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**MONOCHROME MEMORIES:
Nostalgia and Style in 1990s America**

by Paul Grainge, BA, MA.

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ABSTRACT

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Memory is central to the way that cultures produce, negotiate and contest ideas of nationhood. This work examines how, as an aesthetic mode of nostalgia, the black and white image was used in the 1990s to establish and legitimate particular kinds of memory within American cultural life. It locates the production of visual (monochrome) memory in different forms of cultural media and explores how attempts were made in the nineties to authorize a consensual past, a core memory - what might be called an archival essence - for a stable and unified concept of "America." The 1990s were a period when liberal ideologies of nationhood and mythologies of Americanness came under particular, and intensified, pressure. In a time when national identity was being undermined by transnational political and economic restructuring, when ideas of national commonality were being challenged by an emergent politics of difference, and when the metanarratives of memory were straining for legitimacy against the multiple pasts of the marginalized, the desire to stabilize the configuration and perceived transmission of American cultural identity became a defining aspect of hegemonic memory politics. By considering monochrome memory in nineties mass media, I look at the way that a particular "nostalgia mode" was used stylistically within visual culture and was taken up within a discourse of stable nationhood.

By examining the production and visibility of aestheticized nostalgia, I make a cultural but also a conceptual argument. Much of the contemporary work on nostalgia is bound in critiques of its reactionary politics, its sanitization of history, or its symptomatic contribution to the amnesiac tendencies of postmodern culture. I explore the subject from the vantage point of cultural studies, mediating between theories that understand nostalgia in terms of cultural longing and/or postmodern forgetting. I account for the manner in which nostalgia has become divorced from any *necessary* concept of loss, but, also, how particular modes of nostalgia have been used affectively in the mass media to perform specific cultural and memory work. Critically, I examine nostalgia as a cultural style, anchoring a set of questions that can be asked of its signifying and political functionality in the visual narratives of the dominant media.

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INTRODUCTION

“Chapter One. He adored New York City. He idolized it all out of proportion.” Uh, no, make that: “He, he, romanticized it all out of proportion. Now . . . to him . . . no matter what the season was, this was still a town that existed in black and white and pulsed to the great tunes of George Gershwin.”

Woody Allen, *Manhattan*

Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” begins with a soaring clarinet glissando that seems to befit the rising New York skyline in the memorable opening sequence of *Manhattan*. The music of Gershwin, himself Brooklyn born, is used in the film’s prelude to accompany a vivid series of New York city images, all in black and white. Interspersed with an iconic geography of parks, bridges, monuments and buildings, a host of street scenes and urban vistas form a montage of mercurial city delights. “Rhapsody in Blue” initiates a mood, an atmosphere, a sense of time and the past. It is Woody Allen’s use of monochrome, however, that provides *Manhattan* with a sustained feeling of nostalgia. Black and white creates a quality of pastness in a film that is set in the present. New York is given a suspended temporality: a case, one might say, of nostalgia for now, of putting the classic in the contemporary.

Woody Allen has used black and white photography in several of his films, including *Manhattan* (1979), *Stardust Memories* (1980), *Zelig* (1983), and *Celebrity* (1998). It is perhaps unsurprising, considering this directorial disposition, that he should have

become one of the principal opponents of movie colourization at the end of the 1980s. This was a short-lived debate that set a host of liberal directors and film bodies against the commercial machinations of Ted Turner. Having procured the back catalogue of MGM, Turner sought to recoup his investment by digitally “colourizing” a series of old black and white films, maximizing their profit potential by securing copyrights for them as new commodities. Defending artistic and creative rights, Woody Allen made a strident case for the integrity of black and white. His argument had two parts. Firstly, he said that black and white had particular aesthetic and expressive properties. Writing in *The New York Review of Books*, he commented: “If I had portrayed New York City in color rather than black and white in my movie *Manhattan*, all the nostalgic connotations would have vanished. All the evocations of the city from old photographs and films would have been impossible to achieve in technicolor.”¹ Secondly, he gave black and white a value of authenticity. This was linked to the authority vested in the originality of the art work, and was measured against the colourized simulacra of the “new classic.” In Woody Allen’s public pronouncements against colour conversion, monochrome became an aesthetic which, for the sake of American film heritage and in the name of good taste, should be saved from the dubious benefits of technological “enhancement.”

As it turned out, Woody Allen’s fears about colourization were premature. Despite early commercial success, and largely irrespective of liberal opposition, colourization never took off. With the public’s waning interest in the novelty of colourized classics, and with cable channels like American Movie Classics and The Nostalgia Network showing a host of black and white “oldies,” Ted Turner closed down his operations in 1994. Monochrome memory was itself becoming marketable in a range of cultural

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media and it is here that my own interests begin. Central to this thesis, and framed within contemporary debates about cultural nostalgia, is an examination of why, and to what effect, the black and white image was taken up and used stylistically in various media forms during the 1990s. Black and white experienced a resurgence in this time, principally in advertising and magazine journalism, but also within film, on cable television and in the image industries that sell posters and prints through high street chains and home improvement wholesalers. Monochrome became a signature of time and style; it developed a tangible cachet. This can be measured in terms of the contingent taste regimes that define any period. However, its popularity and visual expedience must also be set in the context of a particular, let us call it postmodern, cultural moment. In a world of unceasing imagery and surface spectacle, of expanding synchronicity and colour simulacra, black and white helped arrest meaning in the 1990s through its creation of temporal and authenticity *effects*.

The late 1980s saw an explosion of colour in the visual media, enabled by new digital technologies and printing processes. From movie colourization to the large-scale transition to colour within magazine publishing and the newspaper industry, colour was sold as an aesthetic value. Moving to a full colour format in 1989, *Time* magazine advertised its colour capacity as something which could provide a more “exciting” and “livelier” medium for corporate promotion, as well as for its readers. In the same year, Ted Turner brushed off claims of cultural vandalism by saying that colourizing films was about “making an improved version.”² Colour was associated with excitement and improvement, an aesthetic mode penetrating the arcane vestiges of black and white wherever they may be. However, by the early nineties, the very saturation of colour within a crowded visual marketplace had given black and white a new life.

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Monochrome was able to punctuate the visual norm; it became a mark of depth in a culture of surface, an aesthetic of slowness in a climate of speed. Black and white was part of, but also seemingly beyond, the world of corporate and media image production. The visuality of monochrome seemed to efface its own relation to the sphere of capitalist simulations, sustaining the illusion that it was somehow removed from the market culture in which it was necessarily produced. Monochrome appeared to transcend the colour flux of contemporary image culture. In appealing to the *aura of the archive*, black and white created a sense or simulation of substance in a postmodern world commonly described as amnesiac and depthless.

If the black and white image is, or has become, an idiom of visual pastness, an aesthetic of memory and of the archive, its popularity in the image culture of the 1990s might be examined in light of current debates over the selling, staging and significance of the past within contemporary life. Historians and cultural critics alike have drawn attention to the fact that certain amnesiac tendencies in cultural life have developed alongside a restless, even obsessional, interest in history, memory and tradition. Fredric Jameson and Pierre Nora suggest that postmodernity/modernity is characterized by a frantic hyperrealization of the past in a cultural moment where the past has become fundamentally estranged. While Michael Kammen explains the “memory boom” in terms of the rapacious commercial energies of a burgeoning heritage industry, doomsayers like Robert Hewison have described memorial culture as a regressive malady and a sign of cultural bankruptcy. Critics such as Linda Hutcheon and Roy Rosenzweig have argued, quite differently, that contemporary (American) culture is far from ill or amnesiac but is reconstituting history and memory in a broadly enlivened and re-evaluative dialogue with the past.³ The debates that

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centre upon American memory have revealed a spectrum of theoretical assumptions and political investments. Critically, I want to enter these debates from the vantage point of cultural studies, focusing upon the production of visual memory within the dominant media. Marita Sturken writes that “cultural memory is a central aspect of how American culture functions and how the nation is defined.”⁴ I proceed with this idea in mind. By locating the production of visual memory in the news magazine, advertising, film and television, I consider how, *as an aesthetic mode of nostalgia*, black and white was used in the 1990s to establish and legitimate particular kinds of memory within American cultural life.

In focusing upon the black and white image, I want to ask three related questions. What is the effect of monochrome as a representational mode? Why has monochrome become a popular style in a visual culture governed by the colour image? And to what degree, and with what significance, has monochrome been used to consolidate a sense of history and heritage, memory and time? These are related to a broader set of questions about the aestheticization of nostalgia in contemporary culture, the postmodern status of authenticity and time, and attempts by the dominant media in the 1990s to produce an archival essence for a unified and historically common “America.” Unlike theories which dismiss contemporary memory practices as specious and amnesiac, especially those shaped by media industries, I want to explore how the black and white image has been used to perform specific cultural and memory work. By examining monochrome memory within nineties mass media, I look at the way that a particular “nostalgia mode” has been used stylistically within visual culture and has been taken up within a discourse of American national identity.

Nostalgia Modes and Memory Crisis

One idea that found expression in a variety of cultural prognoses in the 1980s and 1990s, from the postmodern theory of Fredric Jameson to the public jeremiads emanating from Lynne Cheney as head as the National Endowment for the Humanities, was that of “memory crisis.” While the explanations and political agendas which claimed this condition may have differed, amnesia was diagnosed as a pervasive ailment in American life and was set within a discourse of cultural crisis. There is nothing especially new about the perception of crisis in American life, or indeed, memory crisis. Lawrence Levine, for instance, has examined the sense of decline and the attendant force of nostalgia that grew in relation to various determinants of crisis in the 1920s. This focused significantly on the dilution of American purity by “alien” elements and ideologies, and the “profound ambivalence” by a large segment of the population regarding the pace and project of modernity. John Kasson has described how Coney Island, Greenfield Village and Disneyland all grew as sites of memory and forgetting in this period; they responded to the desire both for restoring the past and forgetting the present in the face and fear of sweeping change.⁵ Similarly, memory was embroiled in a crisis of culture at the end of the nineteenth century. Michael Kammen suggests that, in a period beginning in the 1870s, a new self-consciousness grew regarding the past and national tradition: memory became a force of reconciliation after the Civil War, a strategy of assimilation responding to the flood of immigration, and a means of adjusting to the impact of industrialization.⁶ The status of memory, both its social use and potential loss, has at different historical junctures become joined to questions of continuity and rupture, development and dislocation, cohesion and crisis.

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The contemporary memory crisis has been framed, and can be understood, in two different ways. For neo-conservative critics like Cheney and William Bennett, it has become principally a matter of *what (or not)* is remembered. At the end of the 1980s, the “crisis of memory” was taken up in debates about historical illiteracy, failing educational standards, and the threat posed to consensual notions of American tradition by the curricular claims of the culturally marginalized. Memory crisis was linked to cultural debates about pedagogy and the preservation of national patrimony in a climate of pressing multiculturalism. For left-wing critics like Fredric Jameson, the contemporary memory crisis means something else altogether; it speaks more profoundly to the matter of *how (or not)* we remember in the culture of late capitalism. If, as Andreas Huyssen suggests, “the very structure of memory (and not just its contents) is strongly contingent upon the social formation that produces it,”⁷ memory crisis has been theorized in terms of a formation where new technologies and multinational organizations of capital have engendered a culture of hyperreality and capitalist hyperdevelopment, where changing relations of space and time have produced a culture “haunted by the explosion of temporality in the expanding synchronicity of our media world.”⁸ While memory has been in a state of “crisis” ever since Plato warned against the impact of the written word on active remembrance, a specific discourse of amnesia developed in the late 1980s. This grew in relation, and as a response, to a *postmodern* formation shaping the way that memory has come to be lived, taught, experienced and understood.

For Jameson, postmodernism involves a profound waning or blockage of historicity. In a culture distinguished by the “spatial logic of the simulacrum,” historicity has been replaced by a new aesthetic “nostalgia mode.” This describes an art language where

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the past is realized through stylistic connotation and consumed as pastiche. Symptomatic of a crisis in the postmodern historical imagination, the nostalgia mode satisfies a desperate craving for history, while reinforcing the past as “a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum.”⁹ The representational economy of the nostalgia mode enfeebles a “genuine” sense of history. And yet, the production of pastness in postmodern culture is also “a tangible symptom of an omnipotent, omnivorous and well-nigh libidinal historicism.”¹⁰ In Jameson’s influential theory, the historical past is replaced by fashionable and glossy *pastness*. As a concept, the “nostalgia mode” is divorced from any necessary, or properly existential, sense of longing, loss, or even memory. It is instead a cultural style. Jameson defines nostalgia less in terms of an experiential mood than as an aestheticized mode. In mnemonic terms, the effective content of nostalgic longing has been rivalled and replaced by the contentless of nostalgic affect.

I want to use an idea of the “nostalgia mode” but in a way that departs from Jameson. In *Monochrome Memories*, I maintain a sense of nostalgia’s relationship with postmodernism, existing as a cultural style, but reject the assumption of amnesia and historicist crisis common to much postmodern critique. Essentially, I want to consider the memory politics of stylized pastness, in particular the visual pastness of the black and white image. This is something that Jameson fails to account for. Lamenting the indiscriminate pastiche that distinguishes late capitalism, he gives little sense that meaningful narratives of history or cultural memory can be produced *through* the recycling and/or random hybridization of past styles. As an aesthetic of pastness (a particular kind of nostalgia mode), I would argue that monochrome performed cultural work in the 1990s by legitimating a host of products and cultural positions based on

the authority of (any one of) the archive, the chronicle, the documentary and the classic. My specific focus is on a certain discourse of “black and whiteness” in the dominant media and its intersection with the negotiation of nation; I examine how monochrome was taken up intertextually, and from specific institutional positions, to help stabilize a threatened sense of shared national history and common cultural memory. In a time when national identity was, and continues to be, undermined by transnational political and economic restructuring, when ideas of national commonality were being challenged by an emergent politics of difference, and in a moment when the metanarratives of American memory were straining for legitimacy against the multiple pasts of the marginalized, the black and white image was taken up in a dominant discourse of collective nationhood. I would argue that monochrome helped to aestheticize the archival essence of unconflicted, unfractured “America.”

As a feeling and formation, postmodernity has been distinguished in many different ways: by the specific relationship of space and time, the instability of temporal and referential moorings, the profusion of simultaneity and simulacra, the globalization of image flows. There are numerous sobriquets and schemas that can define the particularity of the postmodern. In sociological terms, Zygmunt Bauman suggests that the most conspicuous features of postmodernity are “institutionalized pluralism, variety, contingency and ambivalence.”¹¹ If one sense of memory crisis relates to a representational regime of simulation and pastiche - what Jameson calls the “perpetual present” of postmodernism - the other has derived from a deepening sense of plural and discontinuous *histories*: that is to say, the fundamental reconception of the cultural centre, of the singularity of American experience, of history with a capital “H.” If the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a discourse of cultural crisis taking hold in America,

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this was partly a response to a series of transitions undermining the perceptual unities of national meaning. While multiculturalism became a lightning rod for jeremiads about national decline in the early 1990s, a sense of dissolving national identity must also be measured against factors such as the end of the Cold War and the accelerated process of globalization. As it was framed in public discourse, memory crisis was linked to the destabilization of cultural moorings, in particular the securities of consensual nationhood and common citizenship that have underpinned and authorized postwar liberal ideologies.

The suggestion of memory crisis can be related in significant ways to hegemonic struggles over centred American identity, including the sense of a common national past. One must always, of course, pose the question at the outset: “whose memory crisis are we dealing with?” By what measure is it possible, and in whose interests does it serve, to call a culture amnesiac? Does the “loss” of memory really mean the loss of a particular kind of memory or way of remembering? As it was formulated by liberals and neo-conservatives in the burgeoning culture war of the late 1980s and early 1990s, “memory crisis” had very acute political stakes. John Fiske sees this in terms of a hegemonic legitimation crisis, a change in the regime of power brought about by a process of “decentring.” He writes: “A social order held together by a homogenous consensus organized around the values and interests of dominant formations is going to have to give way to one organized around multiple points of consent in which social differences are respected and power differences are reduced.”¹² It was in this context, in response to the contested authority of what Fiske calls the existing (white, male, heterosexual) “power-bloc,” that memory and tradition

were taken up in attempts to harden and fix ideas of national culture through appeal to a collective past.

A recurrent diagnostic theme in the American culture war was that of “fragmentation.” Liberal visions of national fraying and disuniting joined neo-conservative diatribes against deculturation and the collapse of tradition. In the bellicose disputes over “political correctness,” the American “memory crisis” was discursively intertwined with a series of debates about education and the status and teaching of history. This was nowhere more effectively displayed than in Arthur Schlesinger Jr’s polemical “reflections” on multiculturalism, *The Disuniting of America*. Attacking the “cult of ethnicity” and the “therapeutic” recourse to history and the past, Schlesinger wrote: “For history is to the nation what memory is to the individual. As an individual deprived of memory becomes disoriented and lost, not knowing where he has been or where he is going, so a nation denied a concept of its past will be disabled in dealing with its present and its future.”¹³ Schlesinger bemoans the corruption, or politicization, of history in a book which speaks unselfconsciously about “the American Creed” (as if this idea was not itself politically invested). *The Disuniting of America* poured fuel on the fire of the neo-conservative attacks directed at multiculturalism and the beleaguered state of educational standards. If the book sought “to produce and license ignorance about multiculturalism,” as Michael Bérubé suggests, it grew out of fears concerning the breakdown of historical knowledge and the degeneration of American heritage.¹⁴ In 1987, Lynne Cheney complained of “a system of education that fails to nurture memory of the past.”¹⁵ Berating the impact of “the victim revolution that is sweeping campuses,” George Will spoke in 1991 of the “collective amnesia and deculturation” that results from a basic failure to transmit the chords of American

cultural patrimony.¹⁶ Memory crisis was, in this context, linked to the protection of a consensual and objective “tradition,” conceived as an indisputable set of shared historical experiences, common symbols and agreed literary classics. Tradition became a byword for a particular and exclusive version of cultural inheritance, the memory of which was seen to be challenged by hostile multiculturalism and the pedagogical tyrannies of “tenured radicals.”

The tirade against multiculturalism reached its apex in the media in 1991 when “PC” became the *bête noir* of every news magazine and political opportunist seeking to score hits in what Patrick Buchanan described (at the 1992 Republican National Convention) as “a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself.” Battling for “the soul of America,” multiculturalism and its attendant PC strictures was stigmatized as a domestic threat to the very principle of nationhood and Americanness. Jim Neilson suggests that the “great PC scare” was “endorsed by the mainstream culture because it was useful in countering the potential adversarial culture and helpful in both promoting national allegiance and discipline and encouraging establishment consensus.”¹⁷ It is not in the scope of my thesis to trace the political fortunes of multiculturalism during the 1990s. It is perhaps enough to say that multiculturalism was mainstreamed, transformed during the Clinton Presidency into the basis of a new kind of national consensus. If America has always been multicultural, Jon Cruz suggests that “only recently has this been recognized and *named* as such in the context of the modern state’s attempt to work out a politically pragmatic blend of cultural benevolence and statecraft to configure its own legitimacy.”¹⁸ The 1990s saw a figurative victory for multiculturalism in the culture

war, but this hardly meant that America was suddenly, and successfully, dealing with difference. In many respects, it meant re-tooling the terms of consensus in a hegemonic struggle to preserve the stakes of commonality and the fundamental constituents of nationhood. As I have said, this struggle was in part fought on the grounds, and over the principle, of memory and national tradition.

There are numerous incidents where the negotiation of a national past intersects with the challenge of multiculturalism. Curatorial debates at the Smithsonian over exhibitions such as the “West as America” in 1991 and the Enola Gay in 1995 both raised anger and protest at revisionist, or “politically correct,” histories daring to present, respectively, the frontier experience as a question of capitalist exploitation, sexism and genocide, and the Hiroshima bombing as one of several possible actions on the part of the American government. As the self-appointed guardian of American memory, Steven Spielberg turned *Schindler’s List* (1993) and *Amistad* (1997) into cultural master memories where racial oppression became a tableau for humanist dramas in the (national) past. In terms of American history, this was especially true of *Amistad*, what Michael Rogin calls “a happy marriage of Afrocentrism and Americanism.”¹⁹ More in response to globalization than multiculturalism, controversy arose in 1992 when quilt historians accused the Smithsonian of abandoning responsibility for the nation’s heritage by allowing commercial reproductions of early American quilts to be made by labourers in the People’s Republic of China.²⁰ In different ways, these indicate the negotiation, representation, and battles of ownership fought over *common national memory*. In 1996, Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield wrote that “recent years have enhanced the prestige of common culture as the primary defensive barrier to the dangers posed by the existence of ethnicity and

race. Plurality is increasingly seen as a dangerous thing.”²¹ One might argue that the 1990s witnessed a struggle on the part of the dominant culture to *eliminate* cultural difference and accommodate pluralism within a limited, rather than transformative, prescription of common culture and consensual memory. This was done, according to Henry Giroux, “in the name of totalizing and one-dimensional master narratives refigured around issues such as nationalism, citizenship and patriotism.”²²

Numerous critics have examined the larger political and economic contexts informing the struggles over multiculturalism in the 1990s.²³ Many agree that the culture wars were a single, if symbolic and politically pregnant, manifestation of a much broader sense of national identity crisis. While the end of the Cold War denied America of its defining ideological “Other,” the more sustained effects of globalization were serving to reshape national boundaries and, with it, imagined communities. Frederick Buell suggests that “the culture wars were, of course, one of the most visible responses to the global slippage felt by many in the United States.”²⁴ This slippage does not simply describe the economic challenge by Japan and other tiger economies to America’s fiscal authority at the beginning of the 1990s. It speaks more profoundly of the ideological crisis of the nation state brought about by the global cultural economy. The “fetishizing of tradition” was a form of hegemonic positioning in the culture wars. However, the discourse of common memory and national tradition must also be understood in relation to particular disorientations produced by the global restructuring of capital.

If the comforts of national heritage and the coherence of place-bound identity have been challenged “by the immediacy and intensity of global cultural confrontations,”

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theorists of globalization have discussed the protective national strategies utilized to conserve (rather than re-interpret) local identities.²⁵ David Morley and Kevin Robins suggest that “the driving imperative is to salvage central, bounded and coherent identities.” Discussing the struggle for meaningful communities and secure social identities in a global world of difference and diaspora, they point to cultural constructions which are “about the maintenance of a protective illusion, about the struggle for wholeness and coherence through continuity.” They continue: “At heart of this romantic aspiration is . . . the search for purity and purified identity.”²⁶ Although their focus is Europe, this speaks well of the vested attempts in America to construct, in a variety of cultural discourses, a distinguishable national essence, a coherent and purified identity. From a Marxist perspective, Jon Cruz writes of a particular conjuncture in America in the 1990s where “on the one hand, a *centrifugal capitalism* began to push outwards, disengaging from domestic commitments in pursuit of transnational strategies. On the other hand, a *centripetal culture* shaped in part by political developments and aided by new tiers of internal mass-media development augmented the process of identity formations.”²⁷ In the midst of a sea change in global relationships, a paradox emerged whereby the fractured ideological basis of the nation state met with a vigorous articulation of ethnic and national identities.

Cruz suggests that “if economic capital seeks flight, cultural capital seeks stable moorings.” Broadly speaking, I am concerned with the unsettled moorings of American national identity - largely produced by the challenge and effects of multiculturalism and globalization - and the attempt to resecure these moorings through an appeal to common memory and the national past. In this context, I examine how a discourse of “black and whiteness” functioned in the dominant media. Stuart

Hall asserts that “there is always something decentred about the medium of culture, about language, textuality and signification, which always escapes and evades the attempt to link it directly, and immediately, with other structures.”²⁸ I am not suggesting that the black and white image was always used consciously, or with calculation, to shore up particular narratives of nationhood. Instead, I am concerned with locating in its use what Hall calls “the shadow, the imprint, the trace, of those other formations, of the intertextuality of texts in their institutional positions, as texts as sources of power, of textuality as a site of representation and resistance.” I want to consider the memory politics of monochrome, examining the way that black and white helped legitimate an archival historical and cultural essence for a strained national culture undergoing both diversification and demystification.

Nostalgia and Cultural Style

In focusing upon the black and white image as an aesthetic mode of nostalgia, I want to get beyond simplistic psychological discussions of nostalgia as a fin-de-siècle symptom, and the more dismissive criticism of its tendency to sentimentalize the past. Along with an examination of the status and significance of the black and white image, I also want to make an argument about nostalgia. I would suggest that modern theories of nostalgia veer towards one of two conceptual poles. This can be simply defined as the difference between mood and mode. If the nostalgia mood is a feeling determined by a concept of longing and loss, the nostalgia mode is a consumable style that has been commonly characterized as amnesiac. The mood/mode distinction is not a binary

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opposition but, instead, represents the conceptual tendencies of a theoretical continuum. I want to examine nostalgia as a cultural style that has no *necessary* relation to the experience of longing and loss, but which can nevertheless perform significant memory work. This mediates between the two positions of mood and mode; it takes issue with various generalized assumptions emanating from nostalgia theories that do not only proceed from, but are fairly governed by, notions of loss and amnesia.

There are perhaps two major theoretical sleights I want to address. Firstly, I want to complicate the assumption that nostalgia modes in cultural production somehow reflect or embody nostalgic moods in cultural life. In this view, the popularity of, say, retro fashion, products of the heritage industry, or the resurgence of television reruns, would be explained in terms of dissatisfaction with the present. It would in this way fail to account for the specific histories and representational economies that explain the emergence, and define the character, of various nostalgia modes. The rerun, for example, is not simply a reflex symptom of nostalgic loss but the complex result of television syndication going back to the 1950s and the industrial deregulation and technological advances in the 1980s that led to the explosion of cable. While the rerun may well tap the nostalgic propensities of certain demographic markets, it must also be understood in a culture where the past is one of many styles taken up within particular regimes of taste. Drawing playfully on style codes of the past, retro fashion may even use the rerun to thematize its version of nostalgia camp, whether *Starsky and Hutch* and seventies cool or *Casablanca* and forties vintage. The commodification and aestheticization of nostalgia is not, by necessity, the cultural flush produced by a

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broadly experienced nostalgic fever. Neither does this mean to say, however, that it has no relation whatsoever to the production of cultural memory narratives.

The second assumption I want to interrogate, evident in the work of Jameson, is the view that nostalgia modes in cultural production are amnesiac and perform no memory function at all. Jameson believes in a fundamental crisis of collective memory and relates the nostalgia mode to a beleaguered historical imagination. However, this does not account for the way that nostalgia modes perform memory work through the stylistic, and affective, play of “pastness.” There has been a considerable amount of work recently on the *construction* of memory. Just as biologists have reconceived the brain’s memory function - from a case of dormant biochemical proteins waiting simply to be recovered, to a dynamic process constituted by ever-shifting arrangements of neurons within the cerebral cortex - the process of collective memory has also been scrutinized within the humanities and social sciences. Memory has become less a question of the accuracy or authenticity of mnemonic retrieval than a matter of its development in relation to particular collective contexts, social dynamics and political stakes. Critics have examined the invention of tradition, the construction of heritage and the performance of nostalgia, principally as they relate to identity formation and the maintenance of political hegemony.²⁹ In this context, aestheticized modes of nostalgia need not be judged in terms of postmodern depthlessness, but can be examined politically in the context of particular negotiations of cultural identity and historical meaning.

If the black and white image can be thought of as an aestheticized mode of nostalgia, it cannot be reduced to schemes that would see it either in terms of generalized longing

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for the past (relating to an experience of loss), or as a desperate hyperrealizing of the past (responding to a condition of amnesia). The popularity of monochrome has emerged in relation to particular taste regimes and definitions of style; it has developed as a result of the saturation of colour in contemporary visual media and as one of many available codes in a profligate image culture. It is not, in this sense, a visual proclivity that has become popular through a sudden incidence of cultural nostalgia. At the same time, however, a discourse of “black and whiteness” developed in the 1990s where the temporal and authenticity effects of monochrome were used in the mass media to legitimate a common memory, an archival essence, for a national identity under pressure. The perception of fragmentation caused by multiculturalism and the dissipating effects on bounded national identity brought about by globalization were the major discursive well-springs of cultural crisis. In a context where the politics of difference and the emerging climate of postnationalism were beginning to question the coherence of American identity, monochrome memory worked affectively to shore up a concept of shared memory and national tradition. It functioned in response to a certain kind of “loss,” mainly to the hegemonic legitimacy of a dominant liberal consensus that has authorized its power in the postwar period through appeal to cultural commonality and the principle of the nation state.

To explore fully the place and stakes of aestheticized nostalgia in American cultural life, *Monochrome Memories* has two parts: one deals generally with the theoretical status and cultural significance of nostalgia as a style, and the other looks specifically at the memory work performed by the black and white image as a nostalgia style. Part One provides a conceptual and contextual survey of the nostalgia mode. Chapter One examines nostalgia as it has been theorized in psychological, sociological, cultural and

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postmodern discourses, distinguishing between “mood” and “mode” as conceptual tendencies. Chapter Two provides a broad treatment of commodified/aestheticized nostalgia in cultural life during the 1980s and 1990s, focusing upon Reagan, recycling and retro. This explores nostalgia affectively, as a political and commercial investment in “pastness” rather than a content-specific experience of loss. Taken together, these chapters establish the theoretical parameters and cultural basis for my consideration of black and white as a contemporary nostalgia mode. Part One establishes both my critical position - mediating between the conceptual tendencies of loss and amnesia - and demonstrates the disconnection of nostalgia from loss in a range of cultural examples.

Having established the sense and scope of nostalgia, defined as a mode, Part Two turns more specifically to the memory politics of monochrome; it examines a particular mode of visual nostalgia in the 1990s and considers the memory work it has performed in the interests of the dominant power-bloc. Examining different kinds of mass media, and challenging ideas of postmodern amnesia, Part Two explores monochrome memory in two related ways: as it has been used to arrest meaning in a world of colour imagery, and as it has been taken up within a discourse of American national identity. Chapters Three, Four and Five consider the way that monochrome was deployed in the 1990s, exploring its function within the news magazine, global advertising, and Hollywood film. Not only did black and white punctuate the colour norm in each medium, it helped produce a respective sense of chronicled history, consensual heritage, and documented memory. *Time* magazine deployed black and white within a particular signifying regime, using it to transform news facts into “shared” history; the brand campaigns of Apple and Gap produced an archival sense of

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heritage through a monochrome figuration of “our heroes”; and *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* used the documentary techniques and/or credentials of black and white to authorize master memories of the episodic (national) past. My final chapter anchors the discussion of “monochrome memory” within the context of the American culture war. Returning to issues of multiculturalism, globalization and “memory crisis,” Chapter Six considers the way that black and white was taken up and defended in debates about aesthetic and cultural integrity. Treating the liberal defence of the black and white movie “classic,” I bring my analysis together by relating the black and white image to a particular rhetoric of nostalgia that developed in struggles fought over the preservation of heritage; my final chapter examines the “colourization debate” as an example of the desire to stabilize the configuration and perceived transmission of American cultural identity.

Much of the work on memory that is informed by cultural studies has examined the political nature of subjugated histories, the Foucauldian “counter-memories” that disrupt and deconstruct the narrative coherences of official history. *Time Passages* by George Lipsitz examines the interplay between commercialized leisure and collective memory in postwar America, considering “how the infinitely renewable present of electronic mass media creates a crisis for collective memory, and how collective memory decisively frames the production and reception of commercial culture.”³⁰ More recently, *Tangled Memories* by Marita Sturken investigates cultural memory as a “field of negotiation,” focusing upon the contested narratives surrounding the traumas of Vietnam and the AIDS epidemic. Both treat, in different ways, the role of cultural memory “in producing concepts of the ‘nation’ and of the ‘American people’.”³¹ I want to complement this body of work but concentrate more on the endeavour to fix,

rather than on the dialogic fluidity of, cultural memory. Of course, this does not mean to say that memory *is* or *could ever be* fixed. Instead, it suggests that hegemonic attempts have been made to stabilize and define its permanence.

In treating monochrome memory, one must not critically overdetermine the popular meaning and reception of black and white as a visual image. George Lipsitz is correct when he says that “images and icons compete for dominance within a multiplicity of discourses.”³² While not ignoring issues of reception, my emphasis is on the significance, genesis and essential *production* of visual memory within the mass media. I focus upon the representational, or what should more accurately be called the non-representational, properties and politics of “black and whiteness.” Todd Gitlin writes: “Where we stand in history, or even whether there is a comprehensible history in which to stand, we grapple for ready-made coordinates. And so, as time passes, oversimplifications become steadily less resistible. All the big pictures tend to turn monochromatic.”³³ I examine this sentiment in a literal manner. Concentrating upon products of the multinational media - *Time* magazine, global advertising, Hollywood film, syndicated television - I ask how the black and white image has been taken to signify a “comprehensible” national history? How, in related ways, have the temporal and authenticity effects of monochrome been used to transcend the culture of simulacrum? I ask, quite simply, what does it mean to put things in black and white?

NOTES

- ¹ Woody Allen, "True Colors," *New York Review of Books* 13 Aug. 1987: 13.
- ² See *Time* 5 Jun 1989: 1; Greg Dawson, "Ted Turner" (interview) *American Film* 14 (4) 1989: 39.
- ³ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," trans., Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, 26 (Spring) 1989: 7-25; Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993); Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987); Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989); Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelan, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Colombia UP, 1998).
- ⁴ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997) 2.
- ⁵ Lawrence Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993) 189-205; John Kasson, "From Coney Island to Disneyland: Palaces of Memory and Forgetting," Unpublished paper given at a conference titled, "Places and Objects of Memory in the United States," Université de Savoie, 7-8 Mar. 1997.
- ⁶ See Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 93-296.
- ⁷ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 252
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.
- ⁹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism* 18.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ¹¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992) 187.
- ¹² John Fiske, *Power Plays, Power Works* (London: Verso, 1993) 44.
- ¹³ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1991) 45.
- ¹⁴ Michael Bérubé, *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics* (London: Verso, 1994) 225-241.
- ¹⁵ Quoted in George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) 23.
- ¹⁶ George Will, "Literary Politics," *Newsweek* 22 Apr. 1991: 72.
- ¹⁷ Jim Neilson, "The Great PC Scare: Tyrannies of the Left, Rhetoric of the Right," in Jeffrey Williams, ed., *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 77.
- ¹⁸ Jon Cruz, "From Farce to Tragedy: Reflections on the Reification of Race at Century's End," in Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 28.
- ¹⁹ Michael Rogin, "Spielberg's List," *New Left Review* Jul/Aug 1998: 155.

²⁰ For a discussion of the “West As America” and “Enola Gay” exhibits, see respectively, John Fiske, *Power Plays, Power Works*, 162-180; and Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia, Temple UP, 1996) 270-318. The debate over American quilt reproduction is considered in Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1998) 1-10.

²¹ Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism*, 8.

²² Henry Giroux, “Post-Colonial Ruptures and Democratic Possibilities: Multiculturalism as Anti-Racist Pedagogy,” *Cultural Critique* 21 (1992) 15.

²³ See Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dream: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995); Nikhal Pal Singh, “Culture/Wars: Empire in an Age of Democracy,” *American Quarterly* 50 (3) 1998: 471-522; Jon Cruz, “From Farce to Tragedy,” 19-39; Frederick Buell, “Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture,” *American Quarterly* 50 (3) 1998: 548-591.

²⁴ Frederick Buell, “National Postnationalism,” 554.

²⁵ See, in particular, David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995). See also, Frederick Buell, *National Culture and the New Global System* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1994); and Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996).

²⁶ David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity* 122.

²⁷ Jon Cruz, “From Farce to Tragedy,” 28.

²⁸ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996) 271.

²⁹ For a journalistic summary of recent biological research on memory, see James Geary, “A Trip Down Memory’s Lanes,” *Time* 5 May 1997: 43-49. The literature on the invention and construction of memory is developing into a vast field, and treated from a range of disciplinary perspectives. Chosen selectively, see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983); David Brett, *The Construction of Heritage* (Cork: Cork UP, 1997); Susan Bennett, *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past* (London: Routledge, 1996); Barry Schwartz, “The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory,” *Social Forces* 61 (2) 1982: 374-402; and M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).

³⁰ George Lipsitz, *Time Passages* vii.

³¹ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories* 1.

³² George Lipsitz, *Time Passages* 13.

³³ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993) xiii.

PART ONE

MOODS AND MODES

CHAPTER ONE

THEORIZING NOSTALGIA ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

If anyone has the right to remark that nostalgia isn't what it used to be, it is surely the seventeenth century Swiss physician Johannas Hofer. Examining the particular kind of melancholy experienced by Swiss mercenaries when removed from their homeland, Hofer conceived the term "nostalgia" in 1688. Drawn from the Greek *nostos* (meaning return home) and *algos* (meaning pain), nostalgia described the homesickness, or "heimweh," that soldiers could suffer and even die from when fighting away from their native land. Symptoms involved despondency, weeping and sometimes suicide; nostalgia was a disease caused by "the quite continuous vibration of animal spirits through those fibers of the middle brain in which impressed traces of ideas of the fatherland still cling." ¹ As a medical complaint, numerous theories were advanced to explain the likely causes of nostalgia. These ranged from the relentless clanging of cow bells to adjustments in atmospheric pressure when descending from alpine regions. Nostalgia was originally conceived as a specifically Swiss condition. Gradually sanctified by the medical profession, nostalgia attained broad clinical recognition in 1835 when Hofer's neologism entered the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie*. Moving progressively into the realm of psychiatry, nostalgia retained a medical resonance as late as 1946, appearing on a list issued by the U.S. Surgeon General of maladies experienced during the Second World War.

The speed with which nostalgia became semantically unmoored from its early medical basis makes a ripe tale for linguistic and cultural history. While nostalgia began to lose its pathological associations at the turn of the century, Fred Davis estimates that the word was confined within America to psychiatrists, academic psychologists, and a minority of lay speakers until the 1950s.² Few could have foreseen the prolific dissemination of “nostalgia” as a cultural term in the late twentieth century. While the modernist triangulation of Freud, Proust and Faulkner may have problematized and poeticized the experience of memory, melancholy and nostalgia at the beginning of the century, the conception of mnemonic yearning was invariably that of a personal kind. The sociologist Maurice Halbwachs theorized “collective memory” during the 1920s and 1930s, arguing that memory is a socially constructed notion depending on collective frameworks of interpretation.³ However, the socio-cultural dimensions of nostalgia were not given serious attention until the late 1970s. Critical treatments of nostalgia were, until this time, principally literary or philosophical in their concerns, reflections on artistic longing or existential meditations on the nature of authentic being.⁴

It was from the early 1970s that nostalgia became a routine keyword in America for the capaciously sentimental, and variously commodified, past. The reasons for this are varied but critics have generally explained a burgeoning “culture of nostalgia” through factors which include the dislocations caused by the 1960s and the ensuing search for stability, a growing media culture feeding upon its own creations, and the broad commodification of memory within film, fashion, architectural design and the heritage industry. Nostalgia was a sentiment but also a growing style. While complex, related and often symbiotic, the distinction between sentiment and style, mood and mode, has come to underpin many contemporary theories of nostalgia. Since the late 1980s, when memory became a topic of

concerted critical interest, nostalgia has been taken up in critiques of reactionary conservatism, in accounts of retro phenomena, in relation to the growing memorial tendencies in Europe and America, and as central to particular theories of postmodernism. David Lowenthal wrote in 1989, echoing an essay in *Harper's* by Christopher Lasch: "Perhaps our epoch is awash not in nostalgia but in a widespread *preoccupation* with nostalgia among intellectuals and the mass media." Discussing the expansive use of the term in contemporary culture, he went on to say: "Nostalgia is apt to be confused with *any* perspective on the past and every historical enterprise mistaken as nostalgic."⁵ The media currency and commercial profitability of nostalgia grew exponentially in the postwar period, alongside a heightened critical concern with its status, significance and, since the 1970s, its inveterate place in America's cultural lexicon.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the conceptual presuppositions behind modern cultural theories of nostalgia. This will help locate my discussion of monochrome as a form of aestheticized nostalgia in Part Two. There are perhaps two dominant tendencies at work, captured in the distinction between *mood* and *mode*. These terms do not represent a binary opposition but, as I said in the Introduction, distinguish the poles of a theoretical continuum. The nostalgia mood articulates a concept of experience, what Raymond Williams might call "a structure of feeling." Theoretically, nostalgia is understood as a socio-cultural response to forms of discontinuity, claiming a vision of stability and authenticity in some conceptual "golden age." This approximates the conventional sense of nostalgia as a yearning. Critics who examine nostalgia in this way are invariably concerned with the question of what is chosen from the past and why; they are concerned with how, and in whose interest, the past is made to relate to the present. With a different emphasis, the nostalgia mode articulates a concept of style, a representational effect. Nostalgia is

examined in terms of cultural production. To the likes of Fredric Jameson, the central issue is not how the past is made to relate to the present. Rather, the nostalgia mode questions the ability to apprehend the past at all in a postmodern culture distinguished by the profound waning of history. For my purpose, the nostalgia mode has two meanings. It is both a specific concept put forward by Jameson and, at the same time, it is indicative of theories which treat memory as contingent upon culture and which examine the specificity of (post)modern memory practices.

The difference between mood and mode is largely a matter of critical orientation. I would argue that a conceptual emphasis, or what might be called a main gravitational presumption, operates in each case. The nostalgia mood is principally defined in relation to a concept of *loss*. Notions of authenticity and time - endemic to the experience and rhetoric of nostalgia - are structured around a principle of absence and longing, or what Susan Stewart calls a "generalized desire for origin, for nature, and for unmediated experience."⁶ By contrast, the nostalgia mode has no necessary relation to loss or longing. As a commodified and aestheticized style, the nostalgia mode has developed, principally within postmodern theory, a theoretical association with *amnesia*. When authenticity and time have themselves become victims of postmodern speed, space and simulacra, forms of stylized nostalgia have been framed in relation to an incumbent memory crisis. As Jameson writes: "This mesmerizing new aesthetic mode itself emerged as an elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way."⁷

I do not want to exaggerate or schematize the difference between mood and mode. Several critics have examined the dynamic relationship between nostalgic sentiments in social life

and nostalgic styles in cultural production. For example, Jane Becker considers the selling of tradition in American consumer culture during the 1930s. She argues that a revival of traditional folk handicrafts was fused with, and shaped by, middle class nostalgia for “an idealized preindustrial and precapitalized past.” In a period of insecurity and economic depression, the construction and marketing of “authentic” folk culture catered to “antimodernist longings and discomfort with a fast-industrializing society and culture.”⁸ In a different socio-historical juncture, James Combs examines the symbolic nostalgia utilized by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Detailing the endless excursions into a symbolically mythic past, he relates the ritualized romanticism of Reagan to “a period of political drift and exhaustion.” Focusing upon the key tropes that defined Reagan’s political performance and style, Combs suggests that “the nostalgic politician can only succeed at a time in which there is a need for nostalgia.”⁹ For both critics, stylistic modes of nostalgia are measured in relation to a prevalent economic and/or politically determined mood.

While the relationship between mood and mode cannot be ignored, neither should it simply be assumed. Nostalgia modes are not, by necessity, generated by nostalgic moods, or vice versa. Reducing sentiment and style to a fixed and causal relation can underestimate the way that, as a cultural style, nostalgia has become divorced from a necessary concept of loss. In a psychological study, Donna Bassin suggests that: “The current nostalgia among baby boomers for their fifties childhood is evidenced by the increased seeking and collecting of retro artefacts and the surging increase of flea markets and vintage stores.”¹⁰ Not only does this assertion ignore the significant popularity of retro and vintage styles among *the children* of the baby boomers to which Bassin refers, it overdetermines the relationship between middle-age longing and acts of consumption.

Bassin does not account for the taste regimes that make retro artefacts popular, the broad development of nostalgia as a commodified genre, or the means by which “the fifties” might exist simultaneously with other kinds of period nostalgia. I want to get away from theories which conflate mood and mode, and which read the popularity of commodified nostalgia in terms of baby-boom longing, fin-de-siècle syndromes, or other kinds of personal and cultural anxiety.

This chapter will outline mood and mode as conceptual tendencies within modern theories of nostalgia, examining loss and amnesia as grounding critical orientations. As a mood, critics have focused upon the social function and cultural politics of nostalgia. It has largely been discussed in terms of its use and appropriation by the political right, but more recent criticism has tried to recuperate the significance of nostalgia for the left. I will trace this through a number of studies, from the early sociological work of Fred Davis to more contemporary work informed by feminism and cultural studies. Discussing nostalgia as a mode, I will consider three influential theorists who, in different ways and from different critical positions, perceive a cultural shift re-shaping our experience of memory and time. These include Fredric Jameson, Andreas Huyssen and Pierre Nora. Finally, I will elaborate my own critical position along the suggested theoretical continuum. Conceptually, I want to find a position *between* the prevailing tendencies of loss and amnesia. Ultimately, I wish to explore the black and white image as an aesthetic “nostalgia mode” in a way that mediates between narratives of cultural longing and postmodern forgetting. My own position will in this way depend on a discussion of the two main tendencies within nostalgia theory in order that my focus on the memory politics of monochrome can be critically realized in the space left between them.

Mood

To understand nostalgia as a mood, distinguished by a sense of loss, we must return to the medical conception developed by Johannas Hofer. His conjunction of the classical *nostos* and *algos* at the end of the seventeenth century was an exercise in medical invention, the creation of a mental disease. As Jean Starobinski writes: “The word *nostalgia* was coined for the express purpose of translating a particular feeling (*Heimweh, regret, desiderium patriae*) into medical terminology.”¹¹ By giving “homesickness” a clinical authority and semantic designation, its effects were exposed to rational enquiry. Nostalgia was understood as a form of melancholic loss arising from physical and geographical displacement from the homeland. As an emotional disturbance related to the workings of memory, doctors of the Romantic era conceived nostalgia as a psychosomatic condition. In a time when the demographic displacements of urbanization were shaping the structures of modernity, it is perhaps not incidental that a clinical theory should develop based on the fundamental longing *to return home*.

As nostalgia moved into the realm of psychiatry at the end of the nineteenth century, focus changed from the patient’s desire for the literal geography of home to the feelings evoked by past experience. In a medical sense, nostalgia was conceived less as a clinical disease than a matter of reaction and adaptation. These themes would be taken up most famously by Sigmund Freud. In his influential work on mourning and melancholia, Freud theorized the regression of the neurotic to a lost object and/or history. He wrote: “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on. In some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning and we consequently

suspect them of some pathological disposition.”¹² Within psychiatric literature, nostalgia became a pathological longing for a lost object particularized in the past. If modern nostalgia critique has often become hostile and disparaging, associating the experience with distortion and regression, it inherits a tradition where nostalgic melancholy has long been seen as something to be cured. Indeed, metaphors of illness and pathology are inscribed in many contemporary theories of nostalgia. Allison Graham argues that a “*plague* visited upon American culture in the mid-1970s, a kind of *illness* whose chief manifestation has been the commercialization of nostalgia.” While Susan Stewart talks of the “social *disease* of nostalgia,” Robert Hewison comments that “we have no real use for a spurious past any more than nostalgia has any use as a *creative emotion*.” Discussing the dismissive expedience of the epithet “nostalgia,” Christopher Lasch states that the nostalgic “is worse than a reactionary, he is an *incurable* sentimentalist” (my italics in each case).¹³ The nostalgia mood has been given a character of weakness, a feeling defined by crippling reservoirs of pathological longing.

Both Lasch and Jackson Lears have sketched the fortunes of nostalgia in postwar American intellectual life. Having lost its clinical currency by the middle of the century, nostalgia developed a critical edge. Lasch and Lears each point to its ritual adoption by progressive intellectuals such as Richard Hofstadter and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. during the 1940s and 1950s. Used as a rebuke, Lasch suggests that “the nostalgic American’ served liberals as an ideal whipping boy at a time when the intellectual foundations of liberalism were beginning to erode.”¹⁴ Tracing its critical development, both scholars agree that the 1970s were the time when “nostalgia’s stock began to rise both within the academy and outside it.”¹⁵ With the ideology of progress under pressure, intensified by the maelstrom of the 1960s, and with a new generation of social and cultural historians reclaiming, and indeed

redeeming, the pre-industrial past, nostalgia developed a new intellectual legitimacy. Lears points to left-wing intellectuals such as E.P. Thompson, Herbert Gutman and Raymond Williams, all of whom sought to give new seriousness to pre-industrial cultures. Together with the so called “nostalgia wave” developing in the sphere of popular culture, and with media outpourings helping to model and define it as a cultural phenomenon (*Time* magazine asked the question in 1971, “How much nostalgia can America take?”), nostalgia was ripening as a theoretical subject in its own right.¹⁶

The first sustained study of collective nostalgia came in 1979 with Fred Davis’s *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. If there is a difference between nostalgic thought and thought about nostalgia, the abundance of the former in the late 1970s was matched only by the relative absence of the latter. There is still a manner of hesitation in Davis’s preface where he begins by saying “that someone other than a poet or psychologist should write of nostalgia may seem presumptuous as well as surprising.”¹⁷ Attempting to account for nostalgia and its function in social identity formation, Davis suggests that “the current nostalgia boom must be understood in terms of its close relationship to the era of social upheaval that preceded it.”¹⁸ This represents the motivation for, as well as the critical focus of, *Yearning for Yesterday*. Davis is theoretically concerned with nostalgia as it relates to the experience of discontinuity. Underpinning his analysis is an attempt to account for the dislocations of the 1960s and the resulting currency of nostalgia produced in the 1970s. He suggests that nostalgia does not derive from some inherent quality found in the past but occurs “in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties and uncertainties.” Davis writes: “Nostalgia thrives on transition, on the subjective discontinuities that engender our yearning for continuity.”¹⁹ While nostalgia can service politically conservative ambitions, it can also function more broadly as a lens that “we employ in the never-ending work of

constructing, maintaining and reconstructing our identities.” Focusing upon American life and society, Davis allows for the constructive, as well as for the reactionary, license of collective nostalgia.

Throughout *Yearning for Yesterday*, nostalgia is defined as a mood; it is a feeling characterized by the perception of loss and the prescription of longing. While providing a “qualitative description of the nostalgic experience,” Davis also considers the manifestation of nostalgia within art and commerce. He writes:

So frequently and uniformly does nostalgic sentiment seem to infuse our aesthetic experience that we can rightly begin to suspect that nostalgia is not only a feeling or mood that is somehow magically evoked by the art object but also a distinctive aesthetic modality in its own right, a kind of code or patterning of symbolic elements, which by some obscure mimetic isomorphism comes, much as in language itself, to serve as a substitute for the feelings or mood it aims to arouse.²⁰

Here, nostalgia is framed as a cultural style, an “*aesthetic modality*.” However, its symbolic elements emerge from, and are governed by, the fundamental experience of nostalgic longing. The nostalgia mode is not a genre but a “substitute for the feelings” of the nostalgia mood. It represents what Davis calls “the artistic symbolization of an emotion.” The idea of nostalgia art developed by Davis is very different in this regard from that conceived by Fredric Jameson. By way of focusing their respective theories of nostalgia art, Davis and Jameson both discuss *American Graffiti* (1973). For Davis, this is an example of a failed nostalgia film in that it refuses to maintain a contemplative distance from the past. He writes: “Rather than evoke a nostalgic sense of the past, [it] made events appear as but a slightly oblique version of the present.”²¹ It is the very presentness of *American Graffiti*,

however, that for Jameson makes it the “inaugural” postmodern nostalgia film. It illustrates a troubled historical imagination “where the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past is now refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of a generation.”²² The difference between Davis and Jameson is conceptual. They stand at different ends of the theoretical continuum distinguishing the feelings of the nostalgia mood (based upon longing) from the style of the nostalgia mode (born from a condition of amnesia).

Davis is significant in providing one of the first systematic explorations of social and cultural nostalgia. He establishes various conditions and specifications that define the nostalgia mood and that distinguish it from remembrance and recollection. It must relate to lived experience, it depends upon a notion of discontinuity, it imbues the past with special qualities, it is necessarily selective. This same impulse to categorize nostalgia as a rhetoric, a paradigm, and/or a structure of feeling can be witnessed in more recent criticism. Bryan S. Turner identifies a “nostalgia paradigm” in social and cultural discourse, distinguished by four dimensions of loss. These include a sense of lost grace, the loss of personal wholeness and moral certainty, the loss of individual freedom and genuine social relationships, and the loss of simplicity and personal authenticity.²³ Turner is especially interested in tracing the nostalgia paradigm within early sociological thought, notably the classic sociology of Tonnie, Weber and Durkheim. It could equally distinguish the “melancholy scholars” of the Frankfurt school, however, from Adorno to Benjamin.²⁴ Turner describes nostalgia as an “ontological condition” arising from estrangement and alienation; he considers the powerful articulation of loss by artists and intellectuals living within, and responding to, what Fredric Jameson has called the “damaged existence” of our modern world. Tracing the endurance of the “nostalgic metaphor” in cultural life, Turner

suggests that the “nostalgia paradigm is a persistent and prevalent feature of western culture, in literature, art, medical history and social theory.”²⁵

Writing from the vantage point of cultural studies, Stuart Tannock understands nostalgia both as a “rhetoric” and a “structure of feeling.” As a rhetoric, he suggests that nostalgia has three principal tropes: first, a prelapsarian world or golden age, second a lapse, fall or catastrophe, and third, a present or postlapsarian world. These form the narrative basis of an orientation, or feeling, that invokes “a positively evaluated past world in response to a deficient present world. The nostalgic subject turns to the past to find/construct sources of identity, agency, or community, that are felt to be lacking, blocked or threatened in the present.”²⁶ If nostalgia approaches the past as a stable source of value and meaning, Tannock is keen to acknowledge “the diversity of personal needs and political desires to which nostalgia is a response.”²⁷ This reflects a tendency in recent cultural analyses - including historical meditations by Jackson Lears and Lawrence Levine - for redeeming the function and utility of nostalgia, focusing upon the way it has been taken up in the articulation of social and cultural identity.²⁸ Nostalgia can be a historical force that accompanies progress in the “web of ambivalence” surrounding socio-cultural transformation (Levine), as well as an antidote *to* ideas of progress (Lears). Tannock writes that the nostalgic vision can offer “at one and the same time, both a deferral of, and an alternative to, the first, everyday world of the present.”²⁹ In different ways, there has been a tendency in recent social, historical and cultural theory to write against the prevailing idea that nostalgia is a bankrupt, and politically regressive, disease.

Nostalgia has no prescribed political orientation. It can be engaged by dominant and subordinate groups alike, and used for ends that are enabling as much as disabling,

progressive as well as reactionary. It would be wrong to conflate nostalgia with conservatism. This does not mean to say, however, that critics have not scrutinized the appropriation of nostalgia in the recent hegemonic strategies of the New Right. By the end of the 1980s, nostalgia had become a subject of pointed critical interest.³⁰ This was the result of a number of factors but significant among them was the success (and rhetoric) of neo-conservatism as it developed under Reagan and Thatcher. Cultural criticism has, in this context, focused upon the selectivity and political mystifications of nostalgic memory as it has been taken up within social and political discourse. To cite three examples, Stephanie Coontz examines the "crisis" of the American family and the "nostalgia trap" which has served to idealize a series of family myths that occlude any real grasp of contemporary family dilemmas; James Combs considers the "nostalgic myth" in American politics that greased Reagan's assault on the welfare state and buttressed the growth of hawkish militarism; and Janice Doane and Devon Hodges provide an ideological critique of the "rhetoric of nostalgia" that has informed the resistance to contemporary feminism in American life and literature.³¹

The last of these is of particular interest in the way it considers the politically infused trope of cultural degeneracy. In *Nostalgia and Sexual Difference* (1987), Doane and Hodges consider the reactionary politics of nostalgia and the resistance to feminism within male literature, from novels to cultural critique. They use poststructuralist theory to analyse strategies of representation, examining "a frightening antifeminist impulse" they call nostalgic. Nostalgia is here defined as "a retreat into the past in the face of what a number of writers - most of them male - perceive to be the degeneracy of American culture brought about by the rise of feminist authority."³² Nostalgia responds to the "discontinuity" that feminism represents to patriarchal hegemony. Considering writers as diverse as Harold

Bloom, Christopher Lasch, John Irving and Ishmael Reed, the authors show how a belief in “natural” sexual difference is held up and sanctified as a norm that contemporary feminists are then seen to threaten. Doane and Hodges conceive nostalgia as a “rhetorical practice” that has idealized a past deeply complicit with patriarchal authority; they demonstrate how narratives of decline and degeneracy have been used to shore up the status and legitimacy of existent power relations. Their analysis is critically prescient for it anticipates a number of key rhetorical issues that would emerge in the academic “culture war” of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Linked to the rise of (feminist/multicultural) identity politics, narratives of cultural degeneracy were mobilized from various political positions in response to, and as a reaction against, the so-called “politicization” of educational practices and institutional structures.³³

There are several key presuppositions in theories which conceive nostalgia as a mood. Whether examined as a paradigm, a rhetoric, or a structure of feeling, the nostalgic experience emerges from, and is made to relate to, a grounding concept of loss. Responding to a felt or figurative discontinuity, the nostalgic mood locates meaning and stability in a glorified past. Critics of the nostalgia mood are concerned with specific representations of the past and how these may respond to present social and political needs. Focus will sharpen on *what* is chosen from the past, *why* exactly, and in *whose interest* it serves. As a form of idealized remembrance, the nostalgia mood can be taken up in ways that are reactionary and progressive. Whichever it may be, the mood is based on a principle of loss and the experience of longing. In the next section, I want to consider theories of nostalgia that are organized around, or specifically conceive, nostalgia as a mode. Describing the aestheticization and commodification of nostalgia within cultural production, critics are less concerned with the content of nostalgic longing than with its

stylistic form and significance in a world of media image, temporal breakdown and cultural amnesia. At issue here is not the substance of nostalgic loss but the specificity of postmodern memory itself.

Mode

In commercial and aesthetic terms, nostalgia has long been a “mode” in American cultural life, whether viewed in terms of the bygone “real” West pictured at the end of the nineteenth century by Frederic Remington, the “colonial” revival in building and furniture design that emerged in the 1880s, the resurgence of folk arts and handicraft traditions during the 1930s, or the proto-heritage sites of Greenfield Village (1933) and Colonial Williamsburg (1934). It is in the postwar period, however, that nostalgia was broadly commodified in the burgeoning heritage industry. Michael Kammen has assiduously traced this development in *Mystic Chords of Memory*. Examining the transformation of tradition in American cultural life, he asks: “when and how did the United States become a land of the past, a culture with a discernible memory (or with a configuration of recognized pasts)?”³⁴ Arranged chronologically, the last section of the book considers the period from 1945 to 1990 and is given the arching title “Nostalgia, Heritage and the Anomalies of Historical Amnesia.” Kammen maps the democratization of tradition since the Second World War and, with it, the prodigious growth of nostalgia bound in ideas of heritage. He links nostalgia to the cultural consequences of swift social change, the need for stable anchors and consensus in the wake of upheavals like Vietnam and Watergate, an entrepreneurial spirit intent on selling the past, the growing interest in historical preservation and Americana, a broadening enthusiasm for “vernacular culture,” and the impact of the media in disseminating popular, “instant” history. Kammen weaves the

sentiment of the nostalgia mood and the selling of the nostalgia mode in a complex history examining the invention, celebration, marketing and mythologizing of America's national past.

Kammen is useful in bridging theoretically the concept of nostalgia as a social and collective mood with definitions which conceive it as a commodified and amnesiac mode. Historically, Kammen suggests that nostalgia emerged as a pan-Atlantic phenomenon in the postwar period, compensating for "our genuine distance from the past in time as well as knowledge and understanding."³⁵ Like Fred Davis, he gives nostalgia a social function, helping people and cultures adapt to rapid and momentous change. Kammen grows more scathing about the "wistful nostalgia of the seventies and eighties," however. He suggests that nostalgia's growing commercialization has turned the past into a playground of what he calls "history without guilt."³⁶ Kammen concentrates less on the social function of nostalgia than with its "tendentiously capricious memories" within mass culture. He writes:

The pervasiveness of nostalgic yearnings, the peculiarity of disremembering amidst pride in the past, an expanded role for the media in presenting 'memories' and the commercialization of tradition supply some of the central themes that have characterized our own time with its strangely superficial sense of history and heritage - a commodity to be packaged in hundreds of ways ranging from docudramas to 'collectibles' at flea markets.³⁷

As nostalgia proliferates in cultural and commercial life, it intensifies a "superficial" sense of history. Kammen is bothered by the fatuous capacity of idealized history and his sense of "amnesia" develops from this concern; it is a consequence of the selectivity of nostalgic

memory rather than a conditional response to the deep restructuring of mnemonic experience. To place Kammen along the proposed theoretical continuum, one might say that, within his framework of cultural history, nostalgia is *a mood that has been increasingly realized as a mode*. Nostalgic loss has been transformed into a marketable style, a kind of entertainment. This has engendered a saccharine and ultimately forgetful history. Kammen suggests that: "An entrepreneurial mode of selective memory has achieved amazing commercial success, though the price of selective memory has been indiscriminate amnesia."³⁸ In his account of the growing heritage "imperative" or "syndrome" within American cultural life, Kammen understands nostalgia as a mood verging on, or veering into, a commercialized mode. Amnesia describes the unhappy consequence of sanitized memory rather than being, as for many postmodern critics, a symptom of an emergent cultural condition.

It is in postmodern discourse that the nostalgia mode reaches its theoretical apogee. In this context, amnesia is not a side-effect of commercialized nostalgia, as it is for Kammen, but is central to a crisis in the contemporary historical imagination. While amnesia is a dominant presumption, the concept of nostalgic loss is not entirely redundant in postmodern theory. Indeed, critics have argued that an intensified mood of nostalgia has developed in a culture not simply marked but literally defined by discontinuity and what Jean Baudrillard has called the "death pangs of the real." He suggests that "when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning."³⁹ I do not want to recapitulate Baudrillard's well rehearsed argument about the "precession of simulacra." What is significant, however, is that his use of "nostalgia" does not in this case refer to any longing for a specified golden age, but to a "panic-stricken production of the real and referential" in a new era of simulation and hyperreality. Of particular significance, and

influencing later theories of postmodernism like that of Fredric Jameson, is Baudrillard's claim that history itself has become a "lost referential." He suggests that in response "nostalgia endlessly accumulates: war, fascism, the pageantry of the belle époque, or the revolutionary struggles, everything is equivalent and is mixed indiscriminately in the same morose and funereal exaltation, in the same retro fascination."⁴⁰ For Baudrillard, as for Jameson, nostalgia is never a mood or feeling in any simple sense. In the transitional longing for the "depth models" associated with the modern moment (authenticity, origin, the unconscious, deep time), Jameson writes that in the early stages of postmodernism "what is mourned is the memory of deep memory; what is enacted is nostalgia for nostalgia."⁴¹

Some have argued that postmodern theory itself can embody a form of critical nostalgia: for the individual genius and the authentic work of art, for "genuine" historicity, for an unmediated relationship with the past, for critical distinctions between high art and mass culture, for social relationships in a pre-technological age. With his critical interest in popular culture and postmodern aesthetics, Jim Collins suggests that: "Underlying all of Baudrillard's claims is a basically Adorno-like combination of nostalgia and paranoia." Similarly, Neville Wakefield argues that Jameson indulges "in a nostalgia for a paradise lost of stable meanings and fixed coordinates of value."⁴² The nostalgia mood is not entirely divorced from, and is often complexly related to, theories of postmodernism. Indeed, there may be certain kinds of nostalgic longing in theories which themselves proclaim the end of memory, longing and nostalgia. I want to footnote this fact but my concern in this section is not with the nostalgic subtext of particular works but the explicit and conceptual "nostalgia mode" developed within postmodern theory. Ultimately, this

bears upon the work of Fredric Jameson and a series of influential essays which eventually formed the basis of *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991).

In Jameson's theory, nostalgia is not a mood of longing but a "mode" within art, symptomatic of the postmodern "crisis of historicity." This crisis describes a situation whereby the present can no longer be conceived as history or lived in active ways. Caused by an inability to organize the past and future into a temporal scheme, Jameson argues that "we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience."⁴³ If postmodern society cannot deal with time and history it has consequences for cultural production. Much of this historical blockage derives from the "spatialization of time" which I will soon discuss but the initial point is that the "nostalgia mode" does not represent, approximate or idealize the past, but helps reconstruct it for the present as a vast collection of images. The nostalgia mode does not find utopian meaning in the past, but indiscriminately plunders it for style, refracting the past through fashion and glossy images of "pastness." To get a better sense of the nostalgia mode within Jameson's theory, it is helpful to address the wider scope of his argument and his concept of postmodern space and time.

The significance of Jameson is the neo-Marxian framework he brings to his postmodern theory. Postmodernism is never merely a style in his argument. Neither does it signify a major cultural break nor total paradigm shift. Instead, postmodernism is a new cultural dominant that corresponds to the third stage of late, multinational capitalism. He uses the term as a periodizing concept but one that is based on the reconstellation of historical elements in new and intensified forms, not on a fixed division between radically different epochs. Jameson identifies not a break but a profound shift occurring in the social, cultural

and economic order. He locates this in the 1960s where new forms and modes of experience began to grow in relation to multinational, consumer capitalism.⁴⁴ A distinguishing feature of this economic system, along with its media technologies, business organization and global character, is the commodification of previously uncommodified areas. This speaks of its “cultural logic,” meaning the penetration of (late) capitalist energies into the cultural sphere and, ultimately, representation. As culture and aesthetic production become commodities in their own right, they expand throughout the social realm and provide both for the aestheticization of daily life and for the effacement of distinctions between high and mass culture. Critically, this means that Jameson can examine postmodern cultural forms - media images, political spectacle, music, film, architecture - and find them not simply reinforcing but constituting the economic order. Although Jameson has provoked wide discussion about the legitimacy of his argument and methodological dependence on cultural forms, his theory is significant in drawing a basic relationship between postmodernism and capitalist materiality. He states that every position on postmodernism in culture is “also at one and the same time, and *necessarily*, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today.”⁴⁵

If in different historical moments our lived experience of space and time can change according to particular modes of production, Jameson believes that late capitalism has brought with it the “spatialization of time.” This concept underpins much of his theory. Many features of postmodernism that Jameson identifies, like pastiche and schizophrenia, derive from a contention that space has overcome time in the way we live, think about, and experience the world. A strong sense of (temporal) continuity is difficult to achieve in a postmodern state of information flow, media imagery, flexible accumulation, market volatility, global production and accelerated consumption, in a postmodern culture of

surface, simulation, fragmentation and instantaneity. Themes of time and temporality belong to high modernism, along with models of depth. Postmodern life, on the other hand, is marked by flux and discontinuity. This has led to the breakdown of the temporal order and a profound waning of our sense of history. Jameson writes that:

. . . our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve.⁴⁶

There has been, in effect, a compression whereby the past and the future have been sucked into the “perpetual present” that Jameson refers to above. It is this state which ultimately leads to postmodern schizophrenia, the loss of self in undifferentiated time, and pastiche, the flat and random collage of dead styles in the absence of unique, individual expression. Both are constitutive of a new depthless culture that has lost its sense of coherent identity and creative authenticity. The loss of depth, which includes the breakdown of historical continuity and memory, has given rise to a new relationship between postmodern culture and the past.

To understand the nostalgia mode fully, it is important to grasp this relationship. The loss of temporality in our perpetual present has, so the argument goes, caused new attachments to instant impact over continuity. There is a fixation on images and appearance as temporal depth is replaced by spatial surface. Jameson writes: “The new spatial logic of the simulacrum can now be expected to have a momentous effect on what used to be historical time.”⁴⁷ The past, he goes on to say, is modified by this. Genuine historical consciousness that would enable distinctions to be drawn between past and present, thereby organizing

time historically, is replaced by simulation and pastiche. This may satisfy our need, or “chemical-cravings,” for *images* of the past but do nothing in the way of relating the past to a temporal scheme. The images are detached, they float, they are indiscriminately arranged. This returns us to the “crisis of historicity” and the inability in the postmodern moment to live or represent time historically. Mnemonic capacities are replaced by random intensities; our conception of the past becomes spatial, instant, depthless. Jameson provocatively suggests that “we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach.”⁴⁸

The breakdown of memory and historical time will have implications for nostalgia understood as a form or idealized “remembrance.” If the nostalgia mood is based on a dialogue between the present and the past, this dialogue is problematized in a world of perpetual presents. Part of the postmodern “waning of effect,” in Jameson’s argument, involves the loss of historicist pathos and deep nostalgia. Indeed, his use of “nostalgia” is separate from any concept of golden ages, visions of stability, or connotations of past utopia. Nostalgia is no longer conceived as a yearning but as a consumable mode. It doesn’t relate the present to the past but transforms the past into images and stylistic connotation; it satisfies our “image fixation *cum* historical cravings.” This mode is discussed specifically in terms of art and the “nostalgia film.” One can assume, however, that in doing so Jameson is commenting more generally on the problematic status of postmodern historicity. Methodologically, he explores late capitalism through cultural examples which inscribe its character. Discussing nostalgia films can therefore provide a means of treating postmodern pastiche: the cannibalization and collage of past style symptomatic of an image culture that has lost its capacity for original representation. Jameson is cautious about using the word “nostalgia,” wary of associations with (temporal)

yearning and “the pain of a properly modernist nostalgia.” Nevertheless, he feels that nostalgia best describes the process, or mode, whereby history is transformed into image and simulacra; it most clearly approximates the retrospective styling of *la mode retro*.

Jameson illustrates the nostalgia mode in several filmic examples. He makes a distinction between historical films that represent the past and nostalgia films which represent our cultural stereotypes of that past. One can't help but question whether Jameson is assuming too much about the capability, now lost, of looking at the “real” past. However, the new significance he comes to place on style is interesting. To cite one film that I have already mentioned, Jameson suggests that *American Graffiti* is less concerned with the 1950s than with “1950s-ness.” Its status as a nostalgia film is measured by the fact that it does not represent the Eisenhower era, but recreates its “atmosphere and stylistic peculiarities.” Here, content is less significant than feel. Clarifying other works which might be reckoned in this genre, Jameson argues that *Star Wars* (1977) is a nostalgia film by virtue of its reinventing the feel of serials like Buck Rogers. His point is that nostalgia films needn't focus on the past. They can be set in the past, present or in a galaxy far, far away; nostalgia films are not defined by their subject matter but their use, without parody, of older styles from the past. This may seem rather vague in clarifying the contemporary nostalgia film but Jameson is more interested in the process of pastiche than in defining new filmic genres. Pastiche is a form of collage that excavates older voice, style and image. Now that the modernist period of individual expression and originality has arguably passed, marking the death of the (creating) subject, superficial ensembles of past style have become a primary mode of cultural production. The nostalgia film exemplifies this. Using pastiche, nostalgia films imitate the spirit, style, dash and design of previous times, crafting a

product that, when it treats the past, offers little more than simulation and “fashion-plate image.”

What interests me in all of this is the alternative concept of nostalgia developed by Jameson. There are multiple points of debate surrounding his theory of time, pastiche and the past. He makes contentious points about creative originality (is it possible?), postmodern historicity (does it exist?), and the nature of time (has it been replaced by space?). In his ambitious attempt to “cognitively map” the life and logic of postmodernism, however, he posits a concept of nostalgia that can be distinguished from more conventional ideas of loss, absence and an idealized past. Jameson relates nostalgia to *new* modes of cultural production, not enduring moods of cultural longing. In so doing, he suggests a certain literacy that may have developed for generic features of nostalgia art, writing of a “nostalgia mode of reception.” He explains that “the formal apparatus of nostalgia films has trained us to consume the past in the form of glossy images . . .”⁴⁹ The language of “reception” and of being “trained” is revealing here. Nostalgia is conceived as a mode to be *consumed*, not a mood to feel. Whether Jameson’s theory of postmodernism wrongfully jettisons concepts like memory and time, he nevertheless identifies, and usefully conceives, something new about nostalgia and its aesthetic place in cultural life.

I do not wish to participate in the numerous debates contesting the broad significance of Jameson’s theory. Personally, I find certain aspects of his work useful but not the entire argument. For example, there might be something new about our “postmodern” experience of space and time but this needn’t imply the total collapse of the temporal order; we may experience history as pop images but not *always*. I’m inclined to agree with Ien Ang when she argues against totalizing theories which see postmodernism as a structural *fait*

accompli, as “a homogenized, one dimensional and increasingly global reality.”⁵⁰ She suggests that such notions do not account for the profound uncertainty of capitalist postmodernity or, more particular to her interests, consider how audiences negotiate meaning in a media-saturated world. My own interest in Jameson is not to launch a detailed critique of the polemics of late capitalism, but to show how nostalgia is theorized within his idea of postmodernism. Jameson is significant for two reasons. Firstly, he is the one theorist of postmodernism who examines nostalgia in very deliberate ways. As discussed, he identifies something new about nostalgia in postmodernity and develops a concept which examines it generically as “art,” “film,” and “mode.” Secondly, his theory is based on presuppositions which operate in other critical works concerned with postmodernity and time. This, put simply, is the premise that our current climate is one marked by historical amnesia. Two critics which develop this concept are Andreas Huyssen and Pierre Nora. Although their work is markedly different in historical scope, they each theorize a basic change in the way that people relate to the past; they notice a shift in our experience of history and memory. Nostalgia is not examined directly yet both critics help emphasize, like Jameson, the question of *how* we apprehend the past as much as what is drawn from it. A glance at their key points may help situate nostalgia in its new postmodern context.

In his novel *Slowness*, Milan Kundera writes of a “secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting.”⁵¹ One could argue that postmodernity is beset by the promise and perils of speed in its various forms, whether information highways or media blizzards. Speed has come from the reconfiguration of space. One of the clearest examples of this is the speed of communication that has developed from satellites, media technology and electronic networks. Despite its wonders, many argue that speed does very

little to nourish memory or a sense of continuity. This belief is present in Jameson's work and is taken on by Huyssen too. Amnesia is seen to be the consequential illness of a postmodern climate of rapid change, instant communication and constant consumption. The equation between speed and forgetting defines our contemporaneity. If Michael Kammen looks for the historical indices of amnesia, examining everything from the need to forget after Vietnam to the commercially sanitized history purveyed by the likes of Disney, Andreas Huyssen provides a more fundamental cultural diagnosis. He doesn't focus on definitive historical conditions that explain amnesia for any one country, but examines the "twilight" status of memory itself in western culture.

Like Jameson, Huyssen believes that our experience of time has changed dramatically. Central to this transformation is the speed and style of high-tech media. The point for Huyssen is not the breakdown of historical time and cultural memory but the way they have each been shaped by a social formation where the past has become subject to new forms of representation. Huyssen does not give up memory as some older modernist privilege but explores how a new postmodern variety has developed in relation to media representation and the "quickenning pace of material life." It has been argued that new media technologies have induced cultural amnesia by diluting the process of active remembrance. Huyssen is unconvinced by this, accepting that contemporary culture suffers from an amnesiac virus but, at the same time, is witnessing the struggle of memory against it. He looks at a contemporary paradox, or dialectic, whereby a waning sense of historical consciousness has been matched simultaneously by a virtual obsession with the past. Trying to think memory and amnesia together, Huyssen believes that we are experiencing mnemonic fever as a reflex *against* forgetting. He considers there to be a basic need to "mark time" in a culture losing its temporal anchor. He states that:

(Memory) represents the attempt to slow down information processing, to resist the dissolution of time in the synchronicity of the archive, to recover a mode of contemplation outside the universe of simulation and fast-speed information and cable networks, to claim some anchoring space in a world of puzzling and often threatening heterogeneity, non-synchronicity, and information overload.⁵²

Memory represents a battle. This is not judged on the grounds of cultural politics, be they struggles fought over the “natural woman” in contemporary literature or the kind of history the Enola Gay should tell as an exhibit in the National Air and Space Museum.⁵³ The battle for memory, in Huyssen’s view, is not simply a question of negotiated political meaning but of the need, *the imperative*, to live with a sense of temporality.

Huyssen proceeds, like Jameson, from an idea of cultural shift. They both identify something new in the way we live time and experience the past, each agreeing that amnesia defines the postmodern moment. Huyssen does not give up the concept and significance of memory, however. One can see that important questions are being asked and different conclusions drawn about the nature of memory and its relation to the cultural configuration of postmodernism. Nostalgia, as a form of memory, is deeply involved in these debates. How do changing structures of temporality affect the meaning and experience of nostalgia? What effect does the media have on the status of nostalgia as a style or mode? Is nostalgia a product of, or a defence against, the so-called virus of amnesia? Huyssen does not theorize nostalgia as a mode in the same way as Jameson, but does consider the various ways that memory, recollection, history, nostalgia - all the means of marking time - relate to a postmodern social formation obliged, even compelled, to arrest the past in the face and fear of memory’s dissolution.

Although working with historical parameters that extend far beyond specific discussions of postmodernism (namely, the difference between peasant and modern cultures), and keeping his discussion focused on France, Pierre Nora also considers memory in the modern moment. He treats French culture but his theoretical distinction between “environments of memory” and new “sites of memory” has been applied to other cultural, in particular American, paradigms.⁵⁴ Nora’s basic contention is that the “acceleration of history,” meaning the historical perception with which “our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by chance, organize the past,” has replaced older forms of spontaneous memory. Instead of environments of memory, *milieux de memoire*, we now have sites of memory, *lieux de memoire*. These include museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, monuments, anything which represents a conscious endeavour to maintain a sense, or trace, of memory. For Nora, these are “moments of history torn away from the movement of history.”⁵⁵ They are, in a particular sense, material, symbolic and functional modes of memory entirely divorced from experiential moods of memory.

Nora believes that “we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left.” Memory is now a matter of conscious construction and preservation, rather than instinctive and impromptu feeling. Like Huyssen, he describes the impact of the media, turning memory into an “ephemeral film of current events”; he comments on the artificial hyperrealization of the past in response to our basic estrangement from it; his theory develops from a concept of speed (the acceleration of history) and change (the democratization of mass culture). According to his argument, a transformation has occurred in the relationship between memory and history - memory being suppressed and destroyed by history’s compulsion to crystallize and exteriorize its “magic” in artificial

representations - and our sense of the past has been deeply altered because of it. While Nora demonstrates a rather troubling nostalgia for "real" or unbidden memory, compared with its contemporary manifestation in stillborn sites, he provides a ranging perspective on the question of memory's cultural and historical specificity.

Jameson, Huyssen and Nora have different critical objectives. Jameson wants to historicize postmodernism, cognitively map its new territory with examples drawn principally from America; Huyssen examines the status of memory in contemporary culture, addressing the media as a representational form but with a specific cultural interest in Germany; Nora considers the transformation of modern memory from a spontaneous experience to a constructed "site," his theoretical application being France. What joins them all, however, is the belief in a critical change that (post)modern culture has experienced in its relationship with the past. It is held that forms of memory have been influenced, inscribed, even destroyed, by the pace of change in the contemporary milieu. There is nothing timeless about the way we apprehend the past. Indeed, there is nothing timeless about historical time. Accepting the cultural contingency of memory, each critic develops a theory or principle of amnesia; they understand contemporary memory practices in terms of depthlessness (Jameson), struggle (Huyssen) and inauthenticity (Nora). Nostalgia is embroiled in these different schemes of beleaguered mnemonic experience. Whether a stylistic mode resulting from a crisis of historicity, a way of "marking time" in a culture of amnesia, or a memory "site" in a climate where moments have replaced the movement of history, nostalgia is theoretically positioned in relation to an era where memory is fading in the form and structure of everyday life. Nostalgia is set in relation to a new cultural configuration where the experience of memory and moods of temporal longing may be felt and signified in particular ways, or where they no longer exist or function at all.

Nostalgia Modes and Non-Representational Codes

Having established “mood” and “mode” as two conceptual tendencies within modern theories of nostalgia, I should say something of my own position. The mood/mode distinction should not be taken to suggest mutually exclusive critical categories. As I have said, various critics address nostalgia as a feeling *and* a style, as a cultural orientation *and* a representational effect. The relationship between the two will often be understood, however, through conceptual presuppositions that I have characterized in the distinction between loss and amnesia. To illustrate, one might compare Fred Davis and Fredric Jameson. Davis is concerned with nostalgia as a collective mood, a way of adapting to social change and responding to the experience of discontinuity. When Davis considers nostalgia as a cultural style, it is an aesthetic figuration of this mood, “the symbolization of an emotion.” In his theory, the mode grows from and helps enact the mood; nostalgia is a collectively felt and culturally realized experience of longing. By contrast, Fredric Jameson is concerned with nostalgia as a mode, a form of pastiche symptomatic of the postmodern crisis of historicity. When Jameson considers nostalgia as a mood, it is only as a casualty of the depthless and spatial logic of late capitalism. The mood has become a bankrupt emotion and has been replaced by the simulations of a new cultural mode; nostalgia is a stylistic regime defined by the historical waning of effect. While Davis has little sense that nostalgia may have become a consumable style reflecting economies of taste and textuality rather than compulsory feelings of loss, Jameson disconnects stylized nostalgia from any concept of memory at all.

I want to mediate between the poles of loss and amnesia. Critically, I am concerned with nostalgia as a cultural style, an aestheticized mode. Focusing upon the use and function of monochrome in the mass media during the 1990s, I wish to avoid theoretical schemes that reduce aesthetic modes of nostalgia to cultural manifestations of longing or to a conditional experience of amnesia. I want to account for the manner in which commodified nostalgia has become divorced from any *necessary* concept of loss, but, also, how particular modes of nostalgia have been used affectively in the mass media to perform specific cultural and memory work. Basically, I wish to tread a path that will neither ignore the broad development of nostalgia as a style - bound in specific regimes of taste, inscribed in modes of textuality, and enabled by new forms of technology - nor underestimate the function of aestheticized nostalgia as it has been taken up within a discourse of American national identity.

My interests meet at the critical intersection of two cultural/theoretical projects. Firstly, I am interested in the *construction of memory* in cultural life, in particular the staging of the past as it is used to authorize particular cultural representations and political positionalities. This joins a varied body of work concerned with the representational status and political stakes of “authenticity” and the legitimating and/or contested aura of time and the past. Such work can range from the anthropological analysis of tourist economies and American heritage sites by Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, to the historical examination of invented national traditions by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger; it can include Susan Bennett’s literary analysis of the recreation and re-writing of Shakespeare, to the cultural consideration by David Brett of Ireland’s national and regional “construction of heritage.”⁵⁶ While coming from different disciplines, all of these works are in some sense

concerned with the construction of memory and the claims of tradition as they relate to the articulation and negotiation of cultural and historical identity.

The second cultural/theoretical body of work informing my interest in nostalgia as a mode derives from the more specific field of cultural studies. A number of critics have recently tried to theorize, or “synchronize,” the points of contact between cultural studies and postmodernism, examining the connections and the tensions between the ideological and the discursive, the representational and the affective. This is part of a discussion within cultural studies itself, trying to articulate its critical trajectories in a time of growing institutionalization.⁵⁷ Leaving this albeit interesting debate aside, one consequence has been to build upon, and open up, the Marxist basis of cultural studies, or at least develop its theoretical apparatus based upon the encounter with critical postmodernism. This has led to greater interest in what Lawrence Grossberg has called the “affective economy” of everyday life. Critically, this concentrates on non-representational cultural effects which may, or may not, make connections with the ideological, the economic and the political. Affect is “the coloration or passion within which one’s investments in, and commitments to, the world are made possible.”⁵⁸ Grossberg, who has done more than most to substantiate this theory, looks at music and the affective economy of rock. Concerned with the way that feelings and passions are appealed to and played upon in cultural life, his project is linked to an examination of the “hegemony of affect” that, in the 1980s, saw neo-conservatism reorganizing the “rock formation” in a struggle to reconstruct, and win consent through, emotional investments in the “national popular.”⁵⁹

From a slightly different perspective, critics in film studies have also focused upon non-representational effects in various cultural-technological analyses. Steve Neale has

examined the way that colour was used within classical Hollywood, taken up in aesthetic regimes that codified ideas of genre and constructions of gender. Similarly, Richard Dyer has explored racial constructions of whiteness through the technological use and cinematic conventions of light; he examines the way that “light has a tendency to assume, privilege and construct an idea of the white person.”⁶⁰ Framing his critical position, Dyer states that he “wants to insist on the technological construction of beauty and pleasure, as well as on the representation of the world.”⁶¹ As Hayden White might say, he concentrates on the content of the form. Dyer continues: “I (do) want to recognise that cultural media are only sometimes concerned with reality and are at least as much concerned with ideals and indulgence, that are themselves socially constructed. It is important to understand this too and, indeed, to understand how representation is actually implicated in inspirations and pleasures.”⁶² In the work of both Dyer and Grossberg, there is a fundamental concern with *non-representational effects* (and affects) in cultural production and everyday life. At issue are abstract sign systems such as music, colour and light, that have no referent - i.e. they do not constitute representations of reality in and of themselves - but which are nevertheless infused with codes, and are articulated within discursive formations, that help create particular kinds of feel and meaning.

By focusing upon the use of monochrome in contemporary visual media, I am concerned with the non-representational effects of “black and whiteness.” I am less concerned with the content of any particular image than with the temporal and authenticity effects produced by monochrome as a mode of nostalgia. I will argue in Part Two of my thesis that black and white was taken up in the 1990s with two dominant cultural/ideological results. Firstly, monochrome helped penetrate the colour norms of contemporary image culture; it was used to punctuate visually, and arrest meaning within, the culture of simulacrum.

Secondly, it gave rise to a media discourse of “black and whiteness” that was used to articulate an archival essence for a national identity under strain. In critical terms, I want to locate the production of nostalgia within specific cultural examples rather than speculate about whether nostalgia is endemic to the disposition and temper of American (postmodern) life. Defining nostalgic practices and predispositions may have validity in establishing broad historical structures of feeling. Critically, however, I am persuaded by Christopher Lasch’s comment that “what is needed is not an explanation of our nostalgic national condition but an explanation of the widespread *preoccupation* with nostalgia in the intellectual community and the mass media, and the infiltration of political and cultural commentary by this particular catchword.”⁶³ Effectively, I want to anchor a set of critical questions that can be asked of nostalgia’s signifying and political functionality in the visual narratives of the dominant media.

Before turning to the memory politics of monochrome, it is necessary to expand on the commodification and aestheticization of nostalgia in contemporary American culture. I want in the next chapter to consider the cultural dimensions, as well as provide some more precise examples, of what I mean by nostalgia as a style or mode. In mediating between conceptions of loss and amnesia, my analysis will focus upon the disjunction between nostalgia modes and forms of longing in American culture, analysing the memory work of one particular mode (i.e. challenging ideas of amnesia) in my consideration of monochrome in Part Two. This chapter has examined tendencies within nostalgia critique, and the next will historicize the cultural production of nostalgia in American life during the 1980s and 1990s. This will help locate the black and white image in a culture where the selling and circulation of nostalgia was less dependent on the content of any specific (and idealized) past than upon the *affective economy of pastness*. I would argue that the

prevalence of black and white in nineties visual culture cannot be explained simply as the “symbolization of an emotion”; it does not reflect or reveal a general incidence of nostalgic longing. Neither does it reveal the frantic thrashings of a drowning memorial consciousness, a culture whose image world responds desperately to the threat and presence of postmodern forgetting. Instead, it can be understood within a climate where memory, nostalgia and the past had become, certainly by the 1990s, an amplified site of affective investment: that is to say, a moment where the production of pastness had been enabled by new technologies, enlivened by regimes of taste and textuality, and increasingly mobilized for commercial, cultural and political ends. Part One of my thesis is concerned with establishing a theoretical and cultural basis for a particular understanding of nostalgia as a cultural style, a commodified and aestheticized mode that, as I will explore in Part Two, can be seen to include the black and white image. Having established the conceptual terrain, I want now to provide some contextual bearings.

NOTES

- ¹ Johannas Hofer, "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia," first published in 1688 and translated by Carolyn K. Anspach, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 2 (1934): 384. A concise treatment of nostalgia as a term is given by Jean Starobinski, "The Idea of Nostalgia," *Diogenes* 54 (1966): 81-103.
- ² Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: Free Press, 1979) 4.
- ³ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed., Lewis Coser (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992).
- ⁴ See Ralph Harper, *Nostalgia: An Existential Exploration of Longing and Fulfilment in the Modern Age* (Cleveland: Press of the Western Reserve University, 1966).
- ⁵ David Lowenthal, "Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn't," in Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, eds., *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989) 29; see also, Christopher Lasch, "The Politics of Nostalgia," *Harper's Nov* (1984): 65-70.
- ⁶ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1984) 23.
- ⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991) 21.
- ⁸ Jane A. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1998) 222.
- ⁹ James Combs, *The Reagan Range: The Nostalgic Myth in American Politics* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State UP, 1993) 38.
- ¹⁰ Donna Bassin, "Maternal Subjectivity in the Culture of Nostalgia: Mourning and Melancholy," in Donna Bassin, ed., *Representations of Motherhood* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994) 164.
- ¹¹ Jean Starobinski, "The Idea of Nostalgia," 84.
- ¹² Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed., James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1991): 252. For a broad treatment of Freud and memory, see Richard King, "Memory and Phantasy," *Modern Language Notes* 98 (1983): 1197-1213.
- ¹³ Allison Graham, "History, Nostalgia and the Criminality of Popular Culture," *Georgia Review* 38 (2) 1984: 348; Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 23; Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987) 138; Christopher Lasch, "The Politics of Nostalgia," 65.
- ¹⁴ Christopher Lasch, "The Politics of Nostalgia," 68.
- ¹⁵ Jackson Lears, "Looking Backward: In Defense of Nostalgia," *Lingua Franca* Dec/Jan 1998: 60.
- ¹⁶ Gerald Clarke, "The Meaning of Nostalgia," *Time* 3 May 1971: 77.
- ¹⁷ Fred Davis, *Yearning For Yesterday* vii.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

²¹ Ibid., 90.

²² Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 19.

²³ Bryan S. Turner, "A Note on Nostalgia," *Theory, Culture & Society* 4 (1) 1987: 147-156.

²⁴ See Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Work of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Macmillan, 1978); see also Fredric Jameson, "Walter Benjamin, or Nostalgia," *Salmagundi* 10-11 (1969): 52-68.

²⁵ Bryan S. Turner, "A Note on Nostalgia," 152.

²⁶ Stuart Tannock, "Nostalgia Critique," *Cultural Studies* 9 (3) 1995: 454.

²⁷ Ibid., 453.

²⁸ Lawrence Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993); Jackson Lears, "Looking Backwards."

²⁹ Stuart Tannock, "Nostalgia Critique," 459.

³⁰ David Lowenthal comments upon his own rather casual treatment of nostalgic sentimentality in 1985 compared with his entrance into the growing debates over the politics and cultural consequences of nostalgia four years later. See the difference in analysis between Lowenthal, "Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn't" 18-32, and his previous work, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985).

³¹ Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). In a similar account, Arlene Skolnick has examined the rhetoric of nostalgia that pervades many discussions about family life and the changes that have occurred since the 1950s. See Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991). The discussion of Reagan and feminism can be found, respectively in Combs, *The Reagan Range*; and Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, *Nostalgia and Sexual Difference: The Resistance to Contemporary Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

³² Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, *Nostalgia and Sexual Difference*, xiii. See also, Jean Pickering and Suzanne Kehde, ed., *Narratives of Nostalgia, Gender and Nationalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

³³ In the academic culture war, the concept of degeneracy can be seen in both conservative and liberal critique, from the work of Allan Bloom to that of Russell Jacoby. Barry Sarchett writes: "even though Jacoby and Bloom do not share similar political positions, they do share a common discursive formation that demands a narrative of decline as a rallying call for a lost authority." In each case, this is figured around the perception of failing educational standards and compromised intellectual integrity, brought on by the (theoretical) professionalization and (cultural) politicization of the American academy. See Barry W. Sarchett, "Russell Jacoby, Antiprofessionalism, and the Cultural Politics of Nostalgia," in Jeffrey Williams, ed., *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 253-278.

³⁴ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) 7.

³⁵ Ibid., 534.

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- ³⁶ Michael Kammen, *In The Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 157. This collection of essays develops many of the arguments in *Mystic Chords*. Kammen suggest that: "Nostalgia tends to be history without guilt, while this elusive thing called 'heritage' is the past with two scoops of pride and no bitter aftertaste."
- ³⁷ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords* 536.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 536.
- ³⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) 6.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ⁴¹ Jameson, *Postmodernism* 156.
- ⁴² Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 117; and Neville Wakefield, *Postmodernism: The Twilight of the Real* (London: Pluto Press, 1990) 62. Writing more generally about the challenge of postmodernism to the privileged claims of high culture, Georg Stauth and Bryan Turner comment that: "Nostalgia is a very potent mode for a moribund intellectual elite adrift from its traditional culture and institutional setting." Georg Stauth and Bryan S. Turner, "Nostalgia, Postmodernism and the Critique of Mass Culture," *Theory, Society & Culture* 5 (1988): 520.
- ⁴³ Jameson, *Postmodernism* 21.
- ⁴⁴ See Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the Sixties," in Sonya Sayres, ed., *The Sixties Without Apologies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) 178-209.
- ⁴⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 3.
- ⁴⁶ Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in E. Ann Kaplan, ed., *Postmodernism and its Discontents*, (London: Verso, 1990) 28.
- ⁴⁷ Jameson, *Postmodernism* 18.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 287.
- ⁵⁰ Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World* (London: Routledge, 1996) 2.
- ⁵¹ Milan Kundera, *Slowness* (London: Faber&Faber, 1996) 34.
- ⁵² Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 7.
- ⁵³ The Enola Gay exhibition went on display in the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in June 1995 having been chastised by a number of columnists and ex-servicemen as an "antinuke morality play." A good account of this is given by Mike Wallace, "The Battle of the Enola Gay," *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Collective Memory*, (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996) 270-318.
- ⁵⁴ See in particular Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally, eds., *History in African-American Culture*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1994).

⁵⁵ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (Spring) 1989: 12.

⁵⁶ Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983); Susan Bennett, *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past* (London: Routledge, 1996); David Brett, *The Construction of Heritage* (Cork: Cork UP, 1996).

⁵⁷ See Lawrence Grossberg, *Bringing it all Back Home: Essays on Cultural Studies* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997); and David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁵⁸ Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture*, (Durham: Duke UP, 1997) 159

⁵⁹ See Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing In Spite of Myself*, 253-269.

⁶⁰ Steve Neale, *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), 84. Written more from a psychoanalytic perspective, see also, Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992).

⁶¹ Richard Dyer, *White*, 83.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶³ Christopher Lasch, "The Politics of Nostalgia," 66.

CHAPTER TWO

PASTNESS AND THE PRODUCTION OF NOSTALGIA

In describing the growing popularity of old photographs in recent years, Raphael Samuel suggests that within popular taste the content of an image is often secondary to questions of colour and tone. As such, the difference between a print of a 1906 football team and that of women demonstrating for suffrage will be of little consequence so long as both are in sepia. He writes: "Pictures seem to recommend themselves for reproduction because they are, in some ineffable sense, 'atmospheric,' blurring the hard lines of detail in some more generalised aura of pastness."¹ Samuel is specifically concerned with the commercial circulation of visual images and their contribution to British "theatres of memory." His comment is suggestive, however, of larger conceptual distinctions that can be made between the content, or "detail," of nostalgic longing and the more random, and affective, economy of stylized pastness. If the nostalgia mood represents a particular conception of the past thought to be more stable and complete, the nostalgia mode describes an aesthetic register with a far more indiscriminate relationship with the past. This chapter is concerned with the status and production of "pastness" in American culture during the 1980s and 1990s; it provides a ranging survey of how nostalgia has developed as a mode, a genre, a market and a style.

In the last three decades of the twentieth century, nostalgia was commodified and aestheticized as perhaps never before. One can link this to various factors, including diversifying markets for memory, the growth of the heritage industry, the political aesthetic

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of Reaganism, the demographic size of a baby-boom generation entering middle age and the attendant marketing of the “boomer” past, the proliferation of technologies of time-shifting (notably, the VCR) and digital reproduction, and a representational economy of recycling and pastiche. In no singular way, these all helped develop nostalgia as a cultural style, a consumable mode as much as it can be said to be an experienced mood. There is a critical tendency, across various disciplines, to explain the new preponderance for the past in terms of what Jim Collins has called, and criticized as, a “*Zeitgeist* model”: that is to say, a mode of analysis that accounts for the rising stock of heritage, tradition, memory and nostalgia by relating them to a governing narrative or cultural temper.² Like Collins, I take issue with the “comfortable fictions” of zeitgeist theories. I want in this chapter to historicize the development of nostalgia as a style, but without collapsing my argument into any explanatory metanarrative.

The zeitgeist model is especially prevalent in accounts of the initial “nostalgia boom” of the 1970s, a phenomenon that can be seen to include films like *The Sting* and *American Graffiti*, sitcoms such as *Happy Days*, the flourishing of “retro-chic” in the fashion industry, the turn towards historic preservation in city architecture, and the burgeoning interest in heritage evidenced in, and inspired by, dramas like *Roots*. Explaining the growing currency of nostalgia, emergent in the 1970s, critics often refer to a sense of national crisis or, to coin a phrase made popular at the time, “malaise.” Fred Davis relates the cultural incidence of nostalgia to a sense of dislocation, mainly caused by socio-political factors such as crippling inflation, the humiliations caused by the Arab oil embargo and the withdrawal from Vietnam, the tarnishing of the Presidency caused by the Watergate scandal, and the confusions of sexual morality and family values that, collectively, led Jimmy Carter to speak in 1979 of an American “crisis of confidence.” In

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aesthetic terms, Allison Graham relates the production of nostalgia within popular culture to a moment of creative exhaustion, a time where “popular art no longer springs from creative associations with a contemporary social reality.”³ She suggests that America is drawn to its recent history and the recreation of cultural artefacts because of a certain alienation and detachment from vital issues experienced in the present. In different ways, these arguments link nostalgia to a prevailing cultural experience and condition, the consequence of socio-political disorientation and creative enervation.

While the production of nostalgia in the seventies may have grown in tandem with a sense of cultural crisis, even a feeling of loss and malaise, it cannot be reduced to this explanatory model; the commodification and aestheticization of nostalgia, in the 1970s and beyond, cannot be contained within hermetic theories of crisis and decline. For one thing, these do not adequately grasp the “modish” existence of nostalgia in cultural life, or the way that images of the past *and* the future circulate together in reconfigured forms within the textual and taste cultures of postmodern life. Jim Collins suggests that contemporary culture, or what he calls the “information age,” has become increasingly “defined not just by the ongoing struggle between the futuristic and the anachronistic . . . , but even more importantly, by ways in which the opposition is being reconceptualized in cultures defined by the simultaneous presence of phenomena like cyberpunk and neo-neoclassical architecture, but also ‘cutting-edge’ Early Music ensembles.”⁴ While the selling of the past may have developed in accordance with social ruptures, notably in the 1970s, theories that reduce commodified nostalgia to a climate of enveloping decline and dislocation do not always account for the more particular technological, economic and design histories behind specific nostalgia modes, or for the economy of *pastness* that has developed within the textual and affective regimes of postmodern culture.

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This chapter will consider nostalgia as a cultural style, addressing the subject from three different perspectives within the context of the 1980s and 1990s, a period where the form and structure of capitalist postmodernity - meaning the development of global information networks, the integration of corporate structures and financial markets, and the profligate flow of image, spectacle and simulacra - took a more definite shape. Beginning with the Reagan aesthetic and the political expediencies of pastness, I will then discuss the question of cultural recycling. Focusing on The Nostalgia Network and other cable and radio stations that have emerged since the 1980s, I will address issues like market segmentation and programme syndication, as well as the impact of digital and video technology on the reproduction of the past. In a final section on "retro," I will look at stylized nostalgia in terms of fashion and display, considering issues of taste and textuality as they relate both to representational strategies of pastiche and to the commercial staging of "heritage." This chapter does not aim or claim to provide an exhaustive account of nostalgia as a contemporary cultural style. It is purposefully diverse in its approach, moving between politics, technology, textuality and taste, in ways that do not seek to harmonize them within any single account of, or explanation for, the place and significance of stylized nostalgia. Ultimately, this chapter provides a contextual survey, exploring the development of "pastness" in a culture that is not so much reeling from discontinuity and the experience of loss, but able to transmit, store, retrieve, reconfigure, and invoke the past in specific ways. In the context of my thesis, it serves two functions: it helps situate the black and white image in terms of the larger commodification/aestheticization of nostalgia within American cultural life, and it demonstrates how, on certain terms, nostalgia has become divorced from any necessary concept of longing or loss.

The Reagan Aesthetic

Any attempt to measure the feeling or degree of nostalgia within American cultural life runs the risk of becoming a fitful exercise in cultural pulse-taking. It is perhaps more reasonable, and useful, to account for the *discourse of nostalgia* within any period. This concentrates less on how America “feels” than what it feels it needs, what terms and categories have become gradually, or even suddenly, meaningful. Michael Kammen makes some attempt at mapping such a discourse in the contemporary period by suggesting that “nostalgia” became a media buzzword between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s. His evidence for this comes mainly from critical comments in periodicals, broadsheets and news magazines, addressing and ultimately railing against the promiscuous degree of nostalgia observed within American life. He pins 1985 as the year when “warnings started to flash” in journalistic features, beginning to question nostalgia as a detrimental “disease” and “fallacy.”⁵ The media have played a central role in diagnosing and detailing, as well as denouncing, America’s “nostalgic condition.” Christopher Lasch goes as far as to suggest that the “‘nostalgia boom’ of the seventies first took shape as a media promotion, ‘a non-event that proclaimed the demise of the sixties.’”⁶ While the media has a tendency to create news stories and inflate them into cultural phenomena (“road-rage,” “political correctness,” and “Y2K anxiety” to name just three), the media discourse of nostalgia in the 1980s did not emerge in a complete vacuum. The eighties saw the development of nostalgia as a markedly self-conscious mode, both in commercial *and* political spheres. Reaganism, in particular, was a political credo with a pact with the past. A certain Rockwellian nostalgia lay at the rhetorical heart of the Reagan Presidency, harmoniously combined with investments in progress and technological promise.

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Identifying Ronald Reagan as the man, and the moment, when nostalgia crystallized as a style in American political life is simplistic. It was Reagan, however, who refined nostalgia into a political aesthetic, who unmoored the experience of nostalgia from a concept of loss by turning it into a performative style. From the outset, Reagan's previous careers in radio, film, television and then radio again gave him a certain iconic capital, being perceivably of the (popular culture) past. Gary Wills writes that: "Reagan gives our history the continuity of a Mobius strip. We ride its curves backwards and forwards at the same time, and he is always there."⁷ Unlike Jimmy Carter who saw in the past a better America, a time before the contemporary worship of "self-indulgence and consumption," Reagan invoked the past as a well of American spiritual essence of which he himself was a part. The shift from past to pastness in political rhetoric was partly the result of Reagan's own symbolism. He was "the great American synecdoche, not only a part of our past but a large part of our multiple pasts."⁸ Reagan had the aura of pastness about his very being; he was identified with American history by the proxy of popular culture and his enduring place within it for much of his life. According to Wills, "Reagan not only represents the past but resurrects it as a promise of the future. He has Edison's last breath in his lungs."⁹

Reagan played upon his own symbolic cachet, developing a mythic conception of the American past where ideas of small town normalcy and its composite institutions - family, church, community and business - were supposedly manifest.¹⁰ Reagan's politics of nostalgia invoked a vision of America unaffected by the social ruptures of the 1960s and the political and economic humiliations of the 1970s; it was central to a strategy of aggressive nationalism that Todd Gitlin situates in terms of Reagan's desire to "preside over the in-gathering of a majority and the invocation of a unity."¹¹ One cannot ignore the

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sociology of Reagan's nostalgia; in important ways, he played upon a reinvigorated sense of national mission in a climate of acute socio-political discordance. In the context of sustained economic travails, a politically ignominious hostage debacle, and the more general fall-out from a decade of so-called "narcissism," James Combs suggests: "Reagan had to re-enchant the world, to imbue the profane present with the aura of the sacral past in order to forestall or reverse the rapid decomposition of value orientations."¹² The sociology of Reagan's nostalgia is significant but it must be examined alongside its rhetorical execution. When Frank Sinatra performed at Reagan's inauguration in 1980, Johnny Carson quipped "this is the first administration to have a premier." If, as some would say, the Presidency was Reagan's last great acting role, the executive script involved a large degree of mythic invocation, riding slipshod over historical particularity (as well as historical *fact*), to construct a useable past that would support a variety of right-wing political adventures.¹³

It is not my aim to critique Reagan's presidency. No treatment of nostalgia as a cultural style in contemporary America could fail to mention the significance of Reagan, however. He developed a particular form of neokitsch, feeding on the past and the present in ways that transmogrified popular culture into a compendium of national motifs. Sidney Blumenthal suggests that familiarity was the quintessence of the Reagan aesthetic, familiar personalities, songs, jokes, lines, stories and images. If postmodernity is defined by the cannibalization of past styles, Reagan became the cannibal-in-chief. Blumenthal writes that "his rhetoric was filled with shards of kitsch ripped from popular culture. The stream of kitsch allusions emanating from Reagan was endless."¹⁴ It is indicative that both Wills and Blumenthal, each writing in 1988, the year Reagan left office, should be drawn in their preliminary observations to Reagan's political style. The significance of Reagan was in

part his ability to embody a vision of America that was both emotive and comforting. Style, in this sense, was substance. Wills contends that Reagan “renews our past by resuming it. His approach is not discursive, setting up sequences of time or thought, but associative; not a tracking shot, but montage. We make the connections. It is our movie.”¹⁵

Reagan did not invent the nostalgic style in American political culture but may have given it a particular twist in politicizing the conjunction of nationalism and nostalgia through a neokitsch aesthetic. Lawrence Grossberg maps a new relationship that developed between “the people and the nation” in the 1980s with the rise of a new conservative hegemony. Rather than redefine the contents of “common sense” as in Thatcherite Britain, Grossberg argues that the American New Right set about “restructuring the terrain of the national popular.”¹⁶ Explaining the neo-conservative premise that the crisis of America in the 1980s was affective - a lack of passion for values and beliefs - Grossberg suggests that attempts were made to reconstruct investments in the nation through people’s affective relationship with popular taste and culture. One site of this was the proliferation of, and investments in, images of the family; another was the rearticulation of the sixties and the generation of images of pre-countercultural youth cultures. The crux of Grossberg’s argument is that hegemonic conservatism constructed America as a “purely affective investment,” the focus of passionate commitment but without standing for anything. He calls this “nationalism with no content,” an “empty fullness” possible in postmodern culture where the strength of feeling is difficult to achieve for *any* meaning or value. Nostalgia here functions less in the creation of an imaginary past than in providing an iconic terrain for affective commitments to the nation.

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In the Reagan aesthetic, nostalgia was more a question of atmosphere than detail. Harvey J. Kaye comments: "Since he did not tie his past-to-be-recovered to any particular period in American history, Reagan was not temporally limited in his staking of claims on the past."¹⁷ Reagan deployed the aura of pastness, even symbolized it, but in ways that spoke less of the past than secured through kitsch and camp Reagan's own credentials as a political and cultural icon, one of commitment to national commitment. One of Grossberg's key ideas in theorizing a postmodern climate is that of a dominant sensibility characterized by ironic cynicism. He writes: "The cynicism dictates that nothing matters; and yet, even within the cynicism, something has to matter if only to avoid allowing your cynicism to matter too much."¹⁸ Reagan's political aesthetic advanced nostalgia as a cultural style that focused "maps of mattering" if not, in Grossberg's vocabulary, "maps of meaning." It was a form of nostalgia without a concomitant sense of longing or loss. Rather than construct national identity through an imaginary past thought to be retrievable, the New Right used the past as a stimulus of passionate believing. In the 1984 presidential campaign, Assistant White House Chief of Staff, Richard Darman, wrote a memo that advised speechwriters to create a particular kind of rhetoric. It said: "Paint Ronald Reagan as the personification of all that is right with or heroized by America. Leave Mondale in a position where an attack on Reagan is tantamount to an attack on America's idealized image of itself - where a vote against Reagan is in some subliminal sense a vote against mythic "AMERICA."¹⁹ For Reagan, nostalgia was not an exercise in ritualist yearning; it was an aesthetic mode that became fundamental to his projection, *and embodiment*, of a mythical national essence.

The concept of affect is useful for theorizing the disconnection of nostalgia from loss in the political terrain of the 1980s. According to Grossberg, "affective politics" were central to

the hegemonic strategies of neo-conservatism. Affect is a structure of belonging; it describes the energy and passion with which people invest in particular sites of meaning. Neo-conservatism made passion a value in itself, however. The political meaning of “the family,” “drugs,” “the economy,” and “America” became less significant than the degree of belief and commitment each one inspired (or was made to inspire) as a site of affective investment. According to Grossberg, this represents a process of depoliticization whereby the production of passion replaces the capacity for real political debate. Nostalgia was a particular form of passion within this affective economy, a feeling divorced from any culturally realized sense of longing, loss or necessary meaning. Nostalgia, in other words, was no longer a yearning that derived from the articulation of values and virtues thought to exist in the past; it was instead ritualized within a certain political performance. Grossberg suggests that in a world where politics has become freed from the constraints of meaning, where passion has become a replacement for politically informed choice and engagement, “nostalgia is suspect in a scandalized public domain, for it can be measured and judged.”²⁰ What is left is “nostalgia for nostalgia, nostalgia for a mood.” Reagan’s success was partly achieved through his sustained invocation of mood: upbeat, reassured, and greased with a constant stream of hometown rhetoric. Nostalgia was central to a political aesthetic that invoked the past randomly, but relentlessly, in strategic attempts to, in Grossberg’s terms, “redistribute affective investments in the nation.”

Recycling

It is perhaps not incidental that in 1985, during the highpoint of Reagan’s “new politics of old values,” a new 24-hour cable station called “The Nostalgia Network” should be

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launched, offering a “unique blend of non-violent, feel-good programming with traditional values.” Products of popular culture cannot be divorced from the political climate in which they emerge. If the new conservatism was put in place through people’s relation with popular culture, one might be especially inclined to relate the nostalgia embedded within the Reagan aesthetic to certain manifestations in film, television and music. A different kind of analysis might look more closely at the satiric pastoralism of Garrison Keiller, for example, whose national radio show, *The Prairie Home Companion*, became a hit in the mid-1980s and inspired Keiller’s cult book, *Lake Wobegon Days* (1985); it might investigate the nostalgic recreation of family values in the enormously popular sitcoms, *The Cosby Show* and *The Wonder Years*; it might examine the very currency of “traditional values” proffered by a cable station such as the “The Nostalgia Network.” All of these can be set in the context of a political culture where the (nostalgic) past was being heavily trafficked in what one critic has called Reagan’s “orgy of re-illusionment.”²¹ While there is considerable scope for ideological critique of this sort, the production of nostalgia in the 1980s cannot be explained, or examined, through the interests and agenda of the New Right alone. In this section, I want to consider the development of stylized nostalgia from a different perspective: not as it relates to any particular political project but as it has been enabled by technological advancements and produced by specific consumer industries.

The genesis of The Nostalgia Network must be measured, first and foremost, not in relation to Reagan, but in the context of the massive expansion in cable television during the 1980s. In 1976, 90 percent of television viewers watched programmes broadcast by the three major networks, ABC, CBS or NBC. By the mid-1980s, this figure had dropped to 75 percent. Making use of new satellite technologies that could reach large geographical areas, and encouraged by the deregulation of the cable industry’s pricing structure in the

free-market frenzy of the 1980s, there was a proliferation of cable networks, including the likes of MTV and CNN.²² The Nostalgia Network was one of a large number of cable creations that emerged in the 1980s, helping to segment television viewing by targeting specific demographic groups. Exploiting a vast television market, and targeting post-49 year olds, The Nostalgia Network combined niche information and lifestyle programmes with acquired shows like *The Love Boat*, *The Rockford Files* and *The Streets of San Francisco*. In the early 1990s, the network reached a subscription peak of nine million, tapping one of the fastest growing segments of the population in that of middle-aged “baby-boomers.”

Market demographers generally split the baby-boom generation into two categories: those born between the end of World War II and the mid-1950s and those born between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s.²³ Together, they comprise well over a quarter of the population. With high disposable incomes and increased leisure time, the ageing baby-boom generation has become a major target group within the marketing community. If cable networks acquire revenue through subscription fees and paid advertising, the Nostalgia Network provides a programming service, as well as an advertising platform, aimed at the post-49 market. Competing with such as The History Channel, TV Land, Home and Garden Television, and American Movie Classics, The Nostalgia Network is a lifestyle channel that targets the interests, concerns and entertainment predilections of the “greying sector.” Ron Neeson, who hosts an information programme on the network called “Issues and Answers,” suggests that while those in the post-49 market are diverse, they may nevertheless share certain attitudes towards money, leisure time, entertainers, food and music. Of his own programme (the title of which, “Issues and Answers,” was bought by The Nostalgia Network, having been a long-running show on ABC), Neeson comments:

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“We try to deal with serious issues, particularly issues to people over 50, not a lot of shouting and yelling.” He continues: “We try to provide information because that’s the other thing people over 50 are looking for, information: what to do with their own money, what’s the government going to do to them or for them, what candidates best represent them and so forth.”²⁴ Just as MTV, with its fast cut format and high degree of yelling, serves a youth market, The Nostalgia Network provides a programming option at the other end of the demographic scale.

The Nostalgia Network is not about the past, per se, but about niche marketing and the taste and value differentials of particular demographic segments. Significant here is perhaps the connotative drift experienced by the very word and concept of “nostalgia.” In commercial terms, it need not depend on a specific idea of the past but can designate anything which has been culturally recycled and/or appeals to a market where pastness is a value. It is not, in other words, symptomatic of cultural or consumer longing but is an index of commodities, media products, and programming orientations, that draw upon notions of tradition, or use an idea of the past to position themselves within particular niche markets. After a drop in viewing figures in the mid-1990s, The Nostalgia Network underwent a process of rebranding. This entailed the adoption of a new name to portray the contemporary aspects of its revamped schedule. “Nostalgia Good-tv” was deemed by management a better description of its value-oriented rather than past-oriented programming. As President and CEO of The Nostalgia Network, Squire Rushnell identified the station in the following way:

Audiences have been set adrift in a cluttered, fast-paced television environment characterized by sex, violence and social cynicism. Nostalgia Good-tv provides an

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entertainment oasis that is especially attractive to viewers, because we offer more than old programming; we present innovative, original programs built around friendly personalities who uplift, relax and entertain without assaulting one's sensibilities.²⁵

Rushnell plays upon a certain nostalgia for an idea of television as warm and wholesome; there is a picture of decline based around the apparently cluttered, violent, sex-ridden television culture of the 1990s. He is also quick to emphasize, however, that Nostalgia Good-tv is not about returning to a golden age, or reliving a better past. It is about innovation and originality. In a business climate where cable stations must fight desperately for broadcast audiences, Nostalgia Good-tv caters to an older media generation, a specific demographic market, whose values are sponsored and then serviced in the development of contemporary niche programming.

“Nostalgia” has become something of a genre in a media culture of “narrowcasting,” a term denoting the pursuit of narrow but profitable segments of the viewing audience. As a commodity, “nostalgia” designates a particular kind of programming in the radio as well as the television industry. Capitalizing on the growing market for radio syndication in the 1990s, the Nostalgia Broadcasting Corporation (a company that operates NBG Radio and that went public in 1996) offered four networks of radio programming, including the Financial Network, Nostalgia Network, Sports Network and Entertainment Network. According to its own corporate profile, “the company’s approach to radio syndication is to produce and/or acquire speciality audio shows and enrol radio station affiliates to broadcast these programs. NBG’s new product development is market driven; niche radio programming important to specific national advertisers is the first target.”²⁶ Nostalgia is

therefore one of four niche options in this context. NBG sells two radio shows, "The Golden Age of Radio" and "Big Band Classics," to stations filling what radio insiders have come to call an "Oldies" format.

With the marked increase of radio stations and television channels in the 1980s and 1990s - all trying to fill schedules and in competition for listeners and viewers - syndication became an extremely lucrative business. The rerun became an especially cheap and reliable source of material in this context, providing a base component of contemporary broadcast nostalgia. Of course, the rerun has a long syndication history. In television, it dates back to the 1950s where the production costs of live television became too expensive and stations came to rely on filmed, and hence repeatable, programming.²⁷ The expansion of the cable industry and the growth of commercial radio in the 1980s, however, gave the rerun an invigorated life. Old serials and sitcoms were targeted not only at the post-49 market, but also framed in programming formats that helped foster a cult youth following. *Nick at Nite* is perhaps the best example of this, launched in 1985 as part of the evening schedule of the children's cable station, Nickelodeon. Hosted by Dr. Will Miller, and then by Dick Van Dyke, *Nick at Nite* specializes in old sitcoms and television reruns. This is expedient for Viacom, the company which owns Nickelodeon, because it has at its disposal a large stock of old network programming. Accounting for the success of *Nick at Nite*, Lynn Spigel writes: "The popularity of *Nick at Nite*'s reruns probably has less to do with the universal appeal of television art - its ability to last through generations - than with the network's strategies of representation. Nickelodeon created a new reception context for old reruns by repackaging them through a new camp sensibility."²⁸ This "repackaging" involves a certain playfulness in the way that sitcoms are introduced, employing stars like David Cassidy to host special programme marathons. It also derives from original programming

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such as Nickelodeon's own 1991 sitcom *Hi, Honey, I'm Home*. This show was based on a black and white rerun family displaced into the 1990s, a conceit that would be replicated and reversed by Hollywood in *Pleasantville* (1998), a film in which two colour teenagers from the 1990s are displaced into a black and white fifties sitcom. By replaying and recontextualizing reruns in programming formats aimed at particular demographic segments, cable stations have sold nostalgia both as generational reminiscence and postmodern camp

Within the broadcast industries, the commodification of nostalgia has not been a market response to generalized cultural longing but can be explained through commercial imperatives such as market segmentation and media syndication. Cable channels like The Nostalgia Network, radio syndicators like the Nostalgia Broadcasting Corporation, and more specific programmes such as *Nick at Nite* are fairly indiscriminate about the constitution of "nostalgia" in their broadcast formats. As a generic category, nostalgia can encompass anything from ballroom dancing and Big Band interviews, to multi-lingual versions of *The Streets of San Francisco* and rerun marathons of *The Partridge Family*. The content and "meaning" of nostalgia is, in many respects, secondary to strategies of production and the imperatives of niche consumption. If nostalgia is a marketable mode in the broadcast industries, it has become so in the context of the fragmentation of the television and radio audience. While not denying that nostalgic loss may well be experienced and played upon in contemporary media culture, the commodification of nostalgia perhaps more accurately demonstrates the contingencies of niche marketing than any particular index of cultural longing.

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A central argument of this chapter is that, as a cultural style, nostalgia cannot be explained through any simplified theory of cultural longing and/or sense of dislocation. This would be to misread the development of nostalgia as a register and generic mode, both as it has been taken up affectively within political discourse and deployed strategically within consumer culture. Instead of one explanatory master-narrative (discontinuity, crisis, enervation, fin-de-siècle anxiety), the commodification and aestheticization of nostalgia in American culture must be set in relation to a cumulation of factors. It is important, in this context, to mark the significance of new technological innovations and their ability to rescue, recycle and reconfigure the past in the cultural and media terrain. The digital and video revolutions have, in particular, transformed our ability to access, circulate, and consume the (cultural) past. The surfeit of information in contemporary culture, enabled by information technologies like computers, cable television, VCR and digital recording, has had a dramatic impact both on our engagement with the past and our sense of the archive. Whether through the click of a mouse or the push of a TV or CD remote, the past has become, in the words of Jim Collins, “a matter of perpetually reconfigurable random access.”²⁹ If nostalgia is a style based on a particular economy of “pastness,” one must recognize the cultural influence of technologies that enable the recuperation of images, styles and sounds drawn from the past.

In a *Herald Tribune* article entitled “New Nostalgia on Record,” Bernard Hollard suggests that “classical music is recycling with the best of them.”³⁰ Owning the tapes of classical recordings made thirty or forty years ago, Hollard notes that companies will prefer to pay the re-use rights rather than hire an orchestra to record a new version. Sony Classical, for example, has gathered many performances from its back-catalogue and reissued them on compilation CDs. What lies behind this strategy are the digital technologies that enable old

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recordings to be produced and sold as high quality merchandise. Selling the musical past has grown exponentially with CDs. Whether jazz, classical, punk, or folk, there has been an extremely profitable outpouring of musical box sets and single-album reissues in the 1980s and 1990s. These are produced by record companies who own the master tapes of old recordings and can make profits through reselling their archives as “classic.” Nostalgia has become a musical category in its own right within this context. The music magazine *Gramophone* gathers under this title compilation CDs by artists such as Nat King Cole, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Sarah Vaughan, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra.³¹ In the music industry, “nostalgia” denotes a particular kind of “pre-rock” performer - mainly jazz artists, crooners and torch singers - who can be sold under ready rubrics such as “timeless” and “legendary.”

If the record industry experienced a commercial windfall in the digital remastering of old music, the film and television industries have also capitalized on the possibilities of cultural recycling opened up by video. As a technological and aesthetic form, video has enormous possibilities for repetition and recycling. From a commercial point of view, it provides the film and television industries with a means of repackaging their products, enabling consumers to watch again their favourite movies and shows, including the “classics” that might otherwise have been laid to rest in company vaults. A video revolution occurred in the 1980s. While in 1978 there were just 440,000 VCRs, by 1983 there were 4.1 million. By 1990, 75 percent of American homes owned a video recorder.³² One consequence of this technological tide has been a newly figured relationship with the here-and-now of television “presence.” Central to the impact of video is the capacity for “time-shifting.” Practically, this gives the individual far more control over the way that television can be watched; viewers are released from network programming schedules with

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the possibility of replay, and are given more choice through the advent of home-rental. Douglas Gomery states that by the beginning of the 1990s revenue from tape rentals was exceeding \$10 billion a year.³³ The video market vastly increased the interest in movie watching. By the mid-1980s, more than one hundred million cassettes were being rented each month.³⁴ Marketing the filmic, as well as the televisual, past became integral to this new media environment. Catering to niche markets, companies like Video Yesteryear have come to specialize in old movies, adding to the range of films drawn from studio archives that are broadcast and sold through cable and video outlets. Marketing the past has, in short, become a lucrative by-product of the new relationship being forged in the age of video between institutions, texts and viewers.³⁵

I have been concerned in this section with “nostalgia” as a commercial niche, developing in the context of certain demographic, industrial, and technological transformations that have enabled, and given life to, a recycled, and newly recyclable, past. The ability to resuscitate the past does not, in itself, explain or guarantee the currency of nostalgia in commercial and cultural life, however. One must also account for the manner in which nostalgia has insinuated itself into particular textual and taste economies. To judge nostalgia as a quite explicit *style*, I want in the final section to look at the phenomenon of “retro” and the commercial selling of “heritage.” The former will bring together issues of taste and textuality as they relate to a postmodern culture where the past is not simply *more* recyclable, but structured into a particular representational regime. The latter will concentrate on the proliferating means by which the past is staged as a tourist attraction and consumer atmosphere. Together, they can round off this chapter’s brief survey of the contemporary “nostalgia mode” by accounting for some of the ways in which, to quote Jim

Collins, “temporality has become perhaps the most significant priority in the determination of ‘style’ values in the nineties.”³⁶

Retro

In the late-1990s, the irreverent online magazine *The Onion* ran a headline story that said: “U.S. Dept. of Retro Warns: ‘We May Be Running Out of Past.’” Mocking the prevalence of American pop-cultural kitsch appreciation, the article “reported” that the U.S. Retro Secretary had “issued a strongly worded warning of an imminent national retro crisis,” cautioning that “if current levels of U.S. retro consumption are allowed to continue unchecked, we may run entirely out of past by as soon as 2005.”³⁷ *The Onion* has made acutely observed satire its stock in trade. What is perhaps interesting in this case, however, is that many of its comic inventions - such as a national retro clock standing at 1990, an “alarming 74 percent closer to the present than 10 years ago when it stood at 1969” - are in some sense quite accurate. Rudi Franchi, for example, who owns a shop in Boston called The Nostalgia Factory, explains that, since he turned his personal collection of memorabilia into a specialist collectors shop in 1970, the greatest change he has noticed selling “overpriced junk and trendy trash” is the speed with which items become collectible. From Pez dispensers to cereal boxers, Franchi says: “No sooner is an item introduced to the market than it shows up at a shop like mine.”³⁸ The lapse of time between an item entering the cultural terrain and returning as “retro” has become a matter of years rather than decades.

“Retro” has become a term used to describe the past as it is figured within style narratives of the chic and trendy. Dictionary definitions of retro give it is as a prefix, meaning backward (as in retrospect) or, in medical terms, contrary to the usual or natural course (as in retrograde). In his treatment of “retrochic,” Raphael Samuel explores its more contemporary application, used to describe any style, advertisement or product that is based on some essential quality of pastness.³⁹ As a term, “retrochic” was coined in France in the late 1960s by the Paris avant-garde. It was applied to the growing taste in revival or period styles emerging from certain counter-cultural examples of alternative consumerism. It began as an impromptu anti-fashion, but was soon taken up as a profitable style, fashion critics calling the trend in mainstream commercial design “the nostalgia industry.” Retro also had a particular meaning in French film, the “*mode retro*” coined as a term in *Cahiers du Cinema*, describing a new genre of film concerned with European fascism. (This became widely discussed after the 1974 release of Louis Malle’s *Lacombe Lucien*). In this case, “retro” did not refer to stylistic kitsch but to the cinematic re-examination of the Occupation.⁴⁰ While the *mode retro* has a particular meaning in (French) film history, the idea of stylistic “retro” has developed a broad international currency based on borrowing, quoting and pastiche. Retro is the word that perhaps best describes versions of postmodern nostalgia: playful, ironic and where the past is a storehouse of fashion.

Critics from Raphael Samuel to Umberto Eco have argued that there is nothing fundamentally new about repetition and recycling within modes of cultural and aesthetic production.⁴¹ What is perhaps new about retro, however, is the cavalier and eclectic regard for the past. Retro is less concerned with historical particularity than with scripting kitsch pastness into particular style regimes. Retro does have a loose period orientation. Within the fashion and music industries - where the term has been most fully developed - it

describes kitsch drawn from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Cinematically, this has been expressed in retro films such as *Boogie Nights* (1997) and *The Wedding Singer* (1998).

Whatever the periodic focus of retro, the past is almost always judged playfully; previous styles inspire revelry more than reverence, nostalgia without loss. In his discussion of “retro-modernism,” Jim Collins suggests that the significance of the retro phenomenon, broadly defined, is in the reconfiguration of “taste cartographies” brought about by the semiotic excess of postmodern culture.⁴² This refers to a process of hybridization that circulates ideas of old and new, classic and cutting-edge, within compound notions such as the “modern classic.” His use and understanding of “retro” in this context goes beyond the designation of fashion raids on popular, post-1960s, kitsch. It suggests a representational economy that can mix and reconfigure past and present, historicity and contemporaneity, in textual syntheses that disturb older distinctions between tradition and innovation. This, he suggests, has a profound impact on evaluative criteria and the forms of cultural authority that legitimize that criteria; it introduces a new “variability of value” where distinctions between past and present, like those of high and popular culture, are less clearly demarcated.

Retro nostalgia has become a subject of pointed critical debate. In 1984, Fredric Jameson wrote his seminal essay “Postmodernism and Consumer Society.” In it, he put forward a theory of pastiche that stated: “In a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum.”⁴³ Retro, by this definition, is symptomatic of cultural exhaustion, creative inauthenticity and a crisis in the postmodern historical imagination. Allison Graham considers a like argument within the context of contemporary American film. From parodies of film genres like *Blazing Saddles* and *Raiders of the Lost*

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Ark to remakes like *Body Heat* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Graham laments the fact that culture has become self-consuming. She writes: "Feeding only on itself, the culture can refer only *to* itself; its crimes are those of absolute solipsism"⁴⁴ What both fail to see in their critiques of postmodern nostalgia, are the particular negotiations of meaning (and evaluative criteria) undertaken by the retro mode.

To its defenders, "retro" is not a mark of cultural amnesia or creative bankruptcy, but a way of acknowledging that the past exists through textual traces in cultural and ideological mediation with the present. There is, in other words, a more acute sensitivity in the retro mode to the fact that access to the past is never direct or natural, but realized through a complex history of representations. For Linda Hutcheon, the parodic re-reading of the past, evidenced in postmodern culture, is not ahistorical, de-historicizing or even nostalgic, but demonstrates an increasing semiotic awareness of the textuality of the past. She writes: "Postmodern historicism is wilfully unencumbered by nostalgia in its critical, dialogical reviewing of the forms, contexts and values of the past."⁴⁵ Put another way, the modish nostalgia that defines postmodern historicism is unencumbered by any attendant sense of nostalgic *loss*. Kaja Silverman reads this in the context of fashion, suggesting that the stylized nostalgia of retro problematizes the binary of "old" and "new." She argues that retro fashion inserts the wearer "into a complex network of cultural and historical references. At the same time, it avoids the pitfalls of a naïve referentiality; by putting quotation marks around the garments it revitalizes, it makes clear that the past is available to us only in a textual form, and through the mediation of the present."⁴⁶ Retro borrows from the past without sentimentality, quotes from the past without longing, parodies the past without loss. As a term, "retro" developed a broad market currency in the 1990s, describing anything from home furnishing and thrift store fashion to "Britpop" and forms

of digital sampling. “Retro” was popularized both as a commercial category and cultural practice; it designated virtually any activity or enterprise where the past was taken up with a particular, often ironic, self-consciousness.

While it is perhaps the epitome of postmodern nostalgia, retro irony is not the only way that nostalgia has been coded within the taste regimes of contemporary culture. A quite different example can be found in the heritage industry, with its staged authenticity of local and national traditions. As a collective term, “the heritage industry” denotes a wide variety of commercial enterprises, tourist attractions and preservation projects, that market the past as a spectacle and/or a site. The reasons for the growth of an international heritage culture are varied and have been treated at length by a number of critics. It has been explained in terms of anything from the democratization and popularization of tradition in the postwar period, to the growth of particular tourist economies, from the need to affirm political legitimacy and social identity in a global culture, to the symptomatic result of historical and creative national decline.⁴⁷ What interests me in this burgeoning field is not the evolution of the American heritage industry (which emerged after World War II) or the historical (mis)representations of particular heritage spectacles. Rather, it is the way that “heritage” and “bygone” have become co-joined in the marketing of consumer atmosphere.

Drawing upon the architectural showcasing of urban heritage that grew in American cities from the 1970s, M. Christine Boyer considers the current wisdom of city building that connects stagings of the bygone past with an idea of a city’s image, liveability and cultural capital. She writes: “Increasingly in the 1970s and 1980s, the centers of American and European cities were seized with nostalgia for past architectural styles, transforming enclaves of their architectural patrimony into city tableaux arranged for visual

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consumption.”⁴⁸ From Boston’s Quincy Market to New York’s South Street Seaport, Boyer reads postmodern fragmentation and amnesia into the economic imperatives of city development. She is highly critical of the process by which historic styles and images are plundered in the creation of historicized commercial stage sets. Not unsimilar to Pierre Nora, she objects to the creation of “imposed scenes” that do not remain part of “living memory.” The return to tradition within contemporary cityscapes has, she argues, turned collective memory into a series of conflicting and privatized fragments that are estranged from any unified totality. Whether or not one agrees with Boyer’s concept of authentic, “living” memory, set against a postmodern architectural ethos of fragments and dissonance, she usefully examines how the bygone past has been taken up in “the new public theatres of late capitalism.” Boyer suggests that a development like the South Street Seaport, which opened in 1983, uses history to script consumers within narratives based on a mercantile past, engaging modes of consumption through the fictive pleasures of bygone trade. The historical tableau extols a nostalgia which is then used for commercial ambience; the aura of pastness is figured within an image spectacle that is profitable, visually fashionable, and where memory is an adjunct of consumption.

The bygone past has become a marketable experience; it is a look, a feel, an atmosphere to be consumed. It can be witnessed in city building but also in the atmospheric surrounds created by the leisure industry, where hotels promise to “echo the graciousness of a bygone era,” or, as one Arkansas establishment put it, “recapture the warmth of a bygone era for non-smoking adults.”⁴⁹ *Staging* the bygone has become central to the valuation of consumer quality and experience. It has also become integral to the techniques of display at specific heritage sites. Exploring the question of authenticity at New Salem, a heritage site marking the home of Abraham Lincoln, Edward Bruner suggests that authenticity is

measured less in terms of material originality than “historical verisimilitude.”⁵⁰ Within museal discourse, this designates a movement away from a concentration on artefacts and towards that of “experience,” a strategic necessity for an industry modelling itself upon, and competing within, an expanding tourist economy. Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett suggests that heritage represents “the transvaluation of the obsolete, the mistaken, the outmoded, the dead and the defunct.”⁵¹ In other words, heritage adds value to buildings, products, districts and histories that are no longer, or have never been, commercially viable. The *process* of adding value will often necessitate a particular kind of re-staging, however. Rather than classify and exhibit the past, heritage sites will more often than not display it in ways that are performative and interactive, typified in “living” heritage sites like Plimoth Plantation, Colonial Williamsburg and New Salem. The contemplation of the historical archive has given way to a more personally experienced, nostalgically inflected, engagement with theatrical “pastness.” As a mode, nostalgia has become a matter of atmosphere within a heritage and tourist economy privileging experience, immediacy and adventure.⁵²

My consideration of retro and heritage is admittedly brief. The basic point I want to make is that nostalgia has been taken up within different kinds of taste regime; it has become a style value in representations of the past that are both hybrid, ironic and playful, and which, alternatively, summon and stage a particular idea of the authentic. Both have evolved within, and are in some sense a response to, the cultural exigencies of postmodernism. In the context of film theory, Jim Collins suggests two kinds of response to the expanding volume, access, manipulability and circulation of signs in postmodern cultural life. One is to play in the array of signs and the other is to retreat from them and appeal to a past purity. Writing quite specifically about film genericity, he labels this as the difference between

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“eclectic irony” and “new sincerity.”⁵³ There is no reason why this difference cannot be seen to operate on a more general level, however. In some sense, it signifies the difference between retro phenomena and the staging of the bygone past. One involves the hyperconscious reworking of the past and the other appeals to an authenticity located *in* the past. As a style value, nostalgia can embrace or be seen to escape postmodern culture depending on its figuration within particular representational and taste regimes.

Summary

My objective in this chapter has been to provide a ranging contextual survey of nostalgia as a cultural style. I do not claim to be in any way comprehensive in my analyses of Reagan, recycling and retro. Neither have I tried to incorporate any, and every, manifestation of commodified/aestheticized nostalgia in American cultural life. I have said nothing, for example, about the nature of memorabilia, collecting, or of nostalgia organizations like the American Nostalgia Racing Association (“drag racing . . . the way it used to be”). As I have explained, my purpose has been to bring out the dimensions of nostalgia as a mode, a genre, a market and a style. By considering stylized nostalgia in relation to politics, demographics, technology, textuality and specific economies of taste, I want to establish a cultural and critical basis for my treatment of black and white as a contemporary nostalgia mode. Monochrome memory must be set within a culture where pastness has become a broad stylistic register, and where nostalgia has become divorced from any necessary concept of longing or loss.

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Ultimately, I want to suggest that nostalgia modes do not emerge from, or reflect in any simple way, nostalgia moods. If nostalgia has developed as a cultural style in contemporary American life, it cannot be explained through any single master narrative of decline, crisis, longing or loss. This does not mean to say that modes of nostalgia have not developed in the context of crisis, or that longing and loss are not powerful and operative narratives within certain kinds of discourse. (My final chapter will discuss the relation between the black and white image and a particular rhetoric of nostalgic loss in the late 1980s). Instead, it resists a critical reduction where nostalgia modes become the reflex result of anxieties and dissatisfactions with the present. As a cultural style, nostalgia has developed in accordance with a series of political, cultural and material factors that have made “pastness” an expedient and marketable mode. Pastness became a site of affective investment in the 1980s and 1990s, a mode and register that emerged in a postmodern culture able to access, circulate and reconfigure the textual traces of the past in new and dynamic ways, that took up nostalgia in particular representational and taste regimes, that turned nostalgia into a performative politics and commercial category; and that generally disjoined nostalgia from any specific meaning located in the past.

Although I want to avoid the conflation of nostalgia modes and nostalgia moods, as well as zeitgeist theories which hypothesize on America’s cultural “condition,” the presence of the past in contemporary life can be given a broad socio-cultural dimension. Without lapsing into the kind of metanarrative this chapter has been at pains to avoid, I would argue that the production of pastness can be related, if not to schemes of loss and amnesia, then at least to particular temporal inclinations of the postmodern. This refers to a series of cultural and ideological factors that have produced a certain, although by no means one-dimensional or uni-directional, revisiting of history, memory and the past: not, it should be said, out of

nostalgia for better days but because the past has become a locus for new kinds of identity formation. Considering the reconceptualization and rewriting of the past in postmodern culture, Andreas Huyssen suggests that the new obsession with history and memory may indicate a temporal shift in the (Western) utopian imagination. He suggests that since the 1970s it has moved from a futuristic pole based on narratives of emancipation and liberation, toward the pole of remembrance. This has been experienced “not in the sense of a radical turn, but in the sense of a shift of emphasis.”⁵⁴ In a culture where metanarratives of history and progress have been severely undermined, and where information technologies have enabled an endless number of texts to exist simultaneously, our relationship with the past has been intellectually and culturally problematized, but also, and at the same time, *enlivened*. Postmodernism has brought with it the deconstruction of history - meaning that the past has become increasingly subject to cultural mediation, textual reconfiguration, and ideological contestation in the present - and this has given memory a new discursive, as well as commercial, import.⁵⁵

If the contemporary use and cultural function of the black and white image must be understood somewhere between the conceptual poles of loss and amnesia, I have been concerned in this chapter with the disconnection of commodified/aestheticized nostalgia from any necessary conception of loss. As a nostalgia mode, the black and white image must be set in relation to contemporary taste regimes and to the image strategies of consumer culture. It is not, in other words, the “symbolization of an emotion.” In Part Two, I want to shift the terms of analysis and concentrate on the memory work performed by monochrome as it was deployed in the dominant media during the 1990s. If black and white is not the result of cultural longing, neither is it symptomatic of postmodern forgetting. Monochrome does not simply hyperrealize the past in a culture losing its hold

on history and memory. While its resurgent cachet can be understood within a culture of simulacra, I would argue that, in specific media contexts, monochrome memory was taken up within a dominant discourse of stable nationhood. Janice Radway argues that: “The very notion of the U.S. nation and the very conception of American nationalism must now be understood as relational concepts, that is, as objects and/or figures constructed precisely in and through a set of hierarchical relationships with groups, communities and nations defined somehow as other, alien, or outside.”⁵⁶ Radway suggests that American nationalism is neither autonomously defined nor internally homogenous. However, this has not stalled attempts in the cultural sphere to maintain the myth of autonomy and homogeneity, of coherence and consensus. I would argue that the discourse of “black and whiteness” can be seen in this light; monochrome helped shore up and aestheticize a shared history, a univocal national memory, in a juncture where the concept of unified, unconflicted “America” had come under increasing scrutiny and pressure.

Writing of particular transformations in American film since the 1970s, notably the locus of a movie’s cultural power, Robert Sklar suggests: “In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the cultural disunity of American society gave rise to a new concern, not with a traditional rhetoric of myths and dreams, but with historical memory.”⁵⁷ This speaks of a process that can be understood more generally whereby time, history, memory and the past developed a more pronounced discursive power, especially in the articulation of national and cultural identity. The media discourse of “black and whiteness” functioned in this broad context. The temporal and authenticity effects of the black and white image were used, in one sense, to transcend the colour norms of a profligate image culture. In more political terms, however, they were used to aestheticize an archival essence, a core memory, for a national identity under strain. As a mode of visual nostalgia, the black and

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white image did not aspire to, or reflect a longing for, any specific golden age. Instead, it helped visualize, and worked to stabilize, a concept of unitary American nationhood and the liberal ideologies which give it support. Having established the theoretical and contextual basis for nostalgia as a mode or style, I want in Part Two of my thesis to examine the memory work performed by one particular example. In moving from a broadly conceptual to a culturally and visually specific analysis, I will turn to the memory politics of monochrome.

NOTES

- ¹ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994) 359. Samuel is concerned with “theatres of memory” in contemporary Britain but his comments are equally valid for America’s own historicist “scopophilia.”
- ² Jim Collins, *Architectures of Excess: Cultural Life in the Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 7.
- ³ See Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: Free Press, 1979); Allison Graham, “History, Nostalgia and the Criminality of Popular Culture,” *The Georgia Review* 38 (2) 1984: 364.
- ⁴ Jim Collins, *Architectures of Excess*, 6.
- ⁵ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993) 656.
- ⁶ Christopher Lasch, “The Politics of Nostalgia,” *Harper’s Nov* (1984): 70.
- ⁷ Gary Wills, *Reagan’s America* (New York: Penguin, 1988) 440.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 445.
- ¹⁰ See James Combs, *The Reagan Range: The Nostalgic Myth and American Politics* (Bowling Green: State University Popular Press, 1993).
- ¹¹ See Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked By Culture Wars* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995) 76.
- ¹² James Combs, *The Reagan Range*, 26.
- ¹³ See Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and other essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996) 250-268. Wallace examines the historical pedigree Reagan claimed for contemporary right-wing policies. This included suggestions that the Contras fought with the moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers, a pseudo-analysis of the rise of federal government in order to justify budget cuts and tax reforms, and persistent mythic constructions of good and evil to legitimate versions of anti-communism.
- ¹⁴ Sidney Blumenthal, “Reagan and the Neokitsch Aesthetic,” in Sidney Blumenthal and Thomas Byrne, eds., *The Reagan Legacy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988) 263.
- ¹⁵ Wills, *Reagan’s America* 5.
- ¹⁶ Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997) 192.
- ¹⁷ Harvey J. Kaye, *The Powers of the Past: Reflections on the Crisis and the Promise of History* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) 99.
- ¹⁸ Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself*, 281.
- ¹⁹ Cited in Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 255.

²⁰ Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 277.

²¹ This term was coined by Paul Erickson and is cited by Mike Wallace in *Mickey Mouse History*, 264. For a consideration of *The Cosby Show* and *The Wonder Years*, see, respectively, June M. Frazer and Timothy C. Frazer, "'Father Knows Best' and 'The Cosby Show': Nostalgia and the Sitcom Tradition," *Journal of Popular Culture* 27 (3) 1993: 163-174; and Jerry Herron, "Homer Simpson's Eyes and the Culture of Late Nostalgia," *Representations* 43 (1993): 1-26.

²² See Jim Cullen, *The Art of Democracy: A Concise History of Popular Culture in the United States* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1996) 259-269.

²³ See Cheryl Russell, *The Master Trend: How the Baby-Boom Generation is Remaking America* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1993); and Susan Mitchell, *American Attitudes: Who Thinks What About the Issues that Shape our Lives* (Ithaca: New Strategists Publications, 1998).

²⁴ "Interview with Ron Neeson," www.flightalk.com, 27 Apr. 1998.

²⁵ Press release, "Nostalgia Good-tv Launches Fall Season With New Variety, Sports and Personality Programs," www.goodtv.com, 27 Apr. 1998.

²⁶ "NBG investor relations," www.nbgradio.com, 27 Apr. 1998.

²⁷ See Phil Williams, "Feeding off the Past: The Evolution of the Television Rerun," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 21 (4) 1994: 162-175.

²⁸ Lynn Spigel, "From the Dark Ages to the Golden Age: Women's Memories and Television Reruns," *Screen* 36 (1) 1995: 18.

²⁹ Jim Collins, *Architectures of Excess*, 3.

³⁰ Bernard Hollard, "New Nostalgia on Record," *Herald Tribune* 4 Jun. 1997: 12.

³¹ Richard Cook, "Nostalgia," *Gramophone* Aug 1997: 102-104.

³² See Jim Cullen, *The Art of Democracy*, 269-274.

³³ Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 276-293.

³⁴ For an economic and industrial consideration of the impact of home-video on the movie business, see Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, and Thomas Schatz, "The New Hollywood," in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins, eds., *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 8-36. On the impact of video more generally, see Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift: On Video Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).

³⁵ A further by-product of the video revolution has been that of the camcorder, a "technology of memory" that has revitalized the market in *home* movies. The first camcorder became available in the mid-1980s. By the mid-1990s, estimates put the total number of camcorders owned worldwide at 40 million, with 14 million owned in America. Technically, they contribute to a culture where storing and re-living the past has become more possible than ever before..

³⁶ Jim Collins, *Architectures of Excess*, 158.

³⁷ "U.S. Dept. of Retro Warns: We May Be Running Out of Past," www.theonion.com, 7 Nov. 1997.

³⁸ My thanks to Rudi Franchi for explaining some of the trends in selling nostalgia, both in conversation on 5 Dec. 1996 and through e-mail on 17 Dec. 1997.

³⁹ See Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 83-118.

⁴⁰ See Susan Hayward, *French National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993); and Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Reimer, *Nazi-Retro Film: How German Narrative Cinema Remembers the Past*, (New York: Twayne, 1992)

⁴¹ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*; Umberto Eco, "Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Post-Modern Aesthetics," *Diogenes* 114 (4) 1985: 161-184.

⁴² Jim Collins, *Architectures of Excess*, 157-185.

⁴³ Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in E. Ann Kaplan, ed. *Postmodernism and its Discontents* (London: Verso, 1988), 18.

⁴⁴ Allison Graham, "History, Nostalgia and the Criminality of Popular Culture," 354.

⁴⁵ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988) 89.

⁴⁶ Kaja Silverman, "Fragments of a Feminist Discourse," in Tania Modleski, ed., *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986) 150.

⁴⁷ For a consideration of the heritage industry in the U.S., Britain and Ireland, see, respectively, Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987); and David Brett, *The Construction of Heritage* (Cork: Cork UP, 1996).

⁴⁸ M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994) 407.

⁴⁹ Found on the Internet (Yahoo browser) under the heading of "bygone," 24 Nov. 1997.

⁵⁰ Edward Bruner, "Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction," *American Anthropologist* 96 (2) 1994: 394-415

⁵¹ Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 149.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 131-176.

⁵³ Jim Collins, "Genericity in the Nineties: Eclectic Irony and New Sincerity," in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, Ava Preacher Collins, eds. *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 242-263.

⁵⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 88. What lies at the base of Huyssen's theory is the breakdown of attitudes, beliefs, values and meanings governed by metanarratives of progress and history. This has been engendered by factors such as environmental disaster, the growth of unaccountable capitalism, seismic technological change, and the processes of decolonization and globalization. More specific to America, one could point to the erosion of a postwar liberal consensus that based its particular articulation of nationhood upon ideas of exceptionalism, progress, political freedom and social and economic opportunity: an erosion that was largely caused by

divisions in the 1960s and 1970s based around the Vietnam war, economic crisis and the rise of civil rights and the new social movements.

⁵⁵ For useful summaries of the debates surrounding postmodern history, see Alān Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Routledge, 1997); and Keith Jenkins, ed, *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997). The American “memory wars” that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s were, in part, driven by a destabilized sense of “knowledge” about the past. History and memory were embroiled in political debates that eschewed univocal and moved towards multi-vocal conceptions of the past.

⁵⁶ Janice Radway, “What’s In a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November, 1998,” *American Quarterly* 51 (1) 1999: 29.

⁵⁷ Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 358.

PART TWO

MONOCHROME MEMORY

CHAPTER THREE

TIME'S PAST AND THE PRESENT Nostalgia and the Black and White Image

The use of black and white is rare these days; by its contrast from the norm, it draws our attention automatically. It is also reminiscent of the past - the only way life used to be remembered on film and television, or in photographs. In some way, black-and-white both speaks for a reverence for the past and re-creates it, brings the mind back to a slower, more studied pace.

Roger Rosenblatt, *Time* correspondent¹

In 1995, the Hubble Space Telescope sent back to astronomers at the University of Arizona a series of vivid colour images of the Eagle Nebula, a dense formation of interstellar gas and dust the likes of which cradle newborn stars. The pictures were of clouds ten trillion kilometres high, momentarily captured as the intense ultraviolet radiation spewing from nuclear fires at the centre of forming stars turned the clouds into pillars so rich that the breathtaking beauty of the images more than equalled their scientific value. These pictures were of cosmic phenomena seven thousand light years from Earth. As evidence that our perceptual universe, in every sense of the word, is defined by the representational powers of colour technology, the Hubble's "cosmic close-ups" are a clear case in point. Our world is rendered and received in high-resolution colour, almost always on television, overwhelmingly in photography and film, increasingly in printouts and photocopies. Colour has become a standard

representational form and hence the visual norm. If so, what can be said of the popularity and proliferation since the late 1980s of the black and white image?

The resurgence of monochrome has been most obvious within advertising and the poster industry, but the black and white image has also developed a new kudos within photojournalism, as well as more recent genres like music video. No self-respecting café-bar it seems can now do without a black and white print on the wall; monochrome has become the signature of designer chic for the likes of Armani and Calvin Klein; even sepia is staging a come-back within commercial photography and portraiture. Black and white is, of course, one of many styles in a rapacious image world that grasps for attention and insinuates the latest "look" within particular regimes of taste. For IKEA, the home superstore which has 12 percent of the world market in print sales (8 to 10 million annually), black and white is just one of several styles used in the profitable business of selling picture frames. Monochrome or Monet? IKEA have the prints and the frames to suit. Andrew Anthony suggests that our design choices are invariably shaped by the combined strategies of home improvement wholesalers and publishers, creating "an unyielding middlebrow orthodoxy of appropriate consumer art."² Black and white is a particular look, a specific atmosphere, one of many stylistic alternatives. While the relationship between corporate distribution and consumer demand is a complex one that cannot be reduced to the conspiratorial taste-mongering argued by Anthony, the popularity of the monochrome image can neither be divorced from the context of its selling and commercial circulation.

Despite its relative place in the tremendous marketplace for prints and images, black and white became a defining style in the mid to late eighties. This was captured in two

images that developed a certain iconic status within Britain and America. The first was a kitsch portrait of a toned and topless male cradling an infant. Taken by Spencer Rowell in 1986 and titled "L'Enfant," the moody black and white photo-poster became an instant best-seller, capturing "new-man" tenderness in agreeably muscle-bound form. The second image was of two lovers kissing in a Paris street. Taken by Robert Doisneau in 1950, "Le Baiser de l'Hôtel de Ville" was initially part of a reportage for *Life* magazine, a human interest story about Parisienne springtime romance. Its second life began in 1986 when the image was sold around the world through the poster industries growing out of New York, London and Paris. Peter Hamilton estimates that the image sold over a million copies between 1985 and 1995. While he relates its success within France to nostalgia for a sense of stable nationhood challenged by urban decay, social disorder and pressing questions of immigration, this does not account for its larger international appeal.³ Indeed, the Doisneau image must be set in relation to a developing market for monochrome, incorporating the work of photographers as diverse as Robert Mapplethorpe and Edward Steichen, Gertrude Kasebier and Herb Ritts.

By the early 1990s, both the Doisneau kiss and the Rowell cradle had surpassed their iconic moment. This was finally marked by postscript revelations that Doisneau's lovers were in fact models paid to kiss in a staged embrace and that the male model used by Rowell was a sex addict who claimed he'd slept with over 3000 women.⁴ The way in which these images, taken forty years apart, became two of *the* monochrome photographs of the late 1980s can no doubt prove various things about particular gender values and cultural nostalgias of the time, not to say the way in which texts from past and present circulate seamlessly together. I am interested, however, in the way they might be seen to index a growing market for "black and whiteness." This concentrates

less on the representational content of an image than upon the expediency and function of black and white as a “non-representational sign.” Richard Dyer develops this concept, suggesting that qualities like colour, texture, movement, rhythm and melody, while abstract and with a less obvious relation to reality, still embody feeling. In this way, they can be linked to culturally and historically determined sensibilities.⁵ One of the central questions in Part Two of my thesis is the nature of monochrome “feeling” and the relevance and bearing of its deployment in the mass media during the 1990s.

Within any single image, black and white is one of several perceptive, rhetorical, tonal and iconic codes that produce overall meaning.⁶ The connotative value of black and white will itself be dependent on the presentational medium, the context of consumption, and the generic conventions that any filmic or photographic image is bound to work within. In short, there is no singular “meaning” to monochrome as a stylistic code. It can be used to suggest intellectual abstraction, artistic integrity, documentary realism, archival evidence, fashion chic and film classicism depending on the nature of a text’s production and reception. Black and white can have various connotations, often simultaneously. For example, Madonna’s music documentary *Truth or Dare* (1991) uses black and white to get “behind the scenes.” Monochrome is juxtaposed with colour to enhance distinctions between room/stage, person/showperson, real life/spectacle. Black and white is an expedient documentary aesthetic. However, it also invokes, intertextually, and in examples drawn from Madonna’s own work, fashion photography (Madonna’s erotic portfolio taken by Herb Ritts, *Sex*), music video (exemplified in “Vogue” and “Justify My Love”), and nostalgia (Madonna’s Marilyn Monroe persona for the filmed *Blond Ambition* tour). The meanings of monochrome are multiple; black and white “feeling” is not a stable or fixed quality.

Acknowledging this fact, there are perhaps two connotations that have become central to the visual effect and signifying character of "black and whiteness." These are what might be called monochrome's "meta-abstractions." In different ways, the black and white image in contemporary visual culture has become associated with *authenticity and time*. In a sense, there is nothing new in this. The entire history of the (black and white) photographic image has been framed within discursive manifestations of these two themes. Miles Orvell suggests that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, photographic discourse focused upon the power of the machine to verify fact and reality within a developing "culture of authenticity." Within both art and documentary photography - Steilgitz and Strand to Evans and Lange - the camera became "a powerful instrument of revelation changing our sense of the world by its power to shock the sensibilities and move the viewer emotionally."⁷ Photography became the mechanical synthesis of science and art; the black and white image was conceived as the authentic rendering of a more intense perceptual reality. Susan Sontag suggests that the history of photography could be recapitulated as the struggle between two imperatives, that of beautification and truth-telling.⁸ These imperatives have different histories, but they are joined by a discourse of authenticity that has long framed and maintained the power of photography to capture lived reality almost transparently.

The camera image was, of course, black and white by necessity until the middle of the century. Monochrome developed a mutually defining relationship with colour as technologies advanced in this time, however. Conventions of use, in the cinema particularly, further established black and white as an idiom of realism and veracity, compared with colour which became associated with genres of spectacle and show.

Colour's early generic range included the musical, the comedy, the adventure story, the cartoon, the fantasy and the historical epic. Within the aesthetic regimes of Hollywood, it was monochrome that remained linked to ideologies of realism and cultural verisimilitude. This continued to be so until the introduction of Eastmancolor in 1954, a technology which suddenly made colour movies easier and far less expensive to make. By enabling colour recordings and prints to be made on conventional black and white cameras and print machines, Eastmancolor was less cumbersome and less costly than Technicolor, with its special cameras and film. Fifty percent of Hollywood films were made in colour from 1955 and, within a decade, television's chromatic transition would normalize colour within general viewing sensibilities. By 1965, black and white was no longer, to quote Stanley Cavell, the "mode in which our lives are convincingly portrayed."⁹ NBC began its major shift to network colour in this year and between 1965 and 1967 network news programmes began to broadcast colour newsfilm. In terms of the US production of colour feature films, output rose from 54 percent to 94 percent between 1966 and 1970. Despite this dramatic decline in the use of monochrome, the artistic and documentary properties of black and white retained an aesthetic value. There remains to this day in photographic theory and practice a sense that colour is artificial, "a coating applied later on to the original truth of the black-and-white photograph."¹⁰ Through conventions of use and its more general place in the early history of the camera image, black and white became, and remains, a quintessential aesthetic of the authentic.

It was from the mid-1960s that monochrome fully developed connotations of memory and time, cinematically expressed by the sepia nostalgia at the beginning of *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), as well as in the black

and white atmospherics of *The Last Picture Show* (1971). When colour became the norm, black and white was progressively distinguished as a style from a different era. Photography may be an intrinsic "technology of memory" but monochrome has grown as a particular style code of the (remembered) past. Like art deco script and Super-8 film, black and white has developed a quality of visual pastness. Unlike art deco and Super-8, however, monochrome refers to no particular decade, movement, or country. It is neither of the European 1920s nor the American 1950s. Instead, it has come to represent a more general, geographically indeterminate, sense of temporality. Roger Rosenblatt writes that black and white "speaks a reverence for the past and re-creates it." One might argue that monochrome signifies time and timelessness.¹¹

The monochrome past has sold very well since the mid-1980s, catalogued and displayed in a largely indiscriminate fashion by the poster industry. From Native American portraits by Edward Curtis to the migrant scenes of Dorothea Lange, whether a Stieglitz steerage or Brassai's Paris, content is less significant than monochrome's time(less) style. Sixty percent of the profits of Magnum, the photo agency established by Henri Cartier-Bresson, are now drawn from sales of its black and white back catalogue. Raphael Samuel dates the so-called "discovery of old photographs" to the late 1960s. This marked the combination of a developing taste for images of the past generated by collectors, dealers and museum curators, by the new significance of memory in advertising and fashion, and by a heightened sense of the visual with the eclipse of the radio.¹² The black and white past has been a collectible style for at least three decades. From the mid-1980s, however, it became commercially marketable, culturally tasteful, and linked to a growing preoccupation in America with heritage and memory.

The black and white image is one of several forms of aestheticized nostalgia in American cultural production; it exists in a climate where pastness has become a style within architecture, commerce, film and fashion. Definitions of nostalgia often bring together “authenticity” and “time” within a structured relationship of longing. Susan Stewart writes that: “By the narrative process of nostalgic reconstruction the present is denied and the past takes on an authenticity of being, an authenticity which, ironically, it can only achieve through narrative.”¹³ This understands nostalgia as a form of desire, a search for transcendence in a past that “continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack.” In *visually coding* authenticity and time, the black and white image can typically produce a sense or effect of nostalgia. I want to explore certain manifestations of this in the next four chapters. I do not want to examine the nostalgia of the black and white image in personal terms (what Roland Barthes calls in *Camera Lucida* the experience of photography as “a wound”). Nor do I conceive the taste for black and white as a symptom of a more broadly experienced sense of cultural loss. There may be a relationship between nostalgia modes in cultural production and nostalgia moods in cultural life, but to force them into a causal relationship is at best speculative and at worst simplistic. Rather, I explore the status and function of monochrome within specific media forms during the 1990s, and examine the cultural and memory work performed in each case.

While nostalgia modes do not reflect larger cultural moods in any prescriptive way, the popularity and expedience of black and white can arguably reveal tendencies within our postmodern moment. In a culture frenetically overproducing colour images, monochrome punctuates the norms of visual reception: it simulates slowness in a

climate of speed, evokes time in a culture of space, suggests authenticity in a world of simulation and pastiche. While black and white is linked to the image-governed world of postmodernity, it somehow seems set apart; it is an aesthetic born of the past and distinguishable from the dominant field of colour representation. Monochrome is one of many available codes in contemporary visual media but it can somehow appear to transcend the image culture in which it is produced. While arrayed as a style code at the postmodern cultural surface, the black and white image is able to produce an effect of depth and time. It is this visual quality which has been used to accentuate the "authenticity" of particular corporate and cultural representations. To the broad question of why a society requires certain images at particular times, the answer for black and white can perhaps be found in its ability to arrest meaning within, and suggest something outside of, an image culture of rapid simulation and relentless colour stimuli.

Pastness pervades the visuality of the black and white image. I want to examine how this has been used stylistically within the dominant media but also how, as a nostalgia mode, monochrome has been taken up within a discourse of nationhood and national memory. From the end of the Cold War and the inflated discussions about the "end of history," to the emergence of the culture war and its numerous debates about morality, memory, history and identity, the 1990s witnessed, in the words of James Davison Hunter, a "struggle to define America."¹⁴ Under particular pressure from the forces of geo-political change, the challenge of multiculturalism, and the global restructuring of capital were the tenets of a liberal consensus that has based its authority in the postwar period on ideas of common culture, capital growth and the integrity of the nation state, bound within frameworks of social and political exceptionalism. If the 1990s were marked by the perception of cultural crisis, it was, in many respects, rooted in the

disruption caused by significant economic, political and social changes to “the coherence and cohesiveness of national myths and ideologies of Americanness.”¹⁵

Broadly speaking, I would argue that a discourse of “black and whiteness” can be set in the context of liberal attempts to manage this disruption; monochrome memory was deployed intertextually, from particular institutional positions, to aestheticize (and stabilize) the archival essence of a nation whose “grand-governing narratives” had come under particular, and intensified, strain.¹⁶

In examining a discourse of “black and whiteness” in the dominant media, my analysis is synchronic rather than diachronic. I am not trying to narrate the history of the black and white image in cultural production or explain the meaning of monochrome in every possible use. The four chapters in Part Two of my thesis consider “black and whiteness” in media forms that can be linked by their relation to particular institutional formations and networks of power. The corporate bodies that gird the “dominant media” to which I refer - Time magazine, Apple Computers, Amblin Entertainment and Turner Broadcasting Corporation - can be conceived in terms of a power configuration (or what has been called a “New Establishment”) deriving from the entertainment, computer and communication industries.¹⁷ This is important to note if one is to grasp, following Stuart Hall, “the shadow, the imprint, the trace” of a text’s (i.e. monochrome’s) relation to specific, in this case neo-liberal, institutional positionalities.

Measured in the context of cultural transformations brought about by capitalist postmodernity, I would contend that a media discourse of “black and whiteness” sought in the 1990s to arrest meaning within, and stabilize identity against, the vicissitudes of an increasingly globalized and multicultural world. David Harvey suggests that images

of permanence in political and commercial culture represent “the fleeting, superficial, and illusory means whereby an individualistic society of transients sets forth its nostalgia for common values.”¹⁸ If monochrome is one such image of permanence, it has succoured authority in a volatile global marketplace based on the impression of depth, continuity and time. I am especially interested in the way that black and white was taken up during the 1990s in ways that helped sustain the legitimacy of power regimes shaken by the *cultural*, as well as the market, volatility opened up by the “de-centring” processes of the postmodern.

Part Two of my thesis will consider the deployment and defence of monochrome memory in the 1990s; it will examine a discourse of “black and whiteness” in the dominant media and explore both its explicit signifying strategies and its tacit intersection with the negotiation of national identity. My theoretical interest in this chapter is the means by which black and white was used in *Time* magazine during the 1990s to give the American present a temporal and potentially nostalgic aura. If monochrome is an idiom of the past, it has the capacity to convey the present *as a past*, complete with a sense of narrativized historical form. When the visual pastness of monochrome in *Time* magazine combines with a powerful journalistic impulse to make sense of the world, black and white can help configure subjects with historical gravitas. If monochrome is able to give issues and events the distance and authority of time, it has the potential for legitimation, giving archival aura to people and politics, cultures and corporations. I would argue that monochrome was used during the 1990s to transform news facts into chronicled history; black and white helped construct a sense of historicized national meaning in a cultural moment when the sureties of that meaning, in the past and for the present, seemed more than ever in flux.

If a news magazine like *Time* performs an ideological function helping to explain the meaning of a country to itself, black and white provides a way of framing news with documentary gravitas, of highlighting specific news information as historical. Managing editor of *Time*, Walter Isaacson, explains that the magazine aims to “provide the common ground of information and knowledge that all informed folks should share and enjoy sharing.”¹⁹ In the 1990s, the black and white image was instrumental in creating a shared sense of historical meaning; it helped articulate what Andrew Ross has called *Time* magazine’s “theme park view of the national essence.”²⁰ I want in this chapter, and in the chapters that follow, to examine how monochrome has been used in the dominant media to aestheticize an archival essence for coherent and consensual “America.” The genesis and expedience of black and white is different in each media form that I treat, but I would argue that its use can be contextualized within a culture of simulacrum negotiating questions of nationhood. The visual pastness of monochrome has been used to stabilize and legitimize a common history/memory in a climate where (historical) meanings and (cultural) memories have become less coherent, more contingent, and subject to what Lawrence Grossberg has called postmodernity’s “dissolution of the ‘anchoring effect.’”²¹

TIME's change

There was an interesting reversal in *Time* magazine during the 1990s. Once, technological and economic necessity meant that *Time* was entirely black and white apart from its cover, a selection of advertisements and those stories deemed “special,” all of which appeared in colour. Ever since the magazine turned full colour in 1989, however, the advertisements and “special” stories began to appear in black and white. There was a transfer of visual signification. If colour was at one time the carrier of impact and meaning, black and white usurped this role. Of course, black and white has impact because it is the contrast from the norm, a quality that colour once enjoyed. Its currency in *Time* and *Newsweek* grew steadily during the 1990s, however, to the extent that it became a visual commonplace. This stylistic renaissance must be understood in relation to strategic factors within magazine publishing, but it can also be measured in terms of monochrome's signifying capital and political functionality. Black and white gives a picture status beyond that of being “news”; it suggests that an image has cultural significance in the broad construction of historical identity. If colour reports, monochrome chronicles.

The use of colour in the print media increased dramatically during the 1980s, made possible by new technologies of desk-top publishing. In 1979, 12 percent of American newspapers used colour in some form. By 1983 this had risen to 53 percent and by 1990, 97 percent of American dailies were using colour technology. The first full colour newspaper was *USA Today*. Beginning in 1982, the paper was accused of a lack of seriousness within the newspaper industry, reflecting aesthetic conventions in the print media that reserve monochrome for “real” news and colour for spectacle and

celebration. It was only in 1993 that the *New York Times* introduced colour into sections other than its magazine, cautiously beginning with the *New York Times Book Review*. Colour photography was used regularly on the front page of the news section from 1998, the same year that *The Washington Post* made its transition to colour. The normalization of colour within general aesthetic sensibilities moved many papers to new colour formats. This was no small venture considering that a printing plant for a major newspaper can cost upwards of \$300 million. It was the importance of advertising revenue, however, that made colour capacity a real imperative for news organizations. A test by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau, reported by the *New York Times* in 1993, found that colour ads produced 43 percent more sales than black and white.²² Without colour, newspapers would struggle to compete with promotional mediums like film and television. It was in this context that *Time* magazine appealed to advertisers within its own pages. Portraying a pastel-coloured penguin, a 1989 advertisement was captioned: "When we say no more black and white, we mean it." Promoting itself as the first international news magazine to be published in colour around the world (the domestic issue went full colour in 1985), the ad explained that: "This extra touch of color makes us a livelier and more appealing medium for your advertisements, as well as for our readers."²³ Within three years, aesthetic tastes would change and the penguin would look its old self again: black and white was back in style.

The resurgence of black and white in *Time* was influenced by the turn to monochrome amongst advertisers themselves. It must also be seen in the context of *Time*'s redesign in 1992, the first since Walter Bernard and Rudy Hoglund systematized the style and typeface in 1977. The early nineties were a period of recession in magazine publishing. At *Time*, ad revenue was down by 20 percent in 1991. This went along with significant

staff reductions and a management shake-up at parent company Time-Warner. A year of analysis ensued at *Time*, strategy sessions addressing its own mission and the role of the news magazine generally. The redesign of *Newsweek* in the late 1980s had, in particular, served to close the gap between the two magazines and challenge the dominance of *Time*. Stylistically inferior to *Newsweek*'s new layout, and accused of having abandoned news stories for celebrity features, the *Time* redesign responded to its depressed market performance by roping off a specific media and entertainment section and giving more space to longer, in-depth, news articles. In his position as managing editor, Henry Muller said at the time: "The priority was to define what a news magazine would be in the era of instant communication."²⁴ Facing increasing competition in the market for news and information, *Time* carved a niche for stories on general subjects like scientology and evil, and gave current affairs extended feature-length coverage.

The black and white news photograph returned in the context of new editorial commitments to the market specificity of magazine journalism. Monochrome drew upon traditions of photojournalism that were being increasingly replaced in a media culture of soundbite over substance, where news editors have less time and space for lengthy photographic features. Black and white also distinguished *Time* in a magazine market that had become saturated with glossy technicolor since new technologies of engraving made full colour formats economically viable in the late 1980s. Monochrome carried a suggestion of depth and seriousness and it became popular in news magazines around 1992 when *Newsweek* ran a story on Sarajevo using black and white photographs by Tom Stoddard.²⁵ It was P.F. Bentley's portraits of Clinton's 1992 Presidential campaign that helped pioneer its recent use in *Time*. This was by no means an explicit managerial strategy. While monochrome was first used in *Time* under the management

of Henry Muller, Bentley had to force the initial decision by shooting mundane campaign material in colour, keeping black and white for the more provocative shots. According to Bentley, the use of monochrome in *Time* was helped by a less sceptical view of black and white's aesthetic merits by a new managing editor, Walter Isaacson. He comments that: "Walter is into the 'exclusive' aspect of this (monochrome), savvy on public relations, and a newsman from way back."²⁶ Monochrome was never a calculated visual strategy at *Time*; it emerged in the context of particular stylistic and managerial transformations at the magazine in the early 1990s.

Bentley suggests that black and white is a means of "getting back to 'real' photojournalism." This is echoed in the preface to a book collection of his campaign photographs, *Clinton: Portrait of Victory* (1993). Roger Rosenblatt writes the introduction, explaining: "If color is the new journalism of photography, in which the photographer's presence is always loudly proclaimed, black and white is the old journalism, in which the photographer disappears, and things speak for themselves."²⁷

A quality of authenticity is ascribed to monochrome. It is part of a tradition of photojournalism able - and supposedly denied by the rapid flow and headline repetitions of CNN - to "probe the inner life of things." Getting back to "real" photojournalism is a sentiment expressed by many who lament the technological and market transformations that have shaped the image-world in which we live. The former editor of *The Guardian*, Peter Preston, writes: "The world is full of pictures; but they aren't the pictures that set the adrenaline of photo-journalists coursing. They illustrate, they soothe, they flatter, they fill acres of space. But they have no independent life of their own."²⁸ Black and white invokes a tradition and plays upon a notion of photographic authenticity. This is significant in a time when new capacities of digital alteration,

together with practical changes like the decreasing role of the staff photographer, have transformed both the place of the photojournalist *and* the status of the news photograph.

The visual coding of “authenticity” in *Time* occurred in the same moment that computer manipulation was undermining the truth status of the photographic image. *Time* was embroiled in controversy in 1995 when a cover shot of O.J. Simpson was found to have been digitally altered and Simpson’s face darkened. This not only raised questions about the suspect racial implications, it made the representational authenticity of the photographic image a subject for public debate. This points to a rather intriguing cultural “coincidence” that developed in the early nineties whereby the capacity for digitally manipulating photography emerged in roughly the same period that black and white became a popular visual style. The undermining of photographic authenticity through computer technology, typified in the *Time* case, was met with a certain *re-affirmation* of photographic authenticity through popular aesthetics. Of course, black and white can be digitally altered like colour but it seems, nevertheless, to provide a more assured sense of veracity.²⁹ It is hard to say whether the black and white image compensates for a felt lack of authenticity in visual culture, or is instead one of many visual styles marketing authenticity as a look. Miles Orvell suggests that the new postmodernist sensibility “has clearly gone beyond worrying about imitation and authenticity, though it is everywhere concerned with it.”³⁰ The popularity of the black and white image is perhaps an aesthetic example of this “concern.”

To summarize my points so far, the resurgence of monochrome in *Time* during the 1990s was the result of several economic and cultural factors. It relates to questions about the status of the news magazine, in particular the need to re-establish a

journalistic niche in a ferocious market for information; it emerged through particular personalities like P.F. Bentley and Walter Isaacson who favour “the old journalism”; it was sanctified and sustained by black and white’s developing cachet in the taste regimes of media and commercial culture; and it can be situated in a cultural moment where photographic authenticity itself was being challenged by new digital technologies. What needs to be examined, having established certain contextual elements, is the *signifying function* of black and white in *Time*. In 1998, Walter Isaacson characterized *Time* as a news magazine by stating: “Through narrative and personality, analysis and synthesis, we try to make a complex world more coherent. The ultimate goal is to help make sure that the chaotic tumble of progress does not outpace our moral processing power.”³¹ I want to ask how black and white operates visually in this context: how, in particular, does it intercede in decisions about, and articulations of, moral and historical “coherence”?

There is no formal policy concerning the use of black and white in *Time*. It is not a question of black and white being cheaper to print, for monochrome photographs are processed in colour to achieve sharper image resolution. Black and white is not a question of economy, but is used instead for particular visual connotations. What makes this interesting from a cultural perspective is the pattern of its stylistic deployment. Since 1992, monochrome has been used to represent stories ranging from the Bosnian war to the rise of the Christian coalition. The black and white photographs of American political life by P.F. Bentley and Diana Walker, special correspondents for *Time*, are commonly used. The question that must be asked is what, if anything, unites these subjects? What status are stories given by their monochrome representation?

Michele Stephenson, picture editor for the domestic issue of *Time*, explains that black and white is used for a documentary effect.³² It creates a sense of unobtrusiveness and of being “behind the scenes,” but it can also provide an archival and retrospective aura. While breaking news will almost certainly be shot in colour, black and white is used to suggest qualities of introspection and poignancy. Henry Luce, founder of *Time*, said that “everything in *Time* should be titillating, or epic or supercurtly factual.”³³ As a visual idiom, black and white leans towards an epic factuality - *monochrome documents and chronicles*. Stories in black and white are visually codified in a way that can provide them with historical significance. Victor Burgin suggests that the news photograph helps transform the raw continuum of historical flux into the product of news. With black and white, we might reverse the terms - the monochrome photograph helps transform the raw continuum of news flux into the product of history.³⁴

Paul Durrant, picture editor of *Time Atlantic*, estimates that 96 percent of images used in *Time* are purchased from agencies. These tend to be in colour. The rest of the images will be taken by contract photographers like Bentley and Diana Walker who are guaranteed a certain amount of work each year. Specialities often develop among the contract photographers and this can lead to monochrome appearing by default rather than by design. One cannot read cultural significance into every single use of monochrome by *Time*. This said, black and white *has* been used in some very particular ways. A certain amount of space was reserved during the 1990s for photojournalistic essays that followed in the hallowed traditions of Magnum. James Nachtway, himself a Magnum photographer, published various photo-essays dealing with conflict and warfare in such as Bosnia and Afghanistan. *Time* also published photo-essays by

Anthony Sava, extracted from his ten year project documenting the death of communism. While these are significant in showing the scope of monochrome's visual presence in *Time*, I am more interested in the way that black and white has been used to create aesthetic effects conducive to particular kinds of story. These tend to be features which claim to get "inside" the subject and/or stories that *deal with memory*.

The equation between monochrome and memory can be observed in various forms, from obituaries to historical features. By way of illustration, one might consider two consecutive cover shots of Princess Diana in the weeks following her fatal car accident. They are different pictures but very similar in being close-up portraits of her face and shoulders. The first is a colour image of a smiling princess at a formal occasion (8 September, 1997, *fig. 1*).³⁵ From the example, one's attention is drawn to her striking blue eyes, perfect white teeth and her shining diamond ear-rings, but also to the words "Special Report" written boldly at the top of the page. This is breaking news. The cover of the next issue is a black and white portrait of Diana, soft-focus and taken in a studio as a fashion portrait (15 September, 1997, *fig. 2*). Although clearly staged, it conveys a more "private" figure than the colour photograph that shows her smiling openly for crowds and paparazzi.

It is unusual for *Time* to use successive covers so similar in style but the issues are sold in different ways. While the first is a "special report," the second has the more discreet "commemorative issue" written inside the word TIME. A character of remembrance is developed *inside* the magazine where the death of Mother Teresa is also covered in black and white. There is perhaps nothing surprising in this as Mother Teresa was often portrayed as someone beyond simple news; her entire life was chronicled as one moving



fig 1. Time, 8 Sep. 1997.



fig 2. Time 15 Sep. 1997.

assuredly towards canonization. Mother Teresa, in life but most certainly in death, was an icon ripe for an aesthetic of gravitas. For a news magazine, the coincidence of both women dying in the same year gave rich texture for journalistic meditations on youth and age, beauty and wisdom, “civic sainthood and the genuine article.” The commemorative issue was reflective, poignant, and as a consequence, unsurprisingly liberal in its use of black and white. It became the best-selling issue of *Time* in the magazine's entire history, selling 1,183,758 copies.³⁶

I am interested in the way in which cultural memory has underpinned the use of black and white in *Time*. More specifically, I want to consider how monochrome memory has given particular stories about American life a pregnant historical import. Marita Sturken writes that “cultural memory is a means through which definitions of the nation and ‘Americanness’ are simultaneously established, questioned and refigured.”³⁷ Black and white images perhaps contribute to this negotiation of nation and “Americanness” by documenting issues and events in narratives of historical memory. If past events gain meaning by their existence in history, one could also say that present events are given meaning by their identification *as* history. The visual differentiation between chronicle (monochrome) and report (colour) is the platform for editorial decisions about cultural meaning, about the subjects which should be framed as more than reported news. I want now to examine three examples that focus, respectively, on social, political and cultural life. These are all cover stories which use black and white on the actual cover page and which reveal particular, hegemonic, stakes in *Time*'s construction of chronicled history.

Chronicle of a History Foretold

The 1990s were a period of cultural identity crisis for America, or at least a time when a rhetoric of crisis seemed especially prevalent. One of the governing metaphors of the decade, describing a wide series of anxieties, debates and distempers about the question of identity and the legacy of the 1960s was that of “the culture war.” Associated most specifically with controversies in education surrounding curricular revision, affirmative action, and speech codes, the culture war became a term that described a range of issues concerned with multiculturalism and the politics of identity. While the origins of the academic culture war can be traced back through the 1980s, and its genesis in the nineties can be set in relation to the end of the Cold War, economic dislocations, globalization, demographic changes, philosophical currents and long-standing identity debates, the culture war came most forcefully to public attention through the news magazine.³⁸ It was a cover story by *Newsweek* (24 December, 1991) that brought the equation of multiculturalism, “political correctness” and left-wing “thought police” to full media fruition. Troubled by the so-called “politicization of the academy,” editorials in *New York*, *The New Republic*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Newsweek* and *Time*, spoke throughout 1991 of a “new intolerance” within universities and in cultural life more generally.³⁹ America was said to be suffering from a new kind of totalitarianism, a “McCarthyism of the Left.” It was in this context, amidst media debate about left-wing tyrannies and cultural fragmentation, that *Time* ran a cover in 1991 with the question, “Who are We?”

The cover coincided with the 4th of July holiday. It was in bright pastels and showed cartoon figures of various American ethnic groups, marching to flute and drum with the

stars and stripes snapping behind them. The cover was captioned: "American kids are getting a new - and divisive - view of Thomas Jefferson, Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July" (8 July, 1991). The feature essay by Paul Gray developed the theme of division, chastising multiculturalism for its "regressive orthodoxies" and for exalting "racial and ethnic pride at the expense of social cohesion."⁴⁰ With an air of judicious consideration, measuring the benefits of multiculturalism with its more profound dangers, the principle of diversity with the need for shared values, the *Time* feature revealed what Michael Bérubé has called the "foundational slippage" in (many liberal) critiques of multiculturalism. This is the conflation of "common culture" and "common society," collapsing the two so that any reconsideration of the former can seem like an attack on the principle of the latter.⁴¹

It is worth developing this point for it provides the background to a monochrome *Time* cover which in May 1992, almost a year after the issue on multiculturalism, posed "*e pluribus unum*" as a question. This cover echoed the title of the final chapter of Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s best-selling book *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (1991). In this influential polemic, Schlesinger is troubled by the waning status of *e pluribus unum* in a country wracked by division. He writes that: "The multiethnic dogma abandons historic purposes, replacing assimilation by fragmentation, integration by separatism. It belittles *unum* and glorifies *pluribus*." Underwriting the argument of *Disuniting* is the fear that America's cultural and political heritage is being compromised by a new "cult of ethnicity." Schlesinger is at pains to maintain principles of inheritance, legacy and tradition, defending a challenged "American Creed." If, as he argues, an ethnic upsurge "threatens to become a counter revolution against the original theory of America as 'one people,' a common culture, a single nation," multiculturalism

is seen as a challenge of no small proportion.⁴² With it rests the integrity of American identity and the communal bonds of the republic. "The historic idea of a unifying America is now in peril," writes Schlesinger. His "reflections" on a multicultural society are a defence of this "historic idea," both in education and through the teaching of history. His polemic against "disuniting" draws upon the force and authority of history, understood as pedagogical practice and unifying cultural experience.

Schlesinger is part of a much larger debate about education and knowledge that I cannot explore here, but it is enough for me to say that what Bérubé defines as his "weak liberalism" - namely, the accommodation of multiculturalism with a hypothetical centre as opposed to a broad institutional transformation *of* the centre - distinguished *Time's* early coverage of multiculturalism. It was befitting that Schlesinger should write a one page article in the *Time* edition on multiculturalism. His short essay developed several key themes from *Disuniting*, in particular the argument of a shifting balance from *unum* to *pluribus* and the dangers of multicultural separatism. Directing his concern at Afrocentrism, Schlesinger wrote that "if separatist tendencies go unchecked, the result can only be the fragmentation, resegregation and tribalization of American life."⁴³ The idea of fragmentation, together with the canard of political correctness, became a dominant feature of culture war rhetoric and would underwrite *Time's* anxious question, "Who are we?" Todd Gitlin suggests that "such a question, asked so insistently, answers itself: we are a people who don't know who we are."⁴⁴ Within seven months, fragmentation would be joined by another adjective in the growing vocabulary of cultural crisis, that of "fraying."

The word was deployed by *Time* columnist and art critic Robert Hughes who rehearsed the argument of his best-selling book, *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (1993), in a 1992 article that went by the shortened title "The Fraying of America." Influenced by Schlesinger, Hughes characterized "a society obsessed with therapies and filled with distrust of formal politics, skeptical of authority, and prey to superstition, its political language corroded by fake pity and euphemism."⁴⁵ Hughes is more concerned with the waning powers of an effective left than Schlesinger, but there is equal dismay at the beleaguered status of *e pluribus unum* in a culture of grievance and increasing factionalism. Hughes suggests that multiculturalists want "cultural separatism within the larger whole of America. They want to Balkanize culture." While much could be said about the liberal critique of multiculturalism in the writings of Schlesinger, Hughes and even Todd Gitlin, I want to understand them contextually leading up to a particular black and white *Time* cover that showed a young black male sitting thoughtfully under the Statue of Liberty, with the headline "The Two Americas: *e pluribus unum?*"

For almost a year, *Time* had been discussing tribalization and the dangers of ethnic fragmentation. This was given an unforeseen resonance, however, when the politics of racial and ethnic identity suddenly moved from the realm of education to the rioting streets of Los Angeles. "There is no guarantee that the U.S.'s long test of trying to live together will not end in fragmentation and collapse, with groups gathered around the firelight, waiting for the attack at dawn," wrote Paul Gray a year before the riots in his essay on multiculturalism.⁴⁶ With the acquittal of the police officers who beat Rodney King, the language of firelight fear and dawn attacks became all too acute. Of course, the LA riots were not so much an expression of some militant form of multiculturalism, but rather a specific response to the failure of judicial procedure and the dumbfounding

clarity of black disenfranchisement in the face of white power. With the beating of white truck driver Reginald Denny, the riots broadened in significance further still. The media portrayed race war: what *Time* would headline “the fire this time.” Suddenly, the anxious question “Who are we?” no longer seemed the heart of the matter. It had been replaced on the cover of *Time* by the urgent plea of Rodney King: “Can we all get along?”

The LA riots were first reported in *Time* in a cover story using colour photography (11 May, 1992, *fig. 3*). The cover image showed police officers running in formation towards a blazing fire, captioned with the quotation from King. The cover of the following week's issue appeared in monochrome, “The Two Americas” written in bold black typeface (*fig. 4*). If the aesthetic shift of the Diana covers marked a movement from report to commemoration, a different transformation was achieved in the coverage of the LA riots. In this case, black and white did not commemorate the riots but framed them in historical terms. In monochrome, controversial stories can be given significance by locating their place in historical narrative. Lance Morrow, a senior writer for *Time*, suggests that a founding principle of the magazine was, and remains, the sorting of the world into stories, turning “the news into saga, comedy, melodrama.”⁴⁷ Describing the “epic” voice of *Time*, Morrow suggests that in the early history of the magazine this was characterized by a “disciplined, moral understanding of history, an adult's steady gaze.” There is something of this legacy of disciplined moral storytelling in *Time*'s treatment of the LA riots. Although the *Time* cover may question *e pluribus unum*, the cover works visually to authenticate the issue of race relations in broad historical terms. Monochrome gives post-riot race relations a stabilizing historical



fig 3. Time, 11 May 1992.

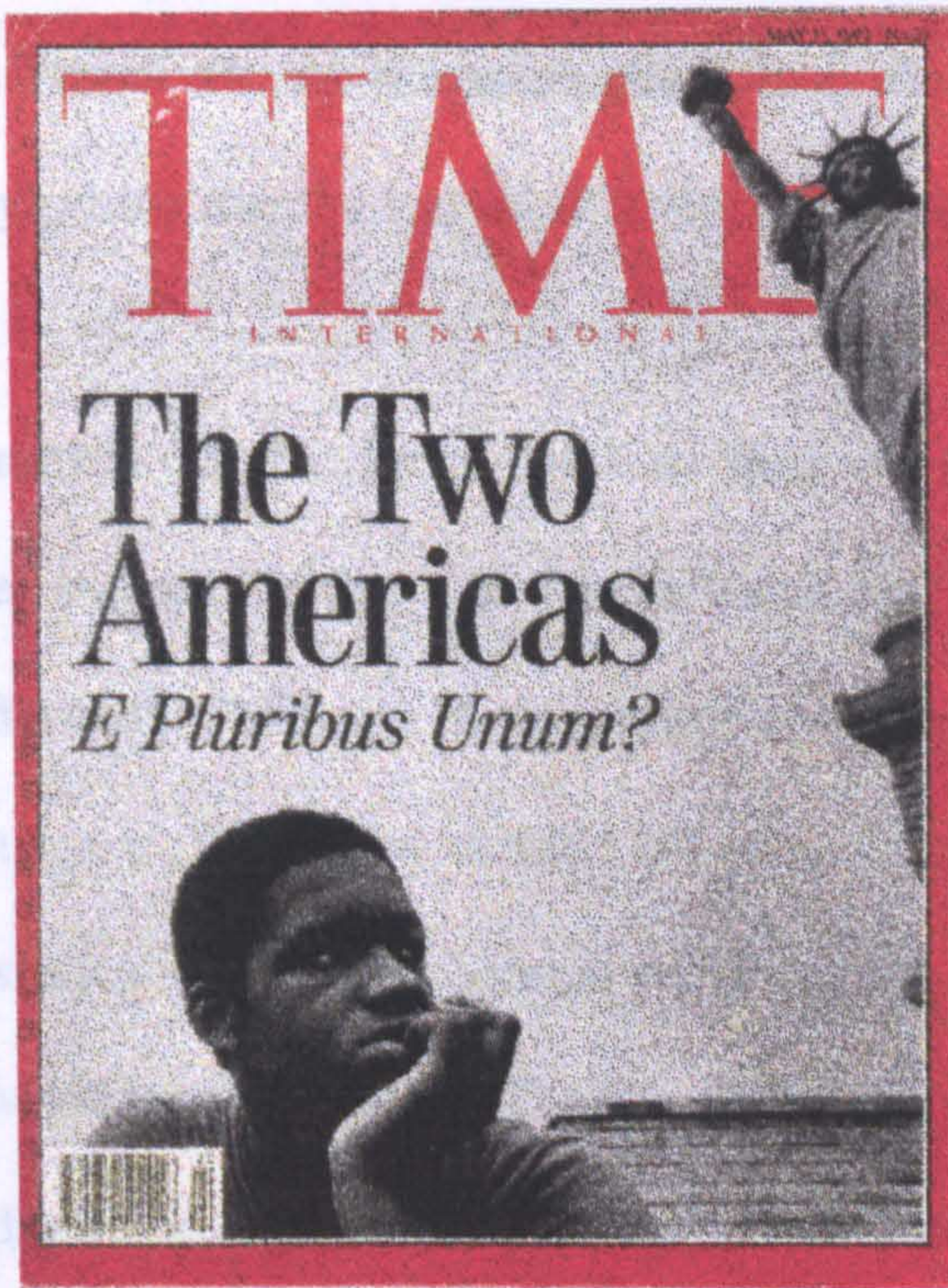


fig 4. Time, 18 May 1992.

dimension, helping to counter the language of anarchy and social breakdown that first accompanied volcanic eruptions of racial discontent.

The essay and articles inside the magazine are a series of reflections and postmortems, discussing the "Lessons of Los Angeles" and "The Two Ways to Play the Politics of Race." The monochrome issue of *Time* attempts to assimilate the experience of the riots and rationalize the violence. Various political implications are assessed and the whole occurrence is framed as a socio-political catalyst - if an unsettling one - in the historical saga of American race relations. Placing the riots in a party-political context, their bearing on the 1992 Presidential election is discussed. Significantly, Bush and Clinton are seen "battling to control *the memories* of Los Angeles"(my italics). The riots quickly become an event to be remembered, a cautionary explosion, a lesson to be learned. By using black and white on its cover, *Time* brings the riots into a retrospective and memorial framework; the magazine attempts to contextualize the racial politics of the LA riots by posing them in historical terms, at least as a historical dilemma.

The riots moved racial and ethnic politics from the culture war over education - where Schlesinger entered the fray - to a more literal and disturbing kind of violence. In the volatile aftermath, *Time* saw fit to question *e pluribus unum*, like Schlesinger had done the previous year. With racial conflict breaking out in several of America's major cities, a swift historical perspective became pressing for a news magazine trying "to make a complex world more coherent." The use of monochrome in *Time* helped locate the riots within a discourse of historical identity. Black and white became a visual means of transforming racial conflict from news (with its sense of presentness and unpredictability) into chronicle (with the implication of continuity and historical

meaning). Black and white turned the question of social division from headline into history. Visually, it placed the riots within a particular interpretative context that rationalized their historical significance, stabilized their meaning, and in some sense contained their potency as “news.”

Time magazine has a circulation of 4.1 million, making it America's twelfth largest magazine. On average, each copy is read by five people, meaning that it reaches about 12.5 percent of the nation's population.⁴⁸ While *Time* may no longer be the flagship of the nation's (middle class) ideology, the magazine's synthesis and “storyfication” of news and world events retains a pointed cultural authority. “The vestibule of this new millennium continues to have intruders that *Time* tries to wrestle into moral and historical context,” wrote Walter Isaacson in an editorial celebrating the magazine's seventy-fifth anniversary in 1998. Outlining the values of the magazine, inherited from Henry Luce, Isaacson describes how *Time* “remains prejudiced toward the values of free minds, free markets, free speech and free choice.” The most enduring value is “a fundamental optimism” and “a faith in humanity's capacity for common sense.”

Isaacson states:

Our goal is to be a touchstone for this common sense. Rather than strike a pose of pessimism about all values, we must hew to certain basic ones, such as doing what's best for our kids. Rather than view individual rights as being at odds with a compassionate sense of community, we must understand that America's historic magic has been creating a social fabric that is strong because it weaves these two strands together.⁴⁹

Such invocations of common sense will no doubt arouse the suspicions of even the most casual of Gramscians. Isaacson is aware and refreshingly unapologetic about *Time's* ideological commitments, or "prejudices." What is significant, however, is the example he draws upon to make his case for common sense. Once again the language of historic magic and social fabric returns. The fraying of America's social fabric was a perennial concern in the 1990s, a fear that the plural tapestry of the nation was being vandalized by those seeking to transform culture (as well as theorize culture) into separatist threads. Visually and rhetorically, investments were made in *Time* to restore a stabilizing historic dimension when identity debates - whether in schools or in the streets - became volatile, fraught or seemed to contravene the received wisdoms of consensual nationhood.

Monochrome linked the violence of the LA riots to the status of American historical identity; it placed the event within larger debates that warned against fragmentation and put a value on America's plural tradition. Later in the year, six months after the Rodney King riots, *Time* ran a black and white cover that achieved a different historical effect. Poised for electoral victory, a black and white special feature taken by P.F. Bentley traced Bill Clinton's presidential campaign, from sax playing on the Arsenio Hall show to closed door meetings with Jesse Jackson. This did not stabilize the election so much as codify it with a sense of nostalgia in and for the present. Sometimes, according to the way that *Time* presents a feature story and the discursive matrix that surrounds a subject matter, a monochrome picture may help construct the present as a future memory *being lived*, as an authentic past *in creation*. I would understand many of Bentley's political images in this way. The second image I want to treat is a black and white cover issue showing Bill Clinton addressing a crowd, a close-up documentary shot looking upwards at his face. The caption that joins the image reads: "Bill Clinton's Long March: The

inside story of the making of his campaign for the presidency. Will he prevail?" (2 November, 1992, *fig. 5*).

How might we understand the concept of nostalgia in and for the present? In *Time* magazine, it describes an express configuration of memory, chronicle and cultural meaning, a feeling of the workings of time for events that have yet to unfold. As an experience of time, we move backwards to the past and forwards to the future in a simultaneous gesture, grasping the present as a cogent period with historical form. Essentially, the present is understood in terms of it being a future past; it is given the wholeness and aura that retrospection and the passage of time can provide *before* the passage of time has actually taken place. The nostalgia in question is anticipatory: we look forward to the future in order to look back on the present being lived, complete with shape and a sense of its archival place in historical narrative. Flaubert believed that pleasure is found first in anticipation, later in memory. Nostalgia for the present finds the two collapsing so that pleasure is to be found in the very *anticipation* of memory.

The cover shot that accompanies Bentley's photographic essay of the Clinton campaign illustrates a certain nostalgia in and for the political present. It has two modes of authenticity. Firstly, it emphasizes "the inside story." The monochrome cover-shot is taken upwards of Clinton's face and shoulders as he speaks to someone outside the frame. It is not a conventional press image but documentary in style. The cover promises personal and political authenticity in a milieu known for its pursuit of controlled photogenia and the carefully managed photo opportunity. Despite the fact that photography can never exist in a transparent or unmediated relation to reality, monochrome is often seen *as* a transparent medium and not as a particular visual

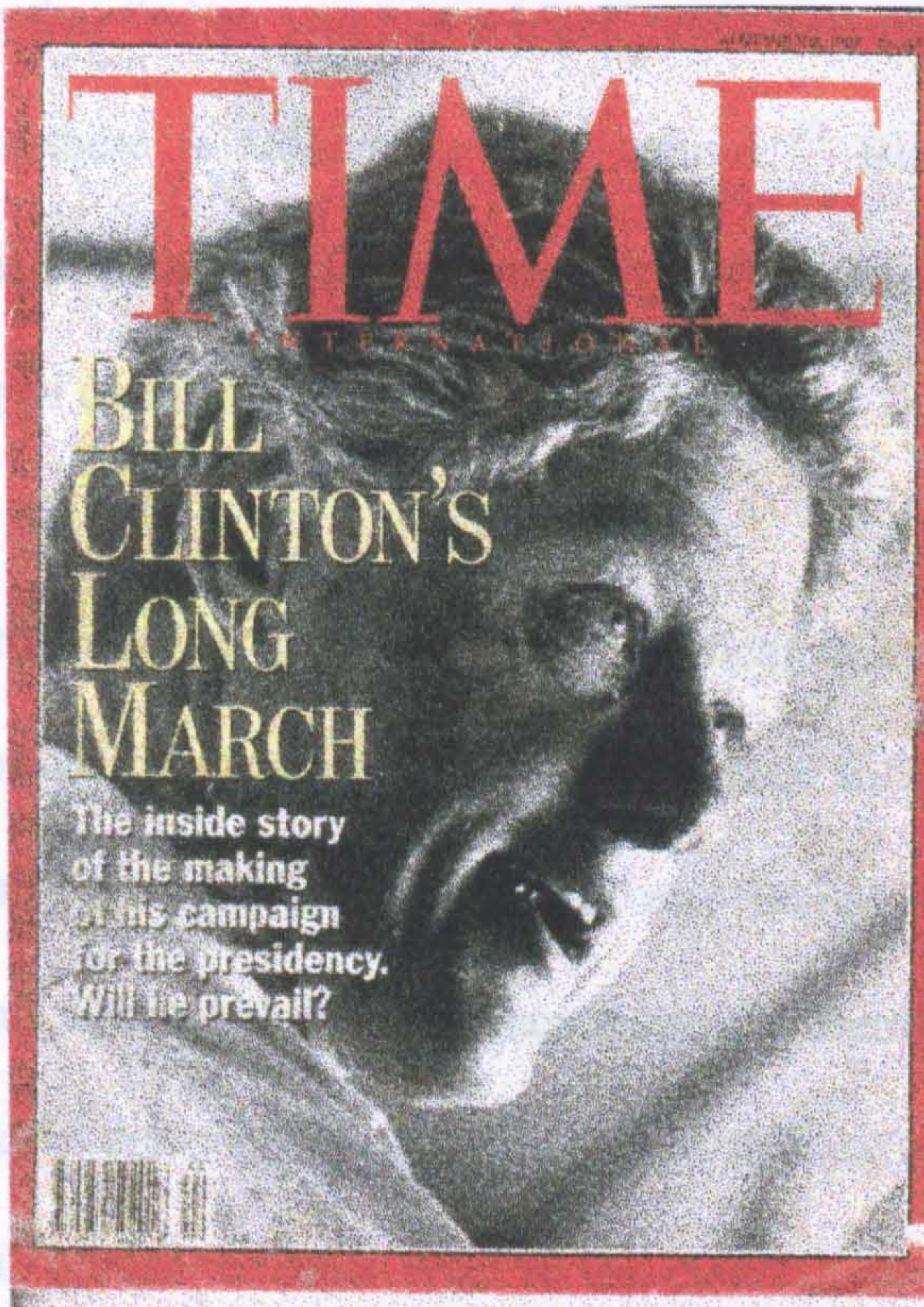


fig 5. *Time*, 2 Nov. 1992.



fig 6. *Time*, 18 Aug. 1997.

effect.⁵⁰ Bentley himself rather naively remarks on the authenticity of black and white by saying that "when you see a black and white photograph you are drawn only to its contents - there is nothing to hide behind."⁵¹ Black and white is given a value of authenticity, something reinforced by photographic composition and the textual anchoring of captions.

The second mark of authenticity is historical in orientation. The cover is not simply about Clinton the man but the man's potential influence on American history, his so-called "long march." To understand any image, one must relate it to a series of intersecting discourses that produce meaning. Bentley's monochrome shots should be understood in the context of the nostalgia that defined Clinton's very campaign, from the bus trip across the Mid West to the dissemination of the photo of a young Clinton shaking the hand of President Kennedy. Clinton's candidacy was based partly on the question of his political authenticity, as to whether he could return the zest to American life once achieved by, or remembered in, Kennedy. This became a mark of *Time's* own construction of Clinton's election identity. Lance Morrow wrote: "For years, Americans have been in a vague mourning for something they sensed they had lost somewhere."⁵² Nostalgia was an expedient mode for Clinton and a tenor of *Time* reporting. This perhaps made the use of black and white more appropriate for P.F. Bentley. He explains that he based his images on those taken of Kennedy in the early sixties by Jacques Lowe. By using black and white, Bentley made the 1992 election immediately archival; it conveyed the here and now as history that could one day be remembered itself - although it seemed ironic by the end of the decade - as an authentic beginning of a new golden age.

When interviewed about the photographs he took of the 1992 Clinton campaign, Bentley said: "First and foremost when you're taking photos for history, black and white is archival. Color is not and deteriorates over time. I would like these images to be seen long after we are both dead so there is a record of what happened during this era."⁵³ In a world that experiences such a fast turnover of images, stories and news events in the visual media, it has become hard to elicit the "significance" of any one in particular. In the case of Bentley's photojournalism, black and white codes a particular historical significance. The documentary function of black and white should not be underplayed. The photo-essay inside the magazine has the style of a diary. Photographs show Clinton in solitary moments (jogging alone), in private exchanges with his friends and wife (talking to Al Gore on the campaign bus, playing table tennis with Hillary) and in public moments where we see Clinton watching others (the back of Clinton's head as he fronts a media barrage). The adjoining captions create a diary sequence: "Labor Day," "Press Conference," "Comeback Kid," "Campaign Snapshots," "Us on a Bus," "Teamwork," "The Third Debate," "The Last Lap." The sense is of an intimate rather than intimated record of events.

The feature is *not simply* an "inside story," however. Describing one of Bentley's campaign shots where Clinton is seen addressing a crowd, Roger Rosenblatt writes: "Could they not be a political audience of the 1940s or 1950s, of almost any era really? One begins to dream back into the entire history of presidential campaigns, the history of American politics itself . . ." ⁵⁴ Black and white has a clear documentary function but monochrome also creates a feeling of tradition and time. This is interesting in a culture that at the beginning of the 1990s was being diagnosed by E.J. Dionne as one suffering

from chronic political disaffection and a veritable crisis in its democratic and public tradition. Dionne exhibits similar liberal anxieties about threatened unity as that witnessed in the writings of Schlesinger ("disuniting of America"), Hughes ("fraying of America") and Todd Gitlin ("twilight of common dreams"). Dionne writes that "our common citizenship no longer fosters a sense of community or common purpose."⁵⁵ Rather than focus his criticism directly on multiculturalism, his causal explanation for "the fragmentation of American society" resides in the failure of the American political system to respond to America's restive majority.

In his best-selling *Why Americans Hate Politics* (1991), Dionne argues that politicians are engaging in symbolic rather than substantive politics and that citizens are being turned away from "a deliberative, democratic public life" by false issues and false political choices. The number of eligible voters going to the polls in American presidential elections is notoriously small, at roughly 50 percent. For mid-term congressional elections this figure is in the region of 35 percent. In Dionne's account at the beginning of the nineties, America was suffering from a "flight from public life." This was principally caused by the "phony polarization around the issues of the 1960s" that were serving to paralyze meaningful (that is to say anything but cultural) politics. Dionne evinces a clear antagonism to the issues associated with the culture war and his talk of political debate "getting back to basics" reveals a somewhat familiar brand of weak, even reactionary, liberalism. *Why Americans Hate Politics* is a polemical work, as one might expect. There is something in Dionne's observation about a new seriousness demanded from politicians in the early nineties, however, that might help explain the utility of black and white in *Time's* coverage of the 1992 presidential election.

In his 1992 afterword, Dionne suggests that the 1990s offer “an unusual opportunity to solve problems by accepting the insights that both the left and right have offered in the last three decades . . . we can preserve the gains of the 1960s while recognizing the mistakes of that era.”⁵⁶ He feels optimistic about the creation of a new political centre and the generation of a concomitant political seriousness. While questions must be asked about the kind of politics he condemns as phony and unserious - largely, the politics of race, class, sexuality and gender - Dionne suggests that the nineties could mark a “new era of reform” developing from a more conciliatory relationship between liberalism and conservatism. This pre-Gingrich, pre-impeachment vision is at odds with the partisan politics witnessed during the Clinton presidency, but it distinguishes the tone of historical possibility that came with the 1992 election. The monochrome *Time* issue dealing with “Bill Clinton’s Long March” was concerned most immediately with Clinton’s “textbook” presidential campaign. Black and white also gave the campaign a historical dimension, however. How had Clinton come this far? Would he prevail? Describing the broad support a Clinton presidency might receive in the polls, *Time* said (in a colour news report in the same issue): “After one of the toughest and most serpentine campaigns in memory, Clinton would have a running start in setting the country on a new course after 12 years of Republican rule.”⁵⁷ The 1992 election marked a political watershed; America was set for “a new course.” Black and white framed this political anticipation in historical, memorial, and potentially nostalgic terms. *Time* inscribed the American political system with significance and possibility in a period when the voting public seemed disengaged or - to quote Warren Beatty’s film about nineties politics, *Bulworth* (1998) - “unaroused.”

Time has used several black and white photo-essays by P.F. Bentley and Diana Walker since the 1992 Clinton campaign. The most extensive have been a retrospective on Newt Gingrich ("Master of the House," 25 December, 1995) and a feature on Bob Dole's Presidential challenge in 1996 ("The Soul of Dole," 19 August, 1996). Generally, monochrome has been used in *Time* to cover Washington politics. It was used to treat the Republican landslide in the 1994 Congressional elections ("Master of the House," 16 January 1995, "100 Days of Attitude," 10 April, 1995); it was expedient in a feature covering the symbolic meeting at the White House between Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996 ("Inside the Summit," 14 October, 1996); it has been used recurrently in stories about Hillary Clinton ("Turning Fifty," 20 October, 1997, "Tradition with a Twist," 27 July, 1998, "The Better Half," 4 January, 1999); and it was a staple in the coverage of the 1992 and 1996 Presidential elections ("Sweet Smell of Success," 30 March, 1992, "Here Come the Big Guns," 31 August, 1992, "See You in November," 18 March, 1996).

The extensive use of monochrome in political features is partly explained by the fact that Bentley and Walker are known in Washington circles and have made black and white their speciality. Writing an e-mail on a plane travelling to Washington, Bentley described how he was being sent to cover the Budget Chairman, John Kasich, and had been asked to take pictures with a "behind-the scenes look to it à la PF."⁵⁸ Black and white is first and foremost a documentary aesthetic. Understood within a signifying regime that differentiates news from chronicle, however, monochrome can also function as a visual signature of history and historical meaning. If so, one might ask why a

conspicuously “historical” event like the 1998/1999 impeachment proceedings against Bill Clinton were never covered in monochrome. I would argue that the so-called “Zippergate” affair was figured as “news” for two main reasons. Firstly, because of its fervent unpredictability and constant news worthiness. And secondly, because reporting the issue, rather than documenting it, enabled the affair to be contextualized as a political convulsion instead of a dramatic and destabilizing historical trauma. Whereas the LA riots needed to be stabilized in historical terms, the historical import of “Zippergate,” in particular the impeachment proceedings, was a political embarrassment that was downplayed visually. One might say that “Zippergate” lacked the air of profundity and grandeur equated semiotically with black and white. The basic point to make here is that monochrome functions in accordance with cultural discourses that create *or deny* historical significance according to the complex balance of interests and identities at stake.

The relationship between monochrome and memory, and the creation of nostalgia in and for the present, is not exclusive to particular historical personalities or to major historical themes. A black and white cover depicting the man at the helm of Apple computers, Steve Jobs, talking on the phone with Bill Gates of Microsoft, illustrates the deemed cultural significance of a financial deal between the two companies (18 August, 1997, *fig. 6*). This is the third cover image that I want to treat. There is a sense of documentary and of the inside story. The text on the cover includes the caption: “Exclusive: Inside the Apple-Microsoft Deal.” The deal involves the financial bailout of struggling Apple by the much stronger Microsoft. The larger historical meaning is brought out on the cover by a quotation from Steve Jobs which reads: “Bill, thank you. The world’s a better place.”

The larger discourse of cyberspace in American culture is significant if one is to appreciate why *Time* may have chosen monochrome as a suitable aesthetic for an otherwise mundane business headline. *Time* has developed a particular, even rather devotional, interest in things cyber. There are several reasons that explain this. Walter Isaacson says that *Time*'s original prospectus involved an "interest in the new." The digital revolution has given rise to a new and substantial increase in the circulation of information. Isaacson continues: "Because we believe in the value of information, we have celebrated the explosion of sources that is the hallmark of the digital age."⁵⁹ *Time* was one of the first magazines to go on-line (with *Time Daily* in 1994) and parent company Time-Warner has made considerable investments in numerous multimedia projects, notably its Pathfinder supersite on the World Wide Web (a site which in 1995 was getting 1.5 million "hits" a week). Cyberspace represents challenges to, and possibilities for, print journalism. Electronic journalism, and the technologies that make it practicable, are tied to the very future of *Time* as a print magazine. As CEO of Time-Warner, Gerald Levin remarked in 1994: "I think we'll engage the consumer in the digital domain in a way that forces new forms of publishing and moviemaking and music-making and shopping and whatever."⁶⁰ In its coverage of cyberspace, *Time* has continually framed the digital revolution in historical terms.

In Spring 1995, *Time* ran a special issue with the (colour) cover headline, "Welcome to Cyberspace." The issue featured a wide range of articles and features on cyberspace, relating it to education, business, technology, behaviour, misbehaviour, the workplace, ageing, government and the press. Throughout the magazine, advertisements promote companies like Siemens, Apple, Nokia, and also *Time* itself. The magazine took an

opportunity to make various claims about its own relationship with, and its capacity to explain developments within, cyberspace. The same stylistic technique was used in three separate one page advertisements. In this, the red magazine border and the word "TIME" framed a single part of a larger image, creating a hypothetical cover image drawn from the figural "big picture." In one, men work at computers in front of a large video consul showing maps, data and statistics. Framed in red is a single computer operative sitting at his desk. Below, a caption reads: "Telecommunications. Cyberspace. The Internet. Ironically, you can keep up with them by reading words printed on actual paper." The second ad, later in the magazine, is a black and white image showing the fingers of an adult gently guiding the hand of an infant across a computer keyboard. Framed in red is a single finger of the infant, about to press the letter "T." The caption reads: "You can understand computers now. Or wait for your children to explain them to you later." The third ad is a grainy colour image of a planet, the red framing device capturing a sun-spot. In this final case, the caption reads: "For those without access to the Hubble telescope, it was the most detailed view." In each advertisement, the captions were accompanied with the sentence: "Understanding comes with TIME." The 1990s saw *Time* crafting a distinct relationship with the computer age; it recurrently sold its own virtues as a print magazine that not only understood but could also explicate the technological significance and historical relevance of cyberspace. The visual gravity ascribed to the Apple-Microsoft story was partly a reflection of *Time*'s journalistic stake in cyberspace and, by turns, the computer industry.

While cyberspace for *Time* is an issue linked to the status of the news magazine, it has also become the locus for stories about American business life and, in more broad terms, become generative of questions about national identity. Computer technology has

been largely pioneered in America, it has defined the language of the internet as American, and it has produced one of the richest men in the world in Bill Gates. Cyberspace has become a new source for American dreams and nightmares. Computers are not simply a burgeoning industry; they constitute a technology that has been discussed in cultural terms that range from utopianism (global villages and electronic democracies) to apocalypse (virus terrorism, internet pornography, and "Y2K" anxiety). Cyberspace is linked to a sense of national *destiny*, America leading the way in realizing the promise of micro technology or suffering from its worst excesses. In the Apple-Microsoft feature, black and white is a visual index of cultural meaning. Monochrome is rarely, if ever, used to cover simple business stories. If it is, historical gravitas is promptly established. This can be observed in a monochrome feature that describes the prevention of global economic meltdown by the Chairman of the Federal Reserve and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. The cover story in this case was titled "The Committee to Save the World" (15 January, 1999). If the deal between Apple and Microsoft made "the world a better place," black and white drew upon and helped construct a similar sense of global consequence.

The use of monochrome in the Apple story must finally be understood in terms of the actual companies involved. The computer industry has seen prolonged corporate struggles waged to control the burgeoning PC market. No conflict has kept attentions rapt like that between Apple and Microsoft. Not only do the companies sell different technologies, they also market different attitudes *towards* technology. (This is something I will discuss in the following chapter). The reconciliation of Gates and Jobs was no casual matter. It joined two of the most charismatic and bold corporate foes of the computer industry. In business terms, the deal between them was truly historic for it

joined what had previously seemed like the irreconcilable enemies of the industry. Black and white gave the deal its archival due. Indeed, the Apple-Microsoft alliance was understood with a particular nostalgia for the present, a new accent on business relations and on developing technological prospects. In a news magazine shaping and shaped by the larger discourse of cyberspace in American culture, monochrome codified the deal as a news exclusive with corporate, as well as cultural, significance.

Cultural Meaning and Magazine Memory

I have argued that the visual differentiation between chronicle and report is a platform for editorial decisions about cultural meaning - about the subjects that should be framed as more than reported news. In terms of the LA riots, black and white was used to give the violence a stabilizing historical dimension. With Clinton's 1992 election and in the business deal between Apple and Microsoft, monochrome helped create a documentary feel but also one of "memorable" history. In broad terms, I would argue that the black and white image was used in *Time* magazine during the 1990s to create different kinds of temporal and authenticity effect. In constructions of the "inside story," monochrome appealed to an idea of documentary authenticity, bound in the verities of "real photojournalism." In this construction, *Time* did not report news so much as witness events. In constructions of the chronicle, monochrome appealed to a different kind of *historical* authenticity. In this case, black and white appealed less to the unmediated authority of the witness than to the unmitigated authority of the archive. In both

instances, monochrome helped provide a visual gravity and depth of meaning that could penetrate and seemingly transcend the colour norms of journalistic report.

In relating the photographic image to social and political history, critics invariably, and perhaps understandably, focus upon representational content. James Guimond, for example, locates American documentary photography within a dialectic of the "American Dream," showing how images throughout the twentieth century have expressed, challenged and projected versions of a specific American reality.⁶¹ Underexamined in much of this kind of cultural history is the non-representational significance of the photographic image and its contribution to visual meaning. In this chapter, I have been interested in the cultural and memory work performed by the visuality of "black and whiteness." More specifically, I have focused on how monochrome transforms the flow of reportable news in *Time* into something archival, historical, temporal. This process can be seen in political terms. Black and white provides a method of deciding upon, and visually framing, the constituents of shared history; monochrome bestows a status of chronicle upon stories that support particular stakes in the form and definition of national meaning.

In the examples I have chosen, black and white gives a stabilizing historical dimension to negotiations of ethnic and racial difference, specifically in the face of multicultural "fragmentation"; it gives a legitimating historical pedigree to the American political and electoral process in a time of deepening public scepticism about politicians and political authority; and it gives a promissory historical significance to computer technology, an industry in which Time-Warner has a commercial stake and for which *Time* magazine has worked to refine the cultural meanings. Walter Isaacson writes of

Time playing “the storyteller who comes to your front porch with the color and insights that turn facts into coherent narratives.”⁶² What Isaacson fails to acknowledge here is that sometimes, and rarely without significance, the storyteller comes not with colour but with monochrome. I have shown some of the ways that black and white turned news facts in the 1990s into the “coherent narratives” of chronicled history. At a time when confidence in American (historical) identity was becoming less secure and more confused - caused by changing expectations in the domestic sphere, together with a need to create a new global role - monochrome helped articulate and affirm the constituents of historicized national meaning.

How can we summarize the currency of black and white in *Time*? If we consider contemporary theories of memory, one view might see the use of black and white as a pure simulation of authenticity, the mark of a culture grasping for a sense of significance and history denied by the rapid pace of change in late capitalist society. Pierre Nora talks of modern culture's hyperrealization of the past due to definitive estrangement from it. He writes that “modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely upon the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, *the visibility of the image*”⁶³ (my italics). The indiscriminate production of archives is, he goes on to say, an expression of “the terrorism of historicized memory.” Perhaps black and white contributes to this archival imperative, the need to create a sense of memory in the face of uncertainty in the present and the breakdown of memorial consciousness. Pursuing his theory that “our society is torn from its memory by the scale of its transformations but all the more obsessed with understanding itself historically,” Nora might see the use of black and white in *Time* as an example of the proliferation of attempts by the media to create non-events as “anticipated commemorations of themselves.”⁶⁴

While provocative, Nora underestimates the cultural work performed by representational modes. He laments the passing of “true” or “spontaneous” memory, replaced by its contemporary inscription in sites, or *lieux de memoire*. Black and white, in this scheme, would be an example of the prosthesis memory that Nora ascribes to an anxious and amnesiac modern culture. Through its visual coding of chronicle, however, monochrome is not simply a scaffold of memorial prop but a visual agent for particular, hegemonic formations of national identity. In a full colour magazine like *Time*, black and white inscribes an image with qualities that set it apart from colour. A. Robert Lee writes that in America the camera has always offered “a quick visual fix appropriate to a nation doing its historic business at high speed.”⁶⁵ In a culture of rapid and profligate image making, and in a time when constructions of national identity have become significantly destabilized, monochrome can visually mark that which should be *considered* historic business. In the pages of *Time* during the 1990s, black and white functioned as a particular kind of nostalgia mode; it performed cultural work in the chromatic inscription of coherent, chronicled, national meaning.

NOTES

¹ Roger Rosenblatt, "Prologue: In Black and White," in P.F. Bentley, *Clinton: Portrait of Victory* (New York: Warner Books, 1993) 9.

² Andrew Anthony, "There's One Good Thing About the Nineties," *Observer Review* 14 Jul. 1998: 5.

³ Peter Hamilton, "France and Frenchness in Post-War Humanist Photography," in Stuart Hall, ed., *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997), 75-150.

⁴ "Le Baiser de L'Hôtel de Ville" received notoriety in 1994 when a married couple took Doisneau to court suggesting that he'd photographed them decades before without consent. This led to the public "admission" that models had been used in the famous "baiser" image, although this fact had never been a secret. The male model used in Rowe's "L'Enfant" became the subject of various British tabloid features in 1997, notably Sarah Chalmers, "Confessions of a New Age Man," *Daily Mail* 3 Apr. 1997: 39.

⁵ Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁶ For a semiotic perspective on the production of photographic meaning, see Victor Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982) and Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans., Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977).

⁷ Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1989), 239. For a more specifically gender-oriented perspective on the practice of photography at the beginning of the century, see Judith Fryer Davidov, *Women's Camera Work: Self/Body/Other in American Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 1998). Davidov is concerned not simply with photographic revelation but with strategies of claiming agency and representing otherness.

⁸ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), 86.

⁹ Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (New York: Viking Press, 1971) 94. A good treatment of the history and ideology of colour in (American) cinema can be found in Steve Neale, *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour* (London: Macmillan, 1985). See also, Gorham A. Kindem, "Hollywood's Conversion to Color: The Technological, Economic and Aesthetic Factors," *Journal of the University Film Association* 31 (2) 1979, 29-36.

¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 1993) 81.

¹¹ For a thoughtful examination of Super-8 as a particularly American nostalgia code within consumer culture, see Grace Elizabeth Hale and Beth Loffreda, "Clocks For Seeing: Technologies of Memory, Popular Aesthetics and the Home Movie," *Radical History Review* 66, Fall 1996 163-171. For a discussion of art deco, see Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

¹² Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994).

¹³ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1984) 23.

¹⁴ James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

¹⁵ Liam Kennedy, "Alien Nation: White Male Paranoia and Imperial Culture in the United States," *Journal of American Studies* 30 (1) 1996: 87.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the "crisis of the grand-governing narratives" in Britain and America since the 1960s, see Harvey J. Kaye, *The Powers of the Past: Reflections on the Crisis and Promise of History* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

¹⁷ See Elise O'Shaughnessy, "The New Establishment," *Vanity Fair* Sep. 1994: 209-240. While the term "New Establishment" has certain limitations in the way it conflates systems and operations of power to particular individuals and corporate bodies, it is useful in suggesting a new kind of power configuration in American life. If the "Old Establishment" was characterized by a strata drawn from East Coast political and military circles, a new locus of power has been observed, deriving from the entertainment, computer and communication industries. This can be seen to include representatives like Bill Gates (Microsoft), Rupert Murdoch (News Corporation), Robert Allen (AT&T), Sumner Redstone (Viacom), John Malone (Tele-Communications Inc.), and Gerald Levin (Time-Warner).

¹⁸ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) 288.

¹⁹ Walter Isaacson, "Luce's Values - Then and Now," *Time* 9 Mar. 1998: 103.

²⁰ Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 8.

²¹ Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing In Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997), 191-252.

²² William Glaberson, "Newspapers Adoption of Color Nearly Complete," *New York Times* 31 May 1993: 41.

²³ *Time* 5 Jun. 1989: 1.

²⁴ Cited in Deirdre Carmody, "One More Time: Magazine is Reborn," *New York Times* 13 Apr. 1992: 1.

²⁵ Paul Durrant. (Picture editor of Time Atlantic). Telephone interview. 25 Mar. 1997.

²⁶ P.F. Bentley. E-mail interview. 28 Apr. 1997.

²⁷ Roger Rosenblatt, "Preface: In Black and White," 12.

²⁸ Peter Preston, "The Last Picture Show," *Guardian Weekend* 28 Nov. 1998: 28.

²⁹ On the issue of computer manipulation, see Fred Ritchen, "Photojournalism in the Age of Computers," in Carol Squiers, ed., *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990) 28-37.

³⁰ Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing* xxv.

³¹ Walter Isaacson, "Luce's Values - Then and Now," 104.

³² Michele Stephenson. Telephone interview. 24 Mar. 1997.

³³ Cited in Lance Morrow, "The Time of Our Lives," *Time* 9 Mar. 1998: 27.

³⁴ Victor Burgin, "Looking at Photographs," in Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography*, 144. It is important not to lose sight of the practicality of monochrome to picture editors. The archival quality of the black and white photograph enables it to be re-used in different feature stories months and years apart. Of course,

colour can also be re-used in this way but the association of colour with breaking news does not give it the same license for portfolio and retrospection. Black and white may represent a specific news moment, but it can also frame it within a broad scheme of chronicled history. When Newt Gingrich was made *Time* "Man of the Year" in 1995, it was accompanied by a nineteen page monochrome photo-feature by P.F. Bentley (25 December, 1995). Most of the images were taken on Capitol Hill: Gingrich in meetings, making speeches, having his hair cut. The only image of Gingrich-at-play was a rather unflattering picture of him gingerly kissing his wife while standing in the surf on a California beach. This image was re-used three years later when Gingrich resigned as leader of the House of Representatives. Initially, it had formed part of a character study, assessing the "master of the House." Second-time around, the photo was part of a retrospective, detailing the "fall of the House of Newt" (16 November, 1998). Both features took historical stock of Gingrich's influence on American politics, and the archival quality of black and white meant the picture was serviceable in each case.

³⁵ All of my references are to that of *Time Atlantic*. While there are certain differences in style, content and layout between the domestic and the international editions of the magazine, enough overlap exists between them not to interfere with my treatment of black and white.

³⁶ This figure is cited in *Time* 9 March 1998: 97. Indicative of the global fascination with Princess Diana, the next best-selling issue is the Diana special report, having sold 802,838 copies.

³⁷ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 13.

³⁸ On the causes of the culture war, see Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995).

³⁹ For a good summary of the media treatment of political correctness at the beginning of the 1990s, see Jim Neilson, "The Great PC Scare: Tyrannies of the Left, Rhetoric of the Right," in Jeffrey Williams, ed., *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 60-89.

⁴⁰ Paul Gray, "Whose America?" *Time* 8 Jul. 1991: 23-27.

⁴¹ Michael Bérubé, *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics* (London: Verso, 1994). 225-241.

⁴² Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1991) 43.

⁴³ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Cult of Ethnicity, Good and Bad," *Time* 8 Jul. 1991: 28.

⁴⁴ Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* 44.

⁴⁵ Robert Hughes, "The Fraying of America," *Time* 3 Feb. 1992: 84.

⁴⁶ Paul Gray, "Whose America?" 24.

⁴⁷ Lance Morrow, "The Time of Our Lives," 27.

⁴⁸ "Papering the nation," *Time* 9 Mar. 1998: 99.

⁴⁹ Walter Isaacson, "Luce's Values - Then and Now," 104.

⁵⁰ See Victor Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography*, and John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

⁵¹ P.F. Bentley. E-mail interview. 28 Apr. 1997.

⁵² Lance Morrow, "Man of the Year: The Torch is Passed," *Time* 4 Jan. 1992: 27.

⁵³ P.F. Bentley. E-mail interview. 28 Apr. 1997.

⁵⁴ Roger Rosenblatt, "Prologue: In Black and White," 9.

⁵⁵ E.J. Dionne Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Touchstone, 1991) 18.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁵⁷ Laurence I. Bennett, "It's Not Quite Over," *Time* 2 Nov 1992: 32.

⁵⁸ P.F. Bentley. E-mail interview. 28 Apr. 1997.

⁵⁹ Walter Isaacson, "Luce's Values - Then and Now," 104.

⁶⁰ Cited in O'Shaughnessy, "The New Establishment," 240.

⁶¹ James Guimond, *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1991).

⁶² Walter Isaacson, "Luce's Values - Then and Now," 104.

⁶³ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations*, trans., Marc Roudebush, Spring (26) 1989: 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 22. Nora's theory is applied specifically to France but his distinction between "sites of memory" and "environments of memory" has been applied to other cultural, in particular American, paradigms. See Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally, eds., *History and Memory in African-American Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994).

⁶⁵ A. Robert Lee, "Shooting America: American Images: Photography 1945-1980," *Journal of American Studies* 20 (2) 1986: 294.

CHAPTER FOUR

ADVERTISING THE ARCHIVE

Nostalgia and the Brand Campaigns of Apple and Gap

To understand “black and whiteness” as a visual discourse in the 1990s, it is necessary to consider the use and expedience of monochrome across a range of mediums and from different institutional positions; one must examine the status and function of black and white *intertextually*. The “meaning” of the black and white image is never contained within any single medium, but is informed by its use across the cultural terrain in different texts and contexts, from the news magazine to the adverts which appear *in* the news magazine. I am concerned in this chapter with the black and white image as it was used in corporate promotion during the 1990s. The last chapter examined how a highly influential and opinion-forming news magazine utilized monochrome in the 1990s, investing issues and events with historical meaning. In this chapter, I want to examine how black and white was used in the global strategies of corporate advertising. More precisely, I will consider how the brand campaigns of Apple and The Gap appealed in the 1990s to an idea of *common heritage*. David Harvey writes that: “Advertising and media images have come to play a very much more integrative role in cultural practices and now assume a much greater importance in the growth dynamics of capitalism.”¹ If images promote structures of desire and inform economies of taste, they can also legitimate forms of authority and power. This chapter will expand on the discourse of “black and whiteness” as it intercedes with questions about, and constructions of, national identity; it will show how the aura of

the archive was used in global brand advertising to figure a cultural, as well as a specifically corporate, tradition.

In August 1993, Pablo Picasso, Muhammad Ali and Amelia Earhart were among twelve celebrities whose black and white portraits appeared in *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The New Yorker*. They were part of an advertising initiative by The Gap to sell its khakis. The so-called “Who wore khakis?” campaign lasted for six weeks and used a series of original monochrome photographs of cultural figures including Arthur Miller, James Dean, Gene Kelley, Chet Baker, Ava Gardner, Norma Jean, Miles Davis, Rock Hudson and Jack Kerouac (see *fig. 7-8*). They were all pictured wearing khaki trousers. They were not wearing Gap khakis but this was hardly the point. In the bottom corner of each portrait was the distinctive Gap logo and the assurance that Picasso, or whoever, “wore khakis.” Association was enough.

In September 1997, Picasso, Ali and Earhart were back again. They appeared once more in black and white, but this time they were selling the corporate philosophy of Apple computers. The global “Think different” campaign by Apple used over forty individuals, including Gandhi, Ted Turner, Buzz Aldrin, Thomas Edison, Jim Henson, Rosa Parks, Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Richard Branson and Martha Graham. Monochrome portraits of a diverse pantheon of “heroes” and mavericks appeared once again in news magazines, but also on billboards, wrapped around forms of public transport and pasted imposingly onto hordings and wall (see *fig. 9-13*). The campaign was an ambitious marketing strategy aimed at reinvigorating the flagging fortunes of the Apple brand. It was no doubt pleasing to agents of The Gap that Picasso and Earhart were still seen wearing their khaki pants.

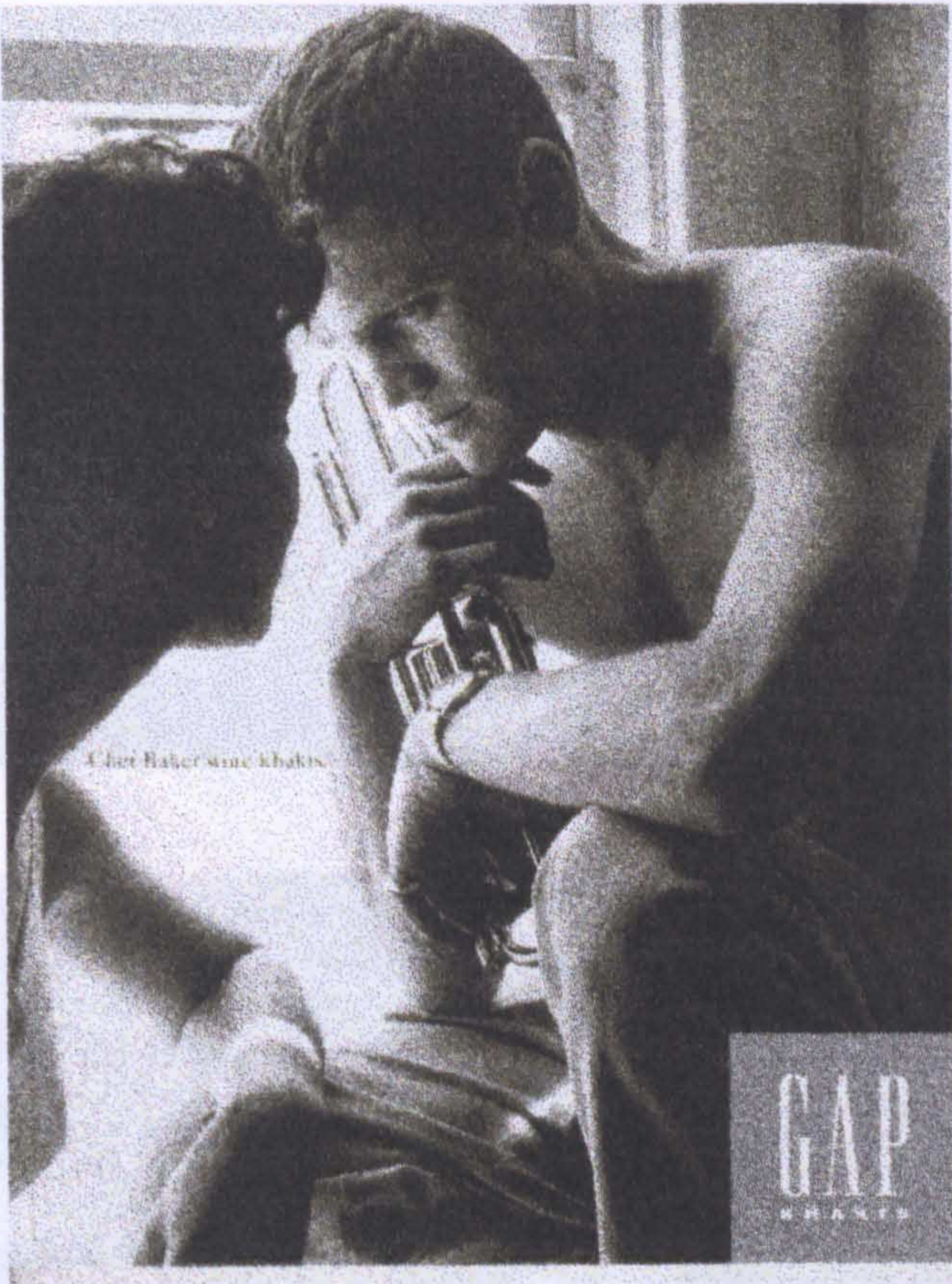


fig 7. "Chet Baker Wore Khakis."

(promotional images courtesy of The Gap).



fig 8. "Miles Davis Wore Khakis."



fig 9. "Thomas Edison."



fig 10. "Buzz Aldrin."

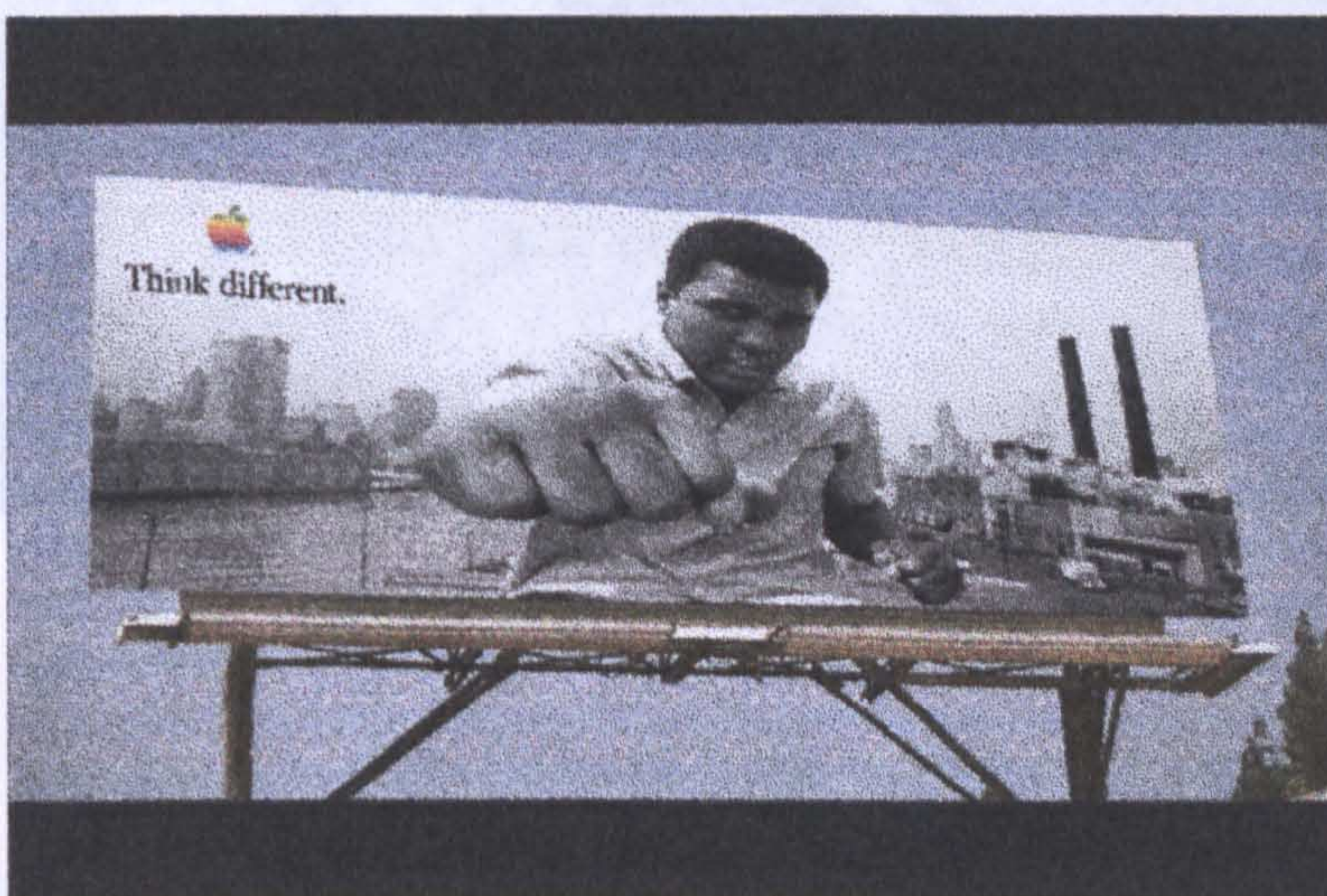


fig 11. "Muhammad Ali."

("Think Different" images courtesy of Apple Computers, 1998).

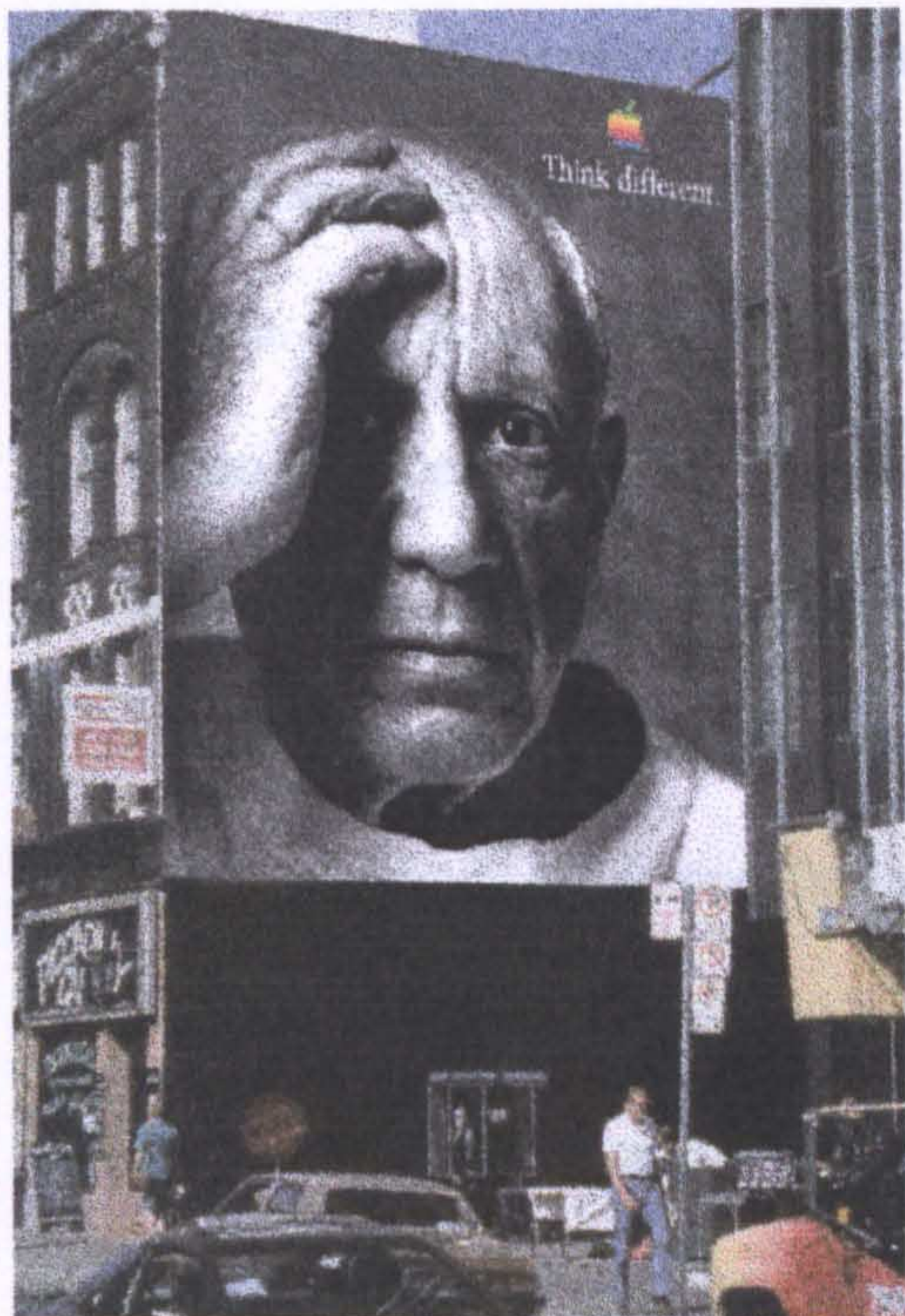


fig 12. "Picasso."



fig 13. "Gandhi."

("Think Different" images courtesy of Apple Computers, 1998)

The two campaigns were distinctive in the way they drew upon the stylish properties of monochrome and the power of the celebrity icon to sell not a product but a brand essence. Not a single company product appeared in the advertisements of either campaign. There were no Gap khakis on display, no Apple hardware to admire. Rather, each campaign sought to position and market a corporate spirit. Unlike celebrity endorsements where individuals wittingly assign their image and name to a product or brand, Apple and Gap used a range of celebrities. The individual was less important than connections established over a long duration between many different individuals. A black and white portrait of Buzz Aldrin would not in itself distill Apple's corporate soul. However, by placing him in the unlikely company of Muhammad Ali, Jerry Seinfeld and John Lennon, Apple could ascribe the common quality joining them all, a quality then transposed to the Apple brand. The arching theme, in this case, was unconventional achievement and creativity. For Gap it was classic style.

Versions of individuality were central to both campaigns. This participates in a long advertising tradition whereby the consumption of standardized and mass produced goods is figured as an expression of unique selfhood. The implication was that using Apple and wearing Gap would show originality, taste, independence of thought. There is nothing new in this marketing technique but the tone of individuality corresponds with a broader reputation both companies have nurtured for innovation, youthfulness, the fresh approach. "In 1969, man walked on the moon, Woodstock happened, and the Gap was born," reads the company script. With its genesis in sixties San Francisco and its reference to the "generation gap," the clothing retailer originally tapped counter-cultural values of simplicity and personal authenticity. These have since

informed the concept of Gap style, of enduring fashion “basics” which contrast with the fickle and over-designed fads of the larger clothing industry. Apple has also built its reputation on values of simplicity. The Apple Mac, launched in 1984, transformed personal computing by user-friendly principles that distinguished it from complex DOS-based systems. The prize-winning advertisement for the Mac “1984” showed an individual smashing the looming screen of Big Brother, a reference to IBM. From its beginning, Apple aligned itself with innovation and independence, a voice of simplicity and individuality in a world of lumbering technological conformity.

In its khaki campaign, Gap lauded “legendary writers, actors, adventurers with style.” Apple created a paean to “the crazy ones . . . the ones who see things differently.” Both companies sought to construct a tradition for the particular values associated with their brand. Monochrome images were expedient in this regard. They were archival but also tasteful, traditional but visually timeless. Black and white is an idiom that can mark but, in the same instance, flatten time. Unlike colour, which can fade and deteriorate, black and white is more visually continuous. Resolution or technique may distinguish photographs taken decades apart, but monochrome is better able to mask the material decline of the image, enabling black and white portraits from the beginning and the end of the century to look very similar. Monochrome suggests temporality but is often described as “timeless.” By draining the historical, chromatic, specificity of an image, black and white is better able to create an *aura* of temporality. Images are *of* time but not specifically *in* time. Black and white was serviceable to Apple and Gap by creating a terrain of tradition in which individuals with no discernible connection could be summarily linked; monochrome established a visual

relationship between people brought together in a hypothetical commonality, exemplars of a brand value.

Black and white was expedient for its connotations of time but also for its association with artistry and style. Monochrome has long been a staple of fashion photography and it has defined the character of much fashion advertising, especially with the commercial crossover of celebrity photographers like Richard Avedon and Herb Ritts. Avedon was responsible for Calvin Klein's black and white "Obsession" campaign in the mid-1990s and Ritts counts Donna Karen, Calvin Klein, The Gap and Giorgio Armani amongst his corporate clients. In 1996, the Boston Museum of Fine Art held an exhibition of work by Herb Ritts, displaying many of his hallmark celebrity portraits, including those of Madonna and Richard Gere. The exhibition was sponsored by Donna Karan and drew large numbers of students and working-class Bostonians. The exhibition was so popular, in fact, that it broke museum attendance records. In promotional terms, both Apple and Gap were exploiting the popularity of the celebrity portrait. More specifically, they were drawing upon a market niche for *black and white* celebrity portraits, something which became a staple in the poster and postcard industries during the 1990s. The catalogue of a major New York postcard distributor like Fotofolio can demonstrate this (*fig. 14*). Fotofolio's 1997 product brochure is replete with black and white images of Einstein, Hitchcock, Picasso, Gandhi, Marilyn Monroe, Amelia Earhart, Muhammad Ali, Jospheine Baker, Miles Davis, James Dean and numerous others, all of whom would find their way into brand advertising during the nineties (see *fig. 15*). For Apple and Gap, the archival celebrity portrait married a concept of tradition with modern style values.



fig. 14 Fotofolio product brochure, 1997.

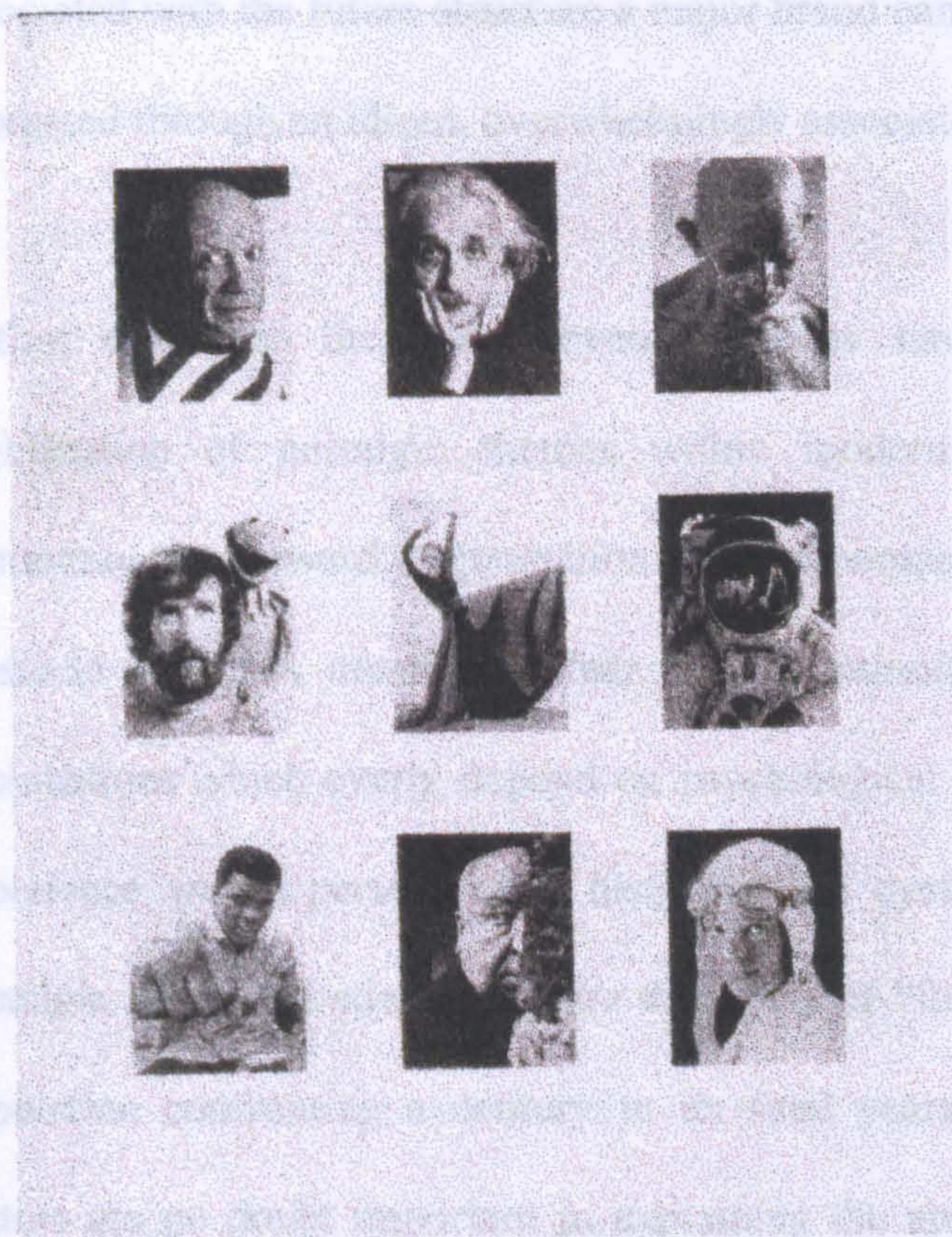


Fig. 15 "Think different," *Wired* Dec. 1997 (inside cover)

Apple and Gap are both Californian companies that have built market profiles based on personality as much as a product; they both sell their brand as a lifestyle choice. Archival celebrity portraits gave a historical pedigree to their respective versions of brand authenticity and corporate *esprit*. At the same time, the portraits ministered to the “youthful and culturally dissident” public that Raphael Samuel suggests first created the high-street market for monochrome images in the mid-1980s.² For Gap, monochrome “legends” galvanized its selling of the fashion classic. The case of Apple is more complex and I want to focus upon the “Think different” campaign, considering its currency of nostalgia. Not only does the campaign raise issues about the commercial appropriation of history and personality, it asks questions about the relationship between authenticity, heritage and the aura of tradition in contemporary advertising. Why, indeed, should a company that develops a technology powerfully associated with the future structure a major brand campaign based on individuals, and expressed through an idiom, overwhelmingly associated with the past?

Within consumer literature, several theories have been used to explain the proliferation of nostalgic themes within modern advertising. Two factors are commonly put forward: a generation of baby-boomers entering middle-age, and fin-de-siècle anxieties creating a fear of discontinuity. These are rather simplistic explanations which overly depend on psychological assumptions about the nostalgic experience within personal and historical life cycles. Barbara Stern suggests that nostalgic themes in advertising are the result of “the double whammy of an ageing population confronting a century in its final years.”³ Demographic and historical factors are no doubt important in explaining the appeal of nostalgia within modern consumer culture, but the popularity of the past cannot be reduced to a combination of

generational melancholy and pre-millennial tension. This ignores the sheer diversity of the nostalgic experience for young and old, the history of nostalgia's aestheticization within commercial culture, and its development as a cultural style divorced from a necessary concept of longing or loss.

Andrew Wernick provides a different perspective, relating nostalgia in contemporary advertising to a "sea-change in values." He speaks of a "phase-shift in capitalist culture" where the progressive future has lost its ideological force and "the arrow of time has been reversed."⁴ This provides a more suggestive explanation for the popularity of the (nostalgic) past in contemporary advertising. Like Andreas Huyssen's theory of a shift in the utopian imagination, nostalgia is set in a cultural moment where the past has developed a new discursive power. Of course, the temporal locutions and monochrome memories of the Apple and Gap campaigns are stylistic effects within a vast promotional repertoire. They may in this way be deployed or discarded according to the changing dictates of corporate imaging. For both companies, the black and white campaigns were superseded in the late 1990s by promotions where products and logos (in colour) were off-set by clinical white backdrops. Black and white should be understood as a variable style in corporate promotion. This does not mean to say, however, that its particular use cannot be related to other kinds of cultural discourse, or that black and white advertising is unable to say anything about "contemporary structures of affective needs and investments."⁵ Despite its shifting role in the exigencies of brand marketing, black and white can be used to explore the currency and expedience of (American) heritage values in the cultural and promotional climate of the 1990s.

John Berger writes that: "Publicity is, in essence, nostalgic. It has to sell the past to the future. It cannot itself supply the standards of its own claims. And so all references to quality are bound to be retrospective and traditional."⁶ The nostalgic past has shaped commercial imagery at various points in the history of American advertising. Jane Becker, for instance, has examined the selling of tradition in the 1930s and the means by which constructions of folk authenticity gave specific commodities origins presumed to lie outside of the marketplace.⁷ The appeal to an authentic past in corporate promotion is nothing new. If "Who wore khakis?" and "Think different" are read (as they must be) in business terms, they are advertising strategies that reveal enduring tendencies in the selling of consumerist values and lifestyles. In their promotional capacity, however, each campaign set forth a legacy of individuals in a prescription of common heritage; in a cultural moment negotiating the terms of American national memory and meaning, monochrome aestheticized a principle of patrimony in a marketing campaign that posed, and then honoured, "our heroes."

Black and white served the transient needs of corporate promotion in the nineties by evoking the transcendent authority of time and the past. Apple's "Think different" campaign sold lifestyle values - creativity, independence, maverick agency - through an appeal to tradition and the authority of cultural inheritance. Strategically conceived in terms of global marketing, the campaign tailored a past that could overcome national boundaries through a (non-representational) economy of nostalgic affect, but that also retained (in representational terms) America as the main symbolic and ideological locus. The brand advertisements were visually immediate and combined world icons (Picasso, Einstein,) with individuals from American cultural history

(Thomas Edison, Martha Graham, Jim Henson). “Think different” created a heritage that was figuratively transnational but distinguishably American. While serving specific corporate needs, the campaign also functioned culturally in the negotiation of nation. I would suggest that the Apple campaign was part of a process at the end of the 1990s that Frederick Buell has called “the partial reconstitution of U.S. national culture for a postnational world.”⁸

The Apple campaign has been discussed in terms of postmodern ahistoricism, mainly for the way it flattens the difference and specificity of the past. History, in this view, is a disposable effect in the creation of brand image; it is symptomatic of a depthless culture where the past is realized through surface image and pop simulacra. In theoretical terms, Part Two of my thesis concentrates on the cultural and memory work performed, rather than denied, by the black and white image as an aesthetic “nostalgia mode.” As such, I want to consider the “Think different” campaign in ways that do not simply prove a widespread crisis in the postmodern historical imagination; Apple advertising does not simply evacuate historical meaning through its plundering of the cultural archive. I wish instead to explore it as a multinational articulation of cultural heritage, creating a patrimonial legacy that helped ground a sense both of corporate and post-*national* identity. I will examine “Think different” in two ways: as a specific market strategy and as an affective figuration of cultural inheritance.

Monochrome Marketing

Before turning specifically to the Apple campaign, it is perhaps useful to situate the function of black and white imagery in the wider context of contemporary advertising. Monochrome does not always, or by necessity, invoke time. There are various artistic and documentary traditions that Madison Avenue can draw upon in using black and white. During the 1998 World Cup, Coca-Cola ran a black and white advertisement that interspersed monochrome images of fans and football with the message, spelt in red floodlight bulbs, "Eat football, sleep football, drink Coca-Cola." Using a pop soundtrack to accompany fast-paced documentary images, the only other use of colour was reserved for the distinctive Coke logo, stamped in red at the ad's conclusion. Football and Coke were brought together in a narrative of passion and necessity; the documentary authenticity of monochrome helped to frame Coke as "the real thing." (In a parody, a British soft drink company ran a campaign several months later that read: "Eat pork pies, sleep a lot, drink Tango." It was in colour and mocked the pretensions of Coca-Cola). When the "Real Thing" campaign was first launched in 1969 it used documentary-style colour photography. Black and white had different connotative properties in the 1960s; it carried a suggestion of technical primitivism that may have disabled Coke's image of modern vitality. In nineties visual culture, however, monochrome became an aesthetic used by various style industries targeting youth markets. Black and white was serviceable to Coca-Cola in the late 1990s in being a documentary idiom *with visual cachet*.

The resurgence of black and white during the nineties does not diminish the sheer and undeniable presence of colour in contemporary promotion, or the demand by

advertisers for colour space within print mediums. The use of black and white became popular within a number of *specific* industries. Perhaps the most notable among them was that of fashion. Black and white developed as a signature of designer legitimacy and high-street chic in the 1980s and 1990s, from Armani and Calvin Klein to sport/street brands like Nike and Adidas. One of the most striking promotional campaigns for Armani, at least in terms of its placement in the print media, came in the pages of *Time*. In its 75th anniversary issue in March 1998, black and white ads for Armani overwhelmed the magazine. There were no less than 22 individual one page black and white ads, each one purveying a version of Armani style, from the beach-casual chic of “Emporia Armani” to the chiaroscuro elegance of “Giorgio Armani classico.” The overall impression was underlined by a monochrome ad on the back cover and a glossy pull-out spread in the centre pages. Armani bought the ad space of the entire magazine, providing the issue with a curious set of visual juxtapositions. As an anniversary edition, *Time* made considerable use of black and white photography, documenting world history and *Time*’s reporting of it. In this way, the reader moved visually between black and white images of Charles Lindbergh, the Depression, Pearl Harbour, and the 1968 Chicago riots, and the self-conscious refinement of Italian designer fashion. History became a fashion tableau; fashion drew a pedigree from history.

Armani used *Time* as a vehicle for a branding blitzkrieg, directed at the magazine’s largely middle class readership. Throughout the 1990s, monochrome distinguished Armani advertising in nearly all of its promotional forms, from television to billboards. Black and white captured a quality of authenticity and style; it became the visual mark of designer credibility and was used by a large number of “exclusive”

fashion brands. In the *Time* issue, black and white played off designer style against an explicit discourse of history. Armani worked to locate itself within a realm of historical, or what it would no doubt prefer to call classic, tradition. Levi used monochrome for similar effects in its selling of denim “originals.” Reinvigorating the image of 501s after a drop in sales during the 1980s, Levi denim was newly associated with classic cool, heralded by Nick Kamen undressing in a fifties launderette to the song “I Heard it on the Grapevine.” While this 1985 campaign was in colour, advertisements in the 1990s used monochrome far more frequently. In campaigns that continued to sell a Levi tradition, advertisements created historical “feel” while affirming contemporary values (sexual independence, individuality, rebellion) and conventions of beauty. Levi drew upon the generic associations of black and white within fashion photography and music video and used them in combination with monochrome’s visual pastness to sell its own version of fashion classicism.

Black and white is a mark of designer style in these examples. It is the suggestion of *temporality* that has made monochrome common to the more explicit “memory ad,” however. According to Judith Williamson, these are advertisements which create a specific narrative of memory that locate the subject within a temporal story.⁹ There are numerous examples within nineties culture, from Jack Daniel’s whiskey to Ralph Lauren interior design. The written and pictorial narratives of Jack Daniel’s advertising are based on a folk nostalgia for small town life, a definitive promotional trait for several decades. In a 1955 marketing manifesto entitled “The Jack Daniel’s character,” company lore had it that advertising should “preserve and foster” feelings that equate Jack Daniel’s with “a touch of yesterday’s leisurely pace that men long for but so rarely find today.” The same advertising language - what the manifesto ruled as

“homey but never quaint” - continued into the 1990s.¹⁰ The commercial imagery of Jack Daniel’s whiskey and of the Lynchburg distillery (the oldest registered distillery in America, as the ads never lose a chance of reminding you) depend on rustic scenes of the slow brewing process and of old wooden whiskey barrels. Misty *colour* photography is preferred to monochrome memory. Black and white is perhaps too stark for the required “homey” effect. Indeed, monochrome is not the only, or always the most expedient, mode of visual memory in consumer culture. In general terms, black and white is more common to ads which focus less upon the recovery of tradition than upon the capacity of the individual *to create* memory and tradition.

Monochrome is used frequently in advertisements for jewellery. There is an element of fashion exclusivity in this - used by De Beers and watchmaker Tag Heuer - but the black and white image is also deployed for its specific connotations of memory and time. “Begin your own tradition,” reads a 1996 advertisement for Patek Philippe watches beside a monochrome picture of a man playing the piano with a child. “Give her a Christmas gift she’ll *never* forget,” a 1996 jewellery brochure for H. Samuel implores, setting a black and white snapshot of a happy young couple on a colour page of chains and bracelets. In these examples, monochrome heightens the symbolic quality of goods that are bought and given as objects and tokens of memory. Black and white film is often sold by photographic companies themselves on the basis of monochrome’s memorial character. “Create a timeless memory . . . next time why not try a Black & White film in your camera,” reads a 1995 ad for Ilford processing. As in the Patek Phillippe ad, Ilford use a black and white image of a child to suggest familial memory; the passing of time becomes an archival movement between generations.

The invention and exploitation of time and tradition is now common in a culture where “pastness” has become imbricated in particular regimes of taste. Jim Collins suggests that temporality has become a new criteria of discrimination in contemporary consumer culture. He writes: “This is not to suggest that other categories which have previously served as the basis of distinction - artistry, functionality, authenticity, rarity - are no longer operative in the constitution of cultural value, but, rather, that all such categories are now defined in reference to new temporal paradigms that are a response to the accessibility and reproducibility of the past.”¹¹ Collins examines the changing relationship between innovation and tradition in a postmodern culture that can circulate, reconfigure and hybridize styles in ways that produce oxymoronic concepts in fashion and design, like the “Modern classic.” He is principally concerned with the refashioning of Modernist aesthetics in contemporary culture, but he also points more generally to a trend whereby timelessness, classicism, and memory have become prevailing categories in the determination of style value.

The Gap developed a promotional currency in the 1990s based on the fashion “classic,” offering “the perfect balance between *updated classics* and seasonal styles” (my italics). A host of celebrity individuals were used in the nineties to endorse Gap fashion, from the boxer Evander Holyfield to the singer Anthony Kiedis, from director Spike Lee to model Naomi Campbell. The 1993 “Who wore khakis?” campaign was a *historical* figuration of Gap’s more general promotional vocabulary. American cultural “legends” such as Chet Baker and Humphrey Bogart were able to provide an alternative set of individuals through which Gap could market its brand values. In so doing, the campaign catered to a slightly different, somewhat older, target audience.

Monochrome signified designer style but gave a mytho-historical dimension to its selling of individualism and the fashion classic.

There was no similar promotional context or generic precedent for the black and white Apple campaign. While it is true that Compaq, Microsoft and IBM all used black and white advertising in the 1990s, the “Think different” campaign was distinct within computer promotion for its archival and overtly temporal structure. Black and white was used to create a historical aura vital to the rebranding of Apple’s corporate identity. To understand the purpose and utility of the monochrome “Think different” advertisements, one must locate the campaign within the turbulent corporate history of Apple during the nineties, and see how a return to original company values became the crux of its business survival.

Back to the Future

In 1998, a list composed by *Advertising Age* of the two hundred biggest brands in America placed Apple 169th, between Nicorette chewing gum and Huggies disposable nappies.¹² This was indicative of the sagging fortunes of a company that was losing its hold in a market that, during the 1980s, it significantly helped to create. The Apple Mac revolutionized personal computing. More expensive and with fewer applications than IBM machines, the Mac pioneered the graphic user interface. This introduced a visual element into the computer market that would shape “user-friendly” principles and standardize graphic icons and pull-down menus. The Mac

was not, in itself, the making of Apple. The breakthrough came in 1985 with laser printing. This capitalized on Apple's graphic capacities with a printing system that became known as "what you see is what you get." Replacing primitive Dot Matrix printers, Apple's technological emphasis on graphic simplicity and printing clarity helped pioneer desk-top publishing. The Apple brand developed a reputation for accessibility and creativity. Although posting its first quarterly losses in 1985, Apple's stock increased in value through the eighties and early nineties, reaching a high in March 1991.

From 1993, both stock prices and market share began to slip. This was the result of a combination of factors. Prominent among them was an increasing number of PCs entering the marketplace, all using the Windows system developed by Microsoft. Windows enabled the graphic simplicity pioneered by Apple to be used on DOS-based machines. This led Apple to sue Microsoft in 1988 for copyright infringement, a battle that took nearly a decade to resolve and saw the launch of Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 in the process. The fortunes of Apple were hit by developments in a fierce PC market but were also the result of strategic blunders. Misguided investments, quality control mishaps, poor inventory management and unfocused marketing were, by the mid-1990s, causing a defection of Apple customers to the Windows/Intel platform. Boardroom politics caused further anxiety with two CEOs resigning between 1993 and 1997. In this period, Apple's market share dropped from 12.1 percent to 3.5 percent. In 1997, losses totalled \$1.5 billion, leading *Business Week* to profess gravely the "death of an icon." Drastic measures were required to prevent calamity and this led in July 1997 to the appointment of Steve Jobs as interim CEO.

Many consider Steve Jobs to be *the* Apple visionary; he was the co-founder whose force of personality had once inspired innovation, animosity, but, ultimately, success. Jobs had left the company in 1985 after a bitter dispute with the Apple board of executives. His return was therefore rich in symbolism. He brought with him something of Apple's past, a dynamism and charisma that could, it was hoped, restore faith in the brand and repel the spectre of Bill Gates. *Time* put the situation like this: "Understand, the idea of Jobs returning to Apple is something akin to that of Luke Skywalker returning to fight what, until last week, cultists regarded as the evil empire."¹³ The arch-enemy of Apple has long been Microsoft: the evil empire extends itself from Seattle. The first decision Jobs made at the helm of Apple, however, was not to challenge Microsoft but to strike an alliance, a corporate "meet the Apple-Gates." Resolving old grudges with his nemesis, Jobs formed a strategic relationship that would secure Apple's prospects of immediate survival. This came in the form of stock investment by Microsoft, a payment of \$150 million by Gates to settle the issue of patent authority, and the agreement by Microsoft to publish Mac software into the next century. This was a "rescue" package that saved Apple from collapse but also served Microsoft very well, both financially through investment and legally in the company's fight against a mounting anti-trust suit.

Shoring up the structural difficulties of Apple was the immediate priority for Jobs. This had meaning only insofar as Apple could reinvigorate its market profile, however. Stopping the rot had to be followed by serious repair work on the ailing brand identity. Jobs took immediate steps by sacking Apple's advertising agency, BBDO, and appointing the firm that made the "1984" campaign, TBWA Chiat Day.

Previous campaigns in the 1990s had focused upon corporate rivalry, expounding the difference between Apple's integrated system of computing and the mere cosmetic benefits of Windows. Market profile was developed through product placements in films like *Mission Impossible* and *Independence Day*. No clear marketing message emerged through these strategies, however. A sharper definition was required. A press release in July 1997 stated that: "Apple's renewed focus on its users and key markets necessitates a significant change in communications strategies."¹⁴ The appointment of TBWA Chiat Day was a preliminary step. The agency was given responsibility for implementing a \$60 million brand campaign that would position Apple more distinctly in a market anticipating the "second digital revolution" of the Internet. With dominant sales in education and desk top publishing, Apple sought to extend principles of simplicity and creativity that would attract new consumers and refresh the loyalties of established converts. The result was the black and white "Think different" campaign.

The new brand advertising was launched on 28th September, 1997, with a television commercial that was aired twice during the network premier of *Toy Story*. In a neat stroke of synergy, this was a film made by Pixar, the animation company owned by Steve Jobs. The commercial was in black and white, showing fast-cut footage of cultural figures from the twentieth century, including Einstein, John Lennon, Thomas Edison, Martha Graham, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Picasso, Ted Turner and many others. The actor, Robert Duvall, read a voice-over, reciting an ode to "the crazy ones." It went like this:

Here's to the crazy ones.

The misfits.

The rebels.

The troublemakers.

The round pegs in the square holes.

The ones who see things differently.

They're not fond of rules.

And they have no respect for the status quo.

You can quote them, disagree with them,
glorify or vilify them.

The only thing you can't do is ignore them.

Because they change things.

They push the human race forward.

And while some may see them as the crazy ones,
we see genius.

Because the people who are crazy enough to think they
can change the world are the ones who do.

The final monochrome image was that of a child, together with the new Apple logo, "Think different." The television advertisement was soon followed by a flood of black and white images in the print media. On posters and billboards, on bus shelters and in airports, the "Think different" message went global, carried forth by a roster of celebrity mavericks, archival emissaries of Apple's new market bite.

Strategically, the "Think different" campaign established an attitude; it identified the "distinct sensibility" of the Mac user. A combination of creativity and independence of thought were the values which Apple hoped would distinguish its product in a market dominated by the Windows operated PC. Steve Jobs said that: "Think Different celebrates the soul of the Apple brand . . . that creative people with passion

can change the world for the better.”¹⁵ It was necessary to transform Apple’s difference in the computer market - an integrated system of software and hardware with its own applications and support servicing - from a potential liability into a positive virtue. All the time that Apple seemed to be in jeopardy, new consumers would be deterred, made anxious by the prospect of buying a computer that had no future. By associating Apple’s difference with a certain character of mind, however, a renegade spirit in the tradition of Muhammad Ali and Martin Luther King, Apple could stand for something more than risk. The new brand campaign focused on the achievement and genius that *comes from risk*, a tactical sleight that turned beleaguered market share into a matter of creative independence. The Mac user was identified with those who are “not fond of rules” and have “no respect for the status quo.” Apple defined itself against the PC norm in such a way that buying Apple became a statement of character in tune with a rich legacy of modern cultural heroes.

Creativity has been integral to Apple’s brand image since the launch of the Mac in 1984. This helped Apple generate a substantial lead in education and graphics arenas. (By 1997, Steve Jobs could argue that Apple computers helped publish 70 percent of American newspapers and were used by 64 percent of children and teachers within schools). Creativity was a powerful value in the repositioning of Apple’s brand identity. It was something that could appeal, in the words of Apple’s head of advertising, Allen Olivo, to “people who don’t care so much about what a computer does as what they can do with a computer.”¹⁶ As a campaign, “Think different” celebrated a selection of *widely admired* “misfits,” “rebels,” and “troublemakers.” From Bob Dylan to Buzz Aldrin, individuals were figured within a narrative of maverick achievement. “They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. The

create. They inspire. They push the human race forward,” read the ode to the crazy ones. The suggestion in the campaign was that Apple exemplified and, at the same time, enabled the creative energy of historical innovators. “We make the tools for these kinds of people,” a larger version of the poem declared. By establishing a tradition of revolutionary free thinkers, Apple sought to locate itself within, and sell its wares upon, a history of rebel creativity.

This market strategy was seen within the company as a philosophical homecoming. In 1996, the summary paragraph of any Apple press release described the company as a “recognized innovator in the information industry and leader in multimedia technologies, [creating] powerful solutions based on easy-to-use personal computers, servers, peripherals, software, personal digital assistants and Internet content.” By 1997, the tone had changed, becoming less descriptive and more promissory. Apple proclaimed that it was “*re-committed to its original mission - to bring the best personal computing products and supports to students, educators, designers, scientists, engineers, businesspersons and consumers*” (my italics). The “Think different” campaign signalled a return, a symbolic reclaiming of the values that launched Apple in the 1980s. Allen Olivo said that “Think different” expounds “exactly the same message as when we launched the Mac back in 1984. If you look at the ‘1984’ commercial, it’s about one individual taking control of the situation and saying, “I can change things.”¹⁷ The archival pastness of “Think different” symbolized, in part, a strategic nostalgia for Apple’s early brand values, re-establishing connections between computer technology and the creative individual that had originally defined the Mac. This relationship was something which had been lost, according to Olivo, when Apple started marketing itself as “a computer box company rather than a creative, thinking

company.” Apple’s new communication strategy was based on the construction of a corporate, as well as a cultural, sense of the historical past. “Think different” used the aura of tradition to galvanize a maverick company soul and to suggest a return by Apple to its founding principles.

Steve Jobs once said that the great thing about the Mac was that the people who designed it were musicians, poets, artists, zoologists and historians who also happened to be the best computer scientists in the world. The Apple “revolution” saw technical invention riding a crest of idealism, a utopian, some might say “hippy,” vision of new technological possibility. The caustic and witty commentator on the computer industry, Robert X. Cringely, has written: “Steve Jobs sees the personal computer as his tool for changing the world. I know this sounds a lot like Bill Gates, but it’s really very different. Gates sees the personal computer as a tool for transferring every stray dollar, deutsche mark, and kopeck in the world into his pocket, Gates doesn’t really give a damn how people interact with their computers as long as they pay up. Jobs gives a damn. He wants to tell the world how to compute, to set the style for computing.”¹⁸ The Apple family were the informally dressed, creatively unorthodox, flower-children of the computer industry, compared with the corporate Goliath of IBM and, later, the Machiavellian maestros of Microsoft. The “Think different” campaign drew upon the admixture of creativity and empowerment that had originally fired the Apple brand; it literally pictured the poets, artists and musicians that Jobs associated with the Mac, and with some essential corporate spirit. Before becoming a member of Apple’s executive board in 1997, Lawrence Ellison, the chief of software giant Oracle commented that: “Apple is the only true life-style brand in the computer industry. It’s the only company people feel passionate about.”¹⁹ “Think different”

sought to capitalize on this, to re-invigorate the brand philosophy that had done so much to inspire Apple's loyal following. Some market analysts saw a risk in trying to sell computer hardware through "lifestyle" advertising. The campaign was only the first part of a larger strategy, however. Indeed, "Think different" cannot be seen apart from the \$100 million campaign used in 1998 to promote the futuristic iMac.

The iMac campaign focused on a particular product and became the biggest marketing launch in Apple's history. With its striking blue shell, the iMac was aimed at a consumer market wanting speed, simplicity and, most importantly, access to the Internet. Steve Jobs explained that: "iMac does for Internet computing what the original Macintosh did for personal computing. Macintosh let anyone use a computer and iMac lets anyone get on the Internet quickly and easily."²⁰ Memories of the Mac were invoked to sell the capacities, and market significance, of the iMac. The iMac was new, innovative, and by Apple's own definition, part of a company tradition. Television advertising for the iMac premiered on the Wonderful World of Disney. Beginning in August, ads also ran on Seinfeld, News Radio and on cable shows like South Park and Larry King. A twelve page insert was distributed in magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Rolling Stone*. The advertising had two principal colours, white and blue, displaying the machine with the discreet "Think different" logo in the corner. This chromatic effect continued the visual simplicity of Apple marketing. The white background offset the translucent blue of the machine, creating a sense of purity and freshness. The iMac was bracing and cool, removed from the stale designs of Apple's rivals. As one ad put it: "Sorry, no beige."

One of the selling features of the iMac was design, in particular its colour. Andrew Ross suggests that the design aesthetic of much information technology has not been distinguished by the high progressive futurism that influenced the machine age. He writes: "The casing designs for information hardware have retained the chunky, robotic iconography of office equipment, and have not generally sought to simulate the physical sensation of unidirectional speed."²¹ The iMac was not entirely different in this regard but it was certainly less austere. The new Apple machine was self-confessedly "chic, not geek." Ross suggests that the selling of the information age has rested both on the promise of hidden delights and the threat of being left behind. The iMac's delights were fairly well displayed. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that: "Apple followers and first-time buyers are gobbling up the machine because of its space-age look and appeal as an Internet terminal."²² The iMac was the best selling computer in the U.S. during August, the month of its launch, and pushed Apple's market share back up to 13.5 percent. If black and white gave the Apple brand a soul, colour gave the new Apple machine a spirit. When Apple introduced the iMac with five new colours in January 1999 - a choice of strawberry, lime, blueberry, tangerine and grape, together with the original Bondi blue - Steve Jobs said: "What's your favourite color? is going to become one of the most important questions for PC consumers."²³ Ideas of taste were organized and reorganized through shifts in chromatic advertising; black and white gave the company an authority and quality based on tradition, while colour gave the new Apple product a compelling sense of innovation, style and fun. It was difficult to judge how lasting the iMac's appeal would be in the fiercely competitive computer market but early signs were promising. Apple sold 278,000 machines in the first six weeks of the iMac launch. Within three

months it had become the fastest selling computer in Apple's history, winning a host of design awards into the bargain. These included *Business Week's* "Best new product of 1998," *Newsweek's* "Best Design of 1998" and *Time's* "Machine of the Year."

The iMac and the "Think different" ads ran simultaneously at the end of 1998, selling the monochrome past and the colour future with a common admonition *to think*. "Think different," said the black and white campaign; "I think, therefore iMac" pronounced the blue and white advertisements. People from the past and machines of the future were the basis of a broad image strategy used to reposition Apple. It was, at once, archival and anticipatory, based on tradition and innovation. A visual nostalgia was used in combination with a cool futurism, authenticating the brand name with marketing that moved backwards and forwards in time. Lifestyle values and corporate soul mean very little in the computer industry without (the marketing of) genuine technological difference. With the return of Steve Jobs, however, selling a soul and marketing a machine became a mutually reinforcing task.

Within Apple's general advertising strategy, a new, and rationalized, product line came to emblemize a maverick creativity that was associated with the company tradition, and that belonged to a larger history of rebel innovation. The monochrome "Think different" campaign established a broadly cultural, and implied a specifically corporate, sense of heritage. The past was the authenticating cornerstone of Apple's new future, and the campaign served a necessary function repositioning the Apple brand as stylish, innovative and different. As an aesthetic, black and white was *visually* different within computer advertising. Of course, the "meaning" of any advertising campaign does not exist, and cannot be examined, in isolation from the

visual and commercial culture in which it circulates. "Think different" must be understood in relation to other campaigns, not only in terms of Apple's own iMac promotion or, intertextually, with other black and white campaigns, but against rivals like Microsoft and Intel. Both of these companies have figured brand identities based on the future (Intel's space-men) and the empowering possibilities of the present (the Microsoft logo, "where do you want to go today?"). What distinguished Apple in the general marketing of information technology was a quite unusual recourse to the historical archive. "Think different" sold not the future or the possibilities of the present, but the authority of tradition bound within a discourse of maverick heritage.

The "Think different" campaign is the complex result of contemporary taste values and specific market strategies. It has a promotional context and commercial genesis, and should not be used metaphorically to draw sweeping conclusions about the state of postmodern historicity or anything else. The articulation of cultural heritage in the campaign does warrant attention, however. "Think different" gathered an eclectic mix of cultural icons and gave them patrimonial value. "You can praise them, disagree with them, quote them, disbelieve them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things." So went the ode to the 'crazy ones.' Apple's brand advertising, vital to its more direct product-oriented marketing, developed a concept of heritage based on the unorthodoxy of purposefully diverse cultural icons. Steve Jobs said: "The 'think different' campaign set out to honor our heroes."²⁴ This begs two immediate questions: who exactly are "our" heroes, and what does it mean for these "heroes" to be used in a black and white campaign selling computers in the global marketplace? I want now to look more

closely at the question of nostalgia and the construction of heritage - *our* heritage - in the "Think different" campaign.

Heritage and the (post)national imaginary

My own first exposure to the "Think different" campaign was in Copenhagen. A giant monochrome poster of Alfred Hitchcock appeared one morning, draped from a building at Rådhuspladsen, the central town square. Another poster, possibly 30 feet in length, hung beside it. Instead of one single image, it had three separate black and white portraits, Einstein among them. In the corner of each poster was a coloured apple and the words "Think different." They each remained in the town square for several weeks, something of a relief, certainly a contrast, from the hypnotic neon dazzle of the corporate slogans and business logos that blinked relentlessly from the electronic ad space enclosing Rådhuspladsen. I had two other encounters with the campaign: once on television with Robert Duvall's earnest recital of "the crazy ones," the second time in Copenhagen airport. My parting image of Denmark after a three month stay was orchestrated by the ad folks of TBWA Chiat Day. Eight, equally spaced, black and white portraits hung beside each other, dangling above the length of the check-in counter. Jim Henson, Gandhi, and Amelia Earhart were among the individuals pictured. I recognized most of them but two escaped me. I later discovered the mysteries to be Martha Graham and Thomas Edison.

While anecdotal, my experience may suggest something significant about the Apple campaign. Simply put, it didn't require recognition of each and every individual. It established instead a principle of commonality *between* individuals. "Think different" was not about any single person but the invented tradition to which they all belonged. To the *New York Times*, the interpellation of disparate icons within the promotional strategies of a multinational corporation like Apple made the campaign seem "audacious."²⁵ "Think different" made unlikely, if not opaque, connections between people who were identified quite simply as "the round pegs in the square holes." The Apple campaign was seen around the world, its version of maverick heritage consumed by West and East alike. Certain disputes emerged from the representational politics involved. In Hong Kong, for example, Apple bowed to Chinese pressure to withdraw a monochrome "Think different" image of the Dalai Lama. The endorsement of maverick political "individualism" may have been safe using images of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but not for those who remain central to ongoing, and unresolved, ideological disputes. For less political reasons, Apple was refused permission by the family of Jacques Cousteau to use an image of the celebrated diver. With the iMac unable to perform under the sea, Cousteau was a hero that Apple could surely do without.

As these disputes might suggest, the representational content of the campaign is not without cultural significance. However, issues of representation cannot be seen apart from the non-representational effects of "Think different." By this I am referring to the campaign's "black and whiteness." In accounting for the visual aesthetic of "Think different," I would suggest that monochrome helped bring the Apple mavericks into a realm or economy of *affective nostalgia*. In Lawrence Grossberg's

theory of affect, the quantity of mattering in American culture (the degree of affect or passion) has become divorced from any necessary investment in meaning (the anchoring effect). Using these terms, one might say that the effective meaning of cultural heritage in the Apple campaign was less significant than the affective mattering of that heritage. Put another way, the detail and specificity of the past was less significant than *the principle* of a common archival past. The nostalgia of the campaign was not rooted in a sentimental regard for any specific memory or cultural history. It was instead free-floating and abstract. It did not stop and rest with any one individual, any particular place or moment. It ranged across the surface of time and fame, creating an affective nostalgia that could be consumed globally through the cumulation of individuals, set within an aesthetic of the archive. Writing of the new global system, David Morley and Kevin Robins suggest that “what corporate manoeuvres and machinations are seeking to bring into existence is a global media space and market.”²⁶ If transnational advertising has become part of a process of “standardizing everything into a common global mode,” the Apple campaign sought to create, through structures of affect, a *common global patrimony*.

The global circulation of “Think different” is of no small significance in accounting for the campaign’s affective economy. In theorizing the emergence of a “global cultural economy,” Arjun Appadurai relates a postmodern, commodity sensibility based on nostalgia to a “complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes.” He is concerned with the cultural flows that move between and across national boundaries in a newly globalized world and comments on the possibility of “nostalgia without memory.” This locates the Jamesonian nostalgia mode, understood as a form of pastiche, in a culture of *world* image systems. Appadurai suggests that: “The past

is not a land to return to in a simple politics of memory. It has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios . . .”²⁷ One consequence of the past existing in this way, as a cultural style within advanced global capitalism, is the possibility for people around the world to consume images that belong to a cultural past that has no relation to their own. With images circulating in a newly heterogeneous and transnational public sphere, Appadurai suggests that nostalgia can be experienced for a past that has never been lost in any culturally specific or referential sense.

Appadurai is one of a growing number of critics who theorize globalization as an interactive socio-cultural process. In his argument, this entails a substantial weakening of national communities and the creation of a decentred transnational global system. The imagination is central to this system; Appadurai argues that a new kind of deterritorialized community is created, or imagined, in a world of global image flows and electronic mediation. Imagined national communities have been replaced, to put it simply, by imagined worlds. In Appadurai’s argument, this is a portentous sign, an indication of the end of the nation-state and the emergence of a complex and borderless global economy. Although sharing many critical sympathies with Appadurai, Frederick Buell is more cautionary, believing that globalization is “still substantially managed by the official mind of nations and by transnational, as well as national, entrepreneurial mentalities.”²⁸ While inclined to see globalization in cultural terms that go beyond theories which understand it as a narrative of capitalist penetration and integration, Buell examines the status of “nationalist postnationalism.” More specifically, he looks at a process that in the 1990s saw the “reconstitution of American national identity for postnational circumstances.” Without digressing into the complexities of globalization theory, it is perhaps useful

to situate “Think different” in the context of Buell’s argument. This will locate the campaign, and its use of black and white, within a particular discourse of American nationhood at the end of the 1990s.

Buell maps a shift in American globalist discourse during the 1990s. He suggests that while globalization initially produced a set of anxieties about lost national foundations, the movement of the “global economy” into mainstream discourse gradually turned the global into the basis for a new national “recovery narrative.” This involved a reinvention of national culture, accomplished by the Clinton presidency, but also helped by “neoliberal politics, corporate policy and public relations, the media, and even a variety of the newer intellectual and social movements.”²⁹ One of the main sites through which this reconstituted national culture came to be articulated was that of the information industry. While U.S. based corporations have long dominated world positions in the market for information-based commodities (generating over 50 percent of global revenues), it was in the 1990s that the global information economy garnered a particular discursive weight. If, as Edward Comer contends, “American private and public sector interests have come to recognize that future U.S. hegemonic capacities depend on the internationalization of liberal ideals and consumerist practices,” the information and communication industries became a prime site of ideological investment.³⁰ Computer technologies, in particular, were central to a global information revolution that America was both seen, and positioned, powerfully to help shape.

Buell suggests that during the 1990s the democratic and interactive possibilities of cyberspace were celebrated in libertarian ideological terms in much of the corporate

culture based in and around the computer industry. Apple was no different in this regard. The “Think different” campaign established a global history of free thinkers and creative innovators; its libertarianism was expressed through recourse to a corporate-cultural maverick patrimony. Apple strategists were, of course, hoping to capitalize on the global capacities of the Internet with the iMac. It was therefore apposite that Apple’s maverick heritage should be figuratively borderless. Using “heroes” from France, Britain, Germany, India, America and Spain, “Think different” had a polycultural dimension. There was never any real doubt about the gravitational centre of the cultural heritage at stake, however. “Think different” expressed a legacy that was nominally global but clearly American. Apple purveyed, and affectively sanctioned, a cultural inheritance that reinforced the ideological position of America at the centre of the wired global system. Buell writes: “The information industry would be a crucial place for the corporate restructuring of American identity.”³¹ By developing the concept of the “maverick” - a term that integrates American individualist and anti-institutional traditions - Apple stitched together a postnational heritage using a distinctly American fabric.

As a global advertising campaign, “Think different” can be characterized in two ways. Firstly, it exemplified what Arjun Appadurai’s has called “the fetishism of the consumer.” He writes: “Global advertising is the key technology for the worldwide dissemination of a plethora of creative, and culturally well-chosen, ideas of consumer agency. These images of agency are increasingly distortions of a world of merchandising so subtle that the consumer is consistently helped to believe that he is or she is an actor, where in fact he or she is at best a chooser.”³² Based on a concept of maverick consumer agency, the “Think different” campaign framed individualism as a

lifestyle and consumerist value. Secondly, the campaign figured an imagined postnational patrimony. In marketing terms, this was practical in giving “Think different” global reach. It was defined by its visuality (rather than textuality) and used a large number of international icons; the campaign was a demonstration of multinational efforts to overcome the borders of national community and address the prospective “global” consumer.

“Think different” may have appealed to a global audience but it was rooted, quite unsurprisingly, in the values of America. The Apple campaign is an example of what might be called *nationally inflected* transnationalism; the campaign’s figuration of global patrimony was organized around an implicit idea of American national genius. With a statistical preponderance of American “heroes” in the campaign, and tapping the association of cyberspace as something which derives from, and is being scientifically propelled by, American technological initiative, Apple helped construct a global maverick inheritance of a particular kind. I do not want to suggest that the campaign was received uncritically around the globe. Indeed, a different kind of analysis might look more closely at the reception of the Apple campaign in specific local contexts, whether in the form of cultural resistance (Cousteau) or political refusal (Dalai Lama).³³ However, from the point of view of production, “Think different” can be seen in the context of attempts in the dominant media to articulate a reconfigured sense of American national identity. The campaign was, in Buell’s terms, part of a process of reconstituting “U.S. culture within the disorganizing forces of current globalization.”³⁴

By focusing briefly on the global cultural economy, I want to highlight certain ways in which the Apple campaign performed ideological work constructing national, as well as corporate, identity. This possibility is something which has been underexamined by commentators who concentrate upon, and then lament, the campaign's ahistoricism. To its critics, the randomness of "Think different" is the main point of issue, namely the means by which Apple devoured the contextual specificity and cultural significance of its various "crazy ones." A *New York Times* article said: "Apart from their accomplishments, what the 20 or so famous figures have in common - and their relationship if any to computers - is unclear."³⁵ Writing in *Time*, Salman Rushdie was especially critical of Gandhi's image being used, suggesting that his "thoughts don't really count in this new incarnation. What counts is that he is considered to be 'on message,' in line with the corporate philosophy of Apple."³⁶ Rushdie continues: "Gandhi today is up for grabs. He has become abstract, ahistorical, postmodern, no longer a man in and of his time but a freeloading concept, a part of the available stock of cultural symbols, an image that can be borrowed, used, distorted, reinvented, to fit many different purposes, and to the devil with historicity or truth."

The Apple and the Gap campaigns both illustrate the commercial appropriation of personality, and the means by which historical images circulate in contemporary visual culture. Picasso can advertise a fashion company and a computer brand without changing the expression on his face. The two campaigns used virtually the same image of the man, wearing his familiar striped t-shirt. Picasso, like Gandhi, is up for grabs. To Fredric Jameson, this kind of corporate rummaging through the iconic past, where archival photographs form the basis of contemporary brand campaigns, is indicative of postmodernism's "crisis of historicity." In his theory of pastiche,

Jameson contends that: "Nostalgia art gives us the image of various generations of the past as fashion-plate images, which entertain no determinable ideological relationship to other moments of time: they are not the outcome of anything, nor the antecedents of our present; they are simply images."³⁷ He suggests that the production of glossy "pastness" in postmodern culture is incommensurate with "genuine historicity"; it demonstrates the inability in contemporary life to imagine the past as radically different. Judged in these terms, the Apple campaign would illustrate how the past is now compressed within an overwhelming and depthless present.

If, as Jameson suggests, the past has become "a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum," it would not be hard to see the Apple campaign substantiating his point.³⁸ History is used in the campaign as a store-house of images, a selection of texts that seem to function randomly with little or no sense of connection between them beyond the relationship established by Apple. As Rushdie quips, "to the devil with historicity or truth." There is something postmodern about Apple's sense of the past: the way that images from different times, of different generations, circulate seamlessly in the selling of a brand identity. And yet, the lament for "genuine historicity" does not do justice to the meanings being worked out in what Lawrence Grossberg has called the "complex economy of everyday life." It doesn't account for the production of affective structures which organize and appeal to emotion, desire, mood and passion (nostalgic or otherwise), or to the way that advertisers tap attitudes, incorporate values and shape responsive meanings in their market campaigns. I would suggest that the "Think different" campaign structures a principle of heritage, the cultural significance of which cannot be reduced to

postmodern, historicist crisis, but which must be seen in terms of the reconfiguration of American national identity at home and abroad.

It is here that we might want to focus on the representational content of the campaign. The individuals that carry Apple's "Think different" message are diverse but not indiscriminate. Different kinds of heritage are figured along overlapping racial, gender, generational, and professional axes. This helps create a canon of distinguishable heroes. These include black heroes (Martin Luther King, Muhammad Ali, Rosa Parks), female heroes (Amelia Earhart, Maria Callas, Martha Graham, Rosa Parks), political heroes (Gandhi, Martin Luther King), entrepreneurial heroes (Ted Turner, Richard Branson), modernist heroes (Pablo Picasso, Albert Einstein, Alfred Hitchcock, Frank Lloyd Wright), postmodernist heroes (Jim Henson, Jerry Seinfeld), scientific heroes (Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein), national heroes (Buzz Aldrin), countercultural heroes (John Lennon, Bob Dylan), and many more configurations between them. Apple provides an over-history which accommodates a plethora of historical figures within a basic framework of maverick individualism. The underlying corporate aim of this, as I have said, is to foster notions of consumer agency.

Apple's sense of tradition gestures towards diversity. The "crazy ones" are male and female, black and white; there are representatives from high and popular culture, art and science, politics and commerce. "Think different" creates a tableau of tradition through which multiple histories emerge and play off of one another. A "Think different" advertisement in *Wired* can illustrate the point (*fig. 15*). It carried a page of nine small monochrome portraits, symmetrically organized in three by three columns, so that the ad appeared like this:³⁹

PICASSO	EINSTEIN	GANDHI
HENSON	GRAHAM	ALDRIN
ALI	HITCHCOCK	EARHART

The top row conveys three non-American icons from the early decades of the twentieth century - Picasso, Einstein and Gandhi. Depending on how the eye moves from one picture to the next across and down the columns, however, many unlikely histories can be made. Pablo Picasso, Jim Henson, and Muhammad Ali in one, Amelia Earhart, Buzz Aldrin and Gandhi in another. Apple presents the maverick past as varied and without hierarchy. In this sense, it reflects the steady breakdown of barriers between high and popular culture, and the challenge to older prescriptions of cultural inheritance that have taken place in American society in the last few decades. In some sense, the campaign adopts multiculturalism as an exportable, (post)national identity, supporting Frederick Buell's contention that multiculturalism had become by the late 1990s "a new, powerful official culture for the U.S. in a global world."⁴⁰

While diverse, all the "crazy ones" used by Apple are not *so* crazy that they threaten the principle and values of the dominant culture. It is not insignificant that the Apple mavericks are Rosa Parks and not Malcolm X, Jerry Seinfeld rather than Robert Mapplethorpe, Bob Dylan instead of James Brown. "Think different" did not think about difference in any concerted way, but was an apt demonstration of what Christopher Newfield and Avery Gordon have called "the assimilationist grip on a

multicultural ideal that is rapidly being adopted by the state, the corporation, the military, the arts council, the university.”⁴¹ There is nothing truly maverick about Apple’s “crazy ones,” at least nothing that the dominant culture hasn’t already contained. The image of some individuals, like Picasso, Einstein, and Martin Luther King, have become floating signifiers, constantly sold and reprocessed in contemporary visual media to support a host of corporate and cultural meanings. Others, like Richard Branson and Ted Turner, literally help to maintain the basis of multinational capitalism upon which Apple and Gap clearly depend. Bob Dylan has by now been fully incorporated within establishment histories, and Jim Henson and Jerry Seinfeld both made fortunes selling their products to corporations like Disney and NBC. While the “crazy ones” may have been controversial in their own time, their maverick messages have been sanctioned or neutralized through the cultural refashioning of their iconoclasm and/or the simple passage of time. While the Apple mavericks are symbolically oppositional, they are figured within a dominant prescription of “alternative” cultural patrimony.

To situate “Think different” in the context of the late 1990s, one might relate and compare it with the figuration of heritage in the earlier Gap promotion. Unlike Apple, the Gap campaign utilized the past to sell a focused generational nostalgia. “Who wore khakis?” specified the identity of the individual as set within a particular historical period. Initially, The Gap used thirteen people, all of them American cultural icons, either writers, actors, artists or musicians. The one exception in terms of nationality was Picasso, although his international capital as *the* twentieth century artist has given him a symbolic place in American, as well as European, cultural life. All of the figures reached the pinnacle of their fame before the 1960s: namely

Humphrey Bogart, Jack Kerouac, Sammy Davis Jnr., Arthur Miller, Norma Jeane, Rock Hudson, Ernest Hemingway, James Dean. In each monochrome portrait, it was made clear who, exactly, “wore khakis.” The individuals had significance in their own right; the campaign developed a more obvious nostalgia for the cultural “legends” of America’s past. In marketing terms, the campaign appealed to an older target audience, developing an *icon*-ography that tapped a particular generational nostalgia, or at least sold the idea of a specific American generation. In promoting a fashion “classic,” Gap appealed to a sense of classic - which in this context meant pre-1960s - America.

“Think different” was broader in scope; it ranged across place and time and was both postnational and multicultural. It is tempting to use the two campaigns to mark a cultural shift in the corporate construction of American identity during the 1990s. The Gap campaign appeared in 1993 and the Apple campaign in 1997. This was roughly the time that saw the discursive transition outlined by Frederick Buell, a rhetoric of endangered national foundations and traditions giving way to a national “recovery narrative” set within a global context. While selling different products and engaging different ideas of “America,” neither of the campaigns by Apple nor Gap can be entirely divorced from the cultural climate in which they evolved. One might argue that the discursive transition from a sense of having lost “authentic” America, to the reconstitution of “America” in global terms, had a contextual (if never a causal) bearing on the two campaigns. The Gap campaign appealed fundamentally to a pre-1960s nostalgia. This, of course, distinguished much of the prevailing culture war rhetoric of the time, with battles fought over the legacy of the 1960s and the compromised nature of American tradition. “Think different” emerged when these

debates had all but run their course. The late 1990s, rather than bearing witness to cultural anxiety about the loss of tradition and the clouding of “authentic” American identity, saw an investment in a more globalized and multicultural form of nationhood. The Apple campaign inscribed brand values through the articulation of a plural (post)national past. It was perhaps this which gave “Think different” the cultural appeal that deepened its claim for, and helped it win, the 1998 Emmy for Outstanding commercial.

“Think different” must be understood, primarily, in the context of American business culture and in terms of the beleaguered state of the Apple brand at the end of the 1990s. I would argue that its promotional and visual strategies reveal certain taste values and cultural tendencies within 1990s image culture, however. The Emmy is suggestive in this regard. What might explain the critical success of “Think different”? I would suggest that the use of archival black and white served to punctuate the colour norms of consumerist culture. “Think different” created temporal and authenticity “effects” which, together with the fact that no product was seen or explicitly sold, helped distance the campaign from any nakedly promotional function. The campaign was part of, but at the same time seemingly beyond, contemporary promotion. It was lifestyle advertising based upon the transcendent virtues of cultural heritage.

The articulation of heritage in the campaign was responsive to contemporary regimes of taste but also contributive to cultural constructions of (post)national identity. By using the aura of the archive, Apple claimed a “tradition” that, while transparently invented, positioned Apple and America at the technological and ideological centre of

the global information revolution. Apple classified a tradition of innovation through recourse to the “multicultural” maverick. Heroism was judged in American terms and, drawing upon a principle of diversity, used a large majority of American examples. Monochrome memory and the celebrity icon became the basis for a brand campaign that established a global heritage of common heroes that Apple *and* America were seen to inherit and embody, and whose spirit and legacy they would mutually carry forth.

“Our” Heroes, “Our” Century

Throughout 1998 and 1999, *Time* magazine ran a series of issues that dealt thematically with “our century,” what Henry Luce had famously described in 1941 as “the American century.” The *Time* 100 list, as it became known, was something of a multi-media event. Listing its selection of the hundred most influential figures of the twentieth century, the magazine published six issues: on leaders, politicians and revolutionaries, artists and entertainers, builders and titans, scientists and thinkers, and heroes and inspirations. Finally, there was the impossible choice of “Person of the Century.” This became an often controversial construction of historical influence, generating column inches in the British and American press about various inclusions and exclusions. Should Bart Simpson really have been chosen as one of the twentieth century’s most significant cultural influences? Could Lucky Luciano be reasonably called either a builder or a titan? In 1999, Madam Tussaud’s mounted an exhibition based on the *Time* selections, CBS News produced prime-time specials based on each

group, luminaries were convened to discuss the selections on Charlie Rose's PBS radio show and, inevitably, a coffee-table souvenir was put in production for Christmas.

The selection of individuals in the *Time* 100 list could be as surprising as the "audacious" juxtapositions of the Apple campaign. *Time* placed together Hitler and Pope John Paul II, Le Corbusier and Coco Chanel, Walt Disney and Ray Kroc, Sigmund Freud and Robert Goddard. Both Apple and *Time* sought to articulate versions of cultural heritage. It was perhaps not surprising, considering their mutual interest in the construction of historic and heroic legacies, that on the back page of *Time*'s issue on "Builders and Titans," Apple should place an advertisement for the iMac. The ad was white, the computer was Bondi blue, and "Think different" was written in the top right-hand corner. Featured inside the magazine were Henry Ford, David Sarnoff, Louis B. Mayer, A.P. Giannini, Charles Merrill, Walt Disney, Lucky Luciano, William Levitt, Walter Reuther, Thomas Watson, Ray Kroc, Estee Lauder, Akio Morita and, perhaps inevitably, Bill Gates. Steve Jobs was given a two-column footnote after the Gates feature, saying that "he may not run the computer world, but he sure can make a dent."⁴² Apple used the *Time* issue to situate the iMac within a history of business innovation. In the context of the larger *Time* narrative, it was part and product of a culture where, as a congratulatory by-line put it, "capitalism not only won, it turned into a marvelous machine of prosperity, led by people who could take an idea and turn it into an industry."⁴³ If Steve Jobs was the person and iMac the idea, the industry belonged to America.

I refer to the issue, and *Time* magazine more generally, because it brings this chapter and the previous chapter to some kind of meeting point. In different ways, both Apple in its “Think different” campaign and *Time* in its “100 list” sought to construct a shared territory of cultural history and heritage. As (part of) global, multinational corporations, they helped articulate visions of patrimony and cultural commonality. Considering the more general use of monochrome in *Time*, both the marketing campaign and the news magazine engaged a discourse of “black and whiteness” that infused particular constructions of national identity with archival legitimacy. The articulation of stable history and common heritage, aestheticized by the temporal and authenticity effects of black and white, can be understood in hegemonic terms. In a postmodern climate where “culture” and “identity” have become based far less on fundamental, or agreed-upon, essences, than upon the contingent and moving play of global and ethnic differences, attempts have been made in the dominant media to consolidate ideas (and images) of permanence, stability, cultural foundations. In 1990, Steven Ross, head of Time-Warner, said that “the new reality of international media is driven more by market opportunity than by national identity.”⁴⁴ While this may be so, there remains an internal tension between the neo-liberal global marketplace and a residual, and patriotic, attachment to a concept of bounded, as well as internally coherent, national culture. Morley and Robins suggest that, while the idea of national culture has become more troublesome in a globalized sphere, it retains a long and potent half-life.⁴⁵ I would argue that the potency of this half-life helped contribute to the context and conditions for a media discourse of “black and whiteness” in the 1990s; it established a provision for the aestheticization of national history and heritage.

The black and white image suggests a depth of meaning that can appear to reach outside the culture of simulacrum, beyond the colour contexts of news report and ad promotion. Monochrome memory appeals to a transcending permanence found, or rather figured, within the historical archive. Both Apple and *Time* drew upon the visual aura of the black and white image in this way, using it as a promotional punctum and a code of chronicle. Taken up within a discourse of national identity, the visuality of monochrome also helped to fix and authenticate a shared sense of historical time and cultural tradition. Discussing media representations of America by U.S.-based, multinational media corporations, Lawrence Grossberg suggests that a struggle is being waged “over the construction of the United States and its place in the world. This is a struggle not merely over identity, but over its spaces and territories, a struggle to remap the United States, its population and capital.”⁴⁶ In a cultural moment negotiating difference and heterogeneity on local and global levels, *Time* magazine and Apple marketing helped suggest, and visualize, a stable historical meaning (“our century”) and a common cultural patrimony (“our heroes”). In different ways, this can be seen as part of an attempt in cultural life and in the dominant media to articulate the form and fixity of American national identity. I want to explore this further in the next two chapters, examining the more specific interests served in the figuration of a consensual, collectively remembered, past. No consideration of memory politics in the mass media can, in this vein, overlook Hollywood film.

NOTES

¹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) 287.

² Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994) 353.

³ Barbara B. Stern, "Nostalgia in Advertising Text: Romancing the Past," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 19, 1992, 388. See also Barbara B. Stern, "Historical and Personal Nostalgia in Advertising Text: The *Fin de siecle* Effect," *Journal of Advertising Studies* 21 (2) 1992: 11-22; and William J. Havlena and Susan L. Holak, "'The Good Old Days': Observations On Nostalgia and Its Role in Consumer Behavior," *Advances in Consumer Research* 18, 1991: 323-329.

⁴ Andrew Wernick, "Resort to Nostalgia: Mountains, Memories and Myths of Time," in Mica Nava, Andrew Blake, Iain MacRury, Barry Richards, eds., *Buy This Book: Studies in Advertising and Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1997) 207-223.

⁵ See Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing In Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997) 191-252.

⁶ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972) 139.

⁷ Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1998). In the field of cultural history, Jackson Lears and Michael Kammen both point to the conflict between nostalgia and progress in nineteenth century commercial culture. The past was commonly invoked but usually to ground a sense of modern improvement. It wasn't until the Depression that progressive idioms were seriously challenged by the value attached to tradition. Lears suggests that it was in the 1930s that "advertisers began an unprecedented effort to associate their products with the past." The rediscovery of folkish imagery and the validation of heritage was a response to economic crisis, a new "pseudotraditionalism" creating a mythic version of the American past that could, it was hoped, restabilize confidence in modern business. See Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994) 383; and Michael Kammen, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 125-142.

⁸ Frederick Buell, "National Postnationalism," 554.

⁹ Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, (London: Marian Boyers, 1978).

¹⁰ "The Jack Daniel's character" was enclosed within a public relations package that can be ordered from the distillery in Lynchburg, as referred to at the bottom of its press advertising. Included in the package is a monochrome portrait of Jack Daniel, a historical sketch of the company, details about the product and a brochure describing "Jack Daniel's Country." The package is sent as "a token of friendship" and, in a language both folksy and familiar, recipients are encouraged to "drop us another line."

¹¹ Jim Collins, *Architectures of Excess: Cultural Life in the Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 158.

- ¹² Cited in Matt Toor, "Different Strokes," *MacUser* 14 (8) 1998: 69.
- ¹³ Cathy Booth, "Steve's Job: Restart Apple," *Time* 18 Aug. 1997: 35.
- ¹⁴ Press release, "Apple Announces Advertising Agency Review," www.apple.com. 26 Jul. 1997.
- ¹⁵ Press release, "Apple Launches Brand Advertising Campaign," www.apple.com. 29 Sep. 1997.
- ¹⁶ Cited in Matt Toor, "Different Strokes," 64.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Robert X. Cringely, *Accidental Empires: How The Boys of Silicon Valley Make their Millions, Battle Foreign Competition, and Still Can't Get a Date* (London: Penguin, 1992) 182.
- ¹⁹ Cited in Cathy Booth, "Steve's Job," 38.
- ²⁰ Press release, "Apple launches its Largest Marketing Campaign Ever for iMac," www.apple.com. 13 Aug. 1998.
- ²¹ Andrew Ross, *Real Love: In Pursuit of Cultural Justice* (London: Routledge, 1998) 27.
- ²² "iMac is too hot to handle," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 Sep. 1998: 6.
- ²³ Press release, "iMac given new colors," www.apple.com. 10 Jan. 1999.
- ²⁴ Press release, "Apple's Think Different Ad Wins Emmy for Outstanding Commercial," www.apple.com. 31 Aug. 1998.
- ²⁵ Stuart Elliot, "New Apple Ad Lifts Off From Disney Land," *New York Times* 29 Sep. 1997: 13.
- ²⁶ David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995) 15.
- ²⁷ Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2 (2) 1990, 4.
- ²⁸ Frederick Buell, "National Postnationalism," 551. For penetrating angles on the transnational question, see three articles that accompany Buell's essay in *American Quarterly* 50 (3) 1998. These are by Paul Giles, "Virtual Americas: The Internationalization of American Studies and the Ideology of Exchange," 523-547; Nikhal Pal Singh, "Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in an Age of Democracy," 471-522; and Michelle A. Stephens, "Black Transnationalism and the Politics of National Identity: West Indian Intellectuals in the Age of War and Revolution," 592-608.
- ²⁹ Frederick Buell, "National Postnationalism," 552.
- ³⁰ Edward A. Comer, "The Re-Tooling of American Hegemony: U.S. Foreign Communications Policy from Free Flow to Free Trade." In Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, Dwayne Winseck, Jim McKenna, and Oliver Boyd-Barrett, eds., *Media in Global Context: A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1997) 195. Comer relates his analysis to initiatives in foreign communications policy directed by the American State. This is part of a broad argument about the nation state as a "mediator of globalization." He suggests that: "Rather than its relative *decline*, I believe that what is underway is a shift in the *form* in which the nation state relates to transnational developments."
- ³¹ Ibid., 566.
- ³² Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference," 16.

³³ For an analysis of issues of reception in the global/local nexus, see Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars*. For a historical and cultural account of containment and resistance from the perspective of American Studies, see George McKay, ed., *Yankee Go Home (& Take Me With You): Americanization and Popular Culture* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

³⁴ Frederick Buell, "National Postnationalism," 577.

³⁵ Stuart Elliott, "New Apple Ad Lifts off from Disney's Land," *New York Times*, 13.

³⁶ Salman Rushdie, "Mohandas Gandhi," *Time* 13 Apr 1998, 71. Ironically, Gandhi was Steve Jobs's choice for "Person of the Century" in a poll taken by *Time* in 1999.

³⁷ Anders Stephenson, "Regarding Postmodernism," 60.

³⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991) 18.

³⁹ *Wired*, Dec 1997, inside cover.

⁴⁰ Frederick Buell, "National Postnationalism," 563.

⁴¹ Christopher Newfield and Avery F. Gordon, "Multiculturalism's Unfinished Business," in Christopher Newfield and Avery F. Gordon, eds, *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 109.

⁴² "Builders and Titans," *Time* 7 Dec. 1998.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁴ Cited in Morley and Robins, *Spaces of Identity*, 11.

⁴⁵ David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity*, 108.

⁴⁶ Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself*, 254.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN OSKAR MET FORREST

Documentary, Nostalgia and Hollywood Film

To suggest that a film is concerned with cultural memory