Los Angeles." New Left Review 164 (1985): 65-86.

_____. City of Quartz. London: Verso, 1991.

de Kerckhove, Derrick. The Skin of Culture. Toronto: Somerville House Publishing, 1995.

Donald, James. "How English Is It? Popular Literature and National Culture." New Formations, no. 6 (Winter 1988): 31-48.

Drummond, Phillip and Richard Paterson, eds. Television in Transition. London: British Film Institute, 1985.

Edge Manitoba Exhibition Catalogue. Winnipeg: Ace Art Gallery, 1992.

Falk, Lorne "The Second Link & The Habit of TV," in The Second Link: Viewpoints on Video in the Eighties, 5-8, Banff: The Walter Phillips Gallery, 1984.

Featherstone, Mike. Consumer Culture and Postmodernism. London: Sage Publications, 1991.

Ferguson, Marjarie "Electronic Media and the Redefining of Time and Space." in Public Communication, 159-170, London: Sage, 1989.

Foster, Hal, ed. The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture. Washington: Bay Press, 1983.

_____. Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics. Washington: Bay Press, 1985.

Foucault, Michel. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977. ed. Colin Gordon, New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

Frith, Simon. "Knowing One's Place: The Culture of Cultural Industries." Cultural Studies From Birmingham, no. 1 (1991): 134-55.

Furlong, Lucinda. "Notes Towards a Brief History of Image Processed Video," Afterimage, (December, 1983), 13-18.

Garnham, Nicholas "Public Service Versus the Market," Screen 24, no.1 (1983): 6-27.

Giddens, Anthony. The Consequences of Modernity. Cambridge: Polity, 1990.

Gifreu, Josep. "From Communication Policy to Reconstruction of Cultural Identity." European Journal of Communication 1, no. 4 (1986): 463-76.

Gregory, Derek and John Urry, ed. Social Relations and Spacial Structures. London: Mcmillan. 1985.

Gever, Martha. "Video Politics: Early Feminist Projects," Afterimage 11, no. 5 (1984), 11-15.

Grossberg, Lawrence, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, ed. Cultural Studies. London: Routledge, 1992.

Hägerstrand, Torsten. "Decentralization and Radio Broadcasting: on the 'Possibility Space' of a Communication Technology." European Journal of Communication 1, no. 1: 7-26.

Harvey, David. "The Geopolitics of Capitalism." in Social Relations and Spacial Structures, ed. Derek Gregory and John Urry, 128-63. London: Mcmillan, 1985.

_____. "Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanization: Reflections on 'Post-Modernism' in the American City." Antipode 19, no. 3 (1987): 260-86.

149

Higson, Andrew. "The Concept of National Cinema." Screen 30, no. 4 (1981): 36-46.

Innis, Harold. The Bias of Communication. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1951.

Jameson, Fredric. Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

Kearney, Richard. The Wake of Imagination: Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Kisil, Gerry. "Harsh Light: Prairie Video." Video Guide 11, no. 2 (1991): 10.

_____. "Bar Code Hotel." Parachute 77 (1995a): 44-5.

_____. "Culture of the Brink." Parachute 79 (1995b): 62.

_____. "Critical Issues in Electronic Media." Parachute 80 (1995c): 67.

_____. "Undiscovery." Parachute 81 (1996a): 61-2.

_____. "Technologies of Abundance: Consumer Culture, Government and the Media Arts." Parachute 84 (1996b): 74-7.

_____. "Language Games." Parachute 89 (1998): 54-5.

Lash, Scott and John Urry. The End of Organized Capitalism. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.

Lash, Scott. Sociology of Postmodernism. London: Routledge, 1990.

Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet. The People's Choice. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.

Lehr, John C. "The Ukrainian Sacred Landscape: A Metaphor of Survival and Acculturation." Material History Bulletin 29 (Spring 1989): 3-12.

Levidow, Les and Robins, Kevin, ed. Cyborg Worlds: The Military Information Society. London: Free Association Books, 1989.

Lury, Celia. Cultural Rights: Technology, Legality and Personality. London: Routledge, 1993.

MacCabe, Colin. "Those Golden Years." Marxism Today 32, no. 4 (April 1988): 24-29.

Marcus, Greil. Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media. New York: American Library, 1964.

McGee, Micki "Artists Making the News/Artists Re-Making the News." Afterimage, (November 1982): 4-8.

Meyrowitz, Joshua. No Sense of Place. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

_____. "The Generalized Elsewhere." Critical Studies in Mass Communication 6, no. 3 (1989): 324-336.

Nichols, Bill. "The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems." Screen. Vol. 29, No. 1, 1992: 22-46.

Morley, David and Kevin Robins. "No Place Like Heimat: Images of the Home(land) in European Culture." New Formations, no. 12 (Winter 1990): 1-23.

Mouffe, Chantel. "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Towards a New Concept of Democracy." in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, 89-104. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Neuman, W. Russell. The Future of the Mass Audience. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991

Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. "Popular Culture." New Formations, no. 2 (1987): 79-90.

Peet, Richard. "The Destruction of Regional Cultures." in A World in Crisis? Geographical Perspectives, ed. R. J. Johnson and P. J. Taylor, 150-172. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Penny, Simon, ed. Critical Issues in Electronic Media. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

151

Petersen, Alan. "Community Arts and Cultural Democracy." Culture and Policy 3, no. 2 (1991): 25-33.

Porter, Vincent. "Film and Television in the Single European Market - Dreams and Delusions." Journal of Media Law and Practice 13, no. 1 (April 1992): 141-156.

Prime Time Video. Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1984.

Robins, Kevin. "Reimagined Communities? European Image Spaces, Beyond Fordism." Cultural Studies 3, no. 2 (1989): 145-165.

_____. "The Politics of Silence: The Meaning of Community and the Uses of Media in the New Europe." New Formations, no. 21 (Winter 1994): 80-101.

Robson, Brian. "Coming Full Circle: London Versus the Rest 1890-1980." in Regional Cities in the U.K., ed. George Gordon, London: Harper & Row, 1986.

Roobeek, Annemieke J. M. "The Crisis in Fordism and the Rise of a New Technological Paradigm." Futures 19, no. 2 (1987): 129-154.

Ross, David. "A Provisional History of Artists Television in the U.S.," Studio International (May/June,1983): 265-9.

Rustin, Michael. "Place and Time in Socialist Theory." Radical Philosophy 47 (1987): 30-6.

Samuel, Raphael. "Little Englandism Today." New Statesman and Society 1, no. 20 (1988): 27-30.

Schiller, Herbert I. "Sayonara MCA." The Nation 31 (December 1990): 828-9.

Schlesinger, Philip. "On National Identity: Some Conceptions and Misconceptions Criticised." Social Science Information 26, no. 2 (1987): 216-239.

Scott, Allen J. "Industrialization and Urbanization: A Geographical Agenda." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 76, no. 1 (1986): 27-37.

Soja, Edward J. "Regions in Context: Spatially, Periodicity, and the Historical Geography of the Regional Question." Society and Space 3, no. 2 (1985): 175-90.

Stephanson, Anders. "Regarding Postmodernism - A Conversation With Fredric Jameson." Social Text 17 (1987): 29-54.

Storper, Michael. "The Post-Enlightenment Challenge to Marxist Urban Studies." Society and Space 5, no. 4 (1987): 418-26.

Storper, Michael and Christopherson, Susan. "Flexible Specialization and Regional Industrial Agglomerations: The Case of the U.S. Motion Picture Industry." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 77, no. 1 (1987): 104-17.

Tafuri, Manfredo. Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976.

The Second Link: Viewpoints on Video in the Eighties. Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery. 1983.

Thompson, E. P. Writing by Candlelight. London: Merlin, 1980.

Thrift, Nigel. "The Geography of the Late Twentieth-Century Class Formation." in Class and Space: The Making of Urban Society. ed. Nigel Thrift and Peter Williams, 207-53. London: Routledge, 1987.

Video '84: International Video Conference Catalogue. Montréal: Artexte, 1984.

Virilio, Paul. Lost Dimension. New York: Semiotext(e), 1991.

Wark, McKenzie. "Europe's Masked Ball: East Meets West at the Wall." New Formations, no. 12 (Winter 1990): 33-42.

_____. "From Fordism to Sonyism: Perverse Readings of the New World Order." New Formations, no. 15 (Winter 1991): 43-54.

_____. "Third Nature." Cultural Studies 8, no. 1 (1994): 115-132.

_____. "Engulfed by the Vector." New Formations, no. 21 (Winter 1994): 64-79.

Western Front Video. Montréal: Musee d'Art contemporain de Montréal, 1984.

Williams, Raymond. Towards 2000. London: Chatto & Windus/ Hogarth Press, 1983.

Williamson, Judith. Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture. London: Marion Boyars, 1985.

Wright, Patrick. On Living in an Old Country. London: Verso, 1985.

Wolf, Eric R. Europe and the People Without History. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

Wollin, Peter. "Cinema/Americanism/The Robot." New Formations, no. 8 (Summer 1989): 7-34.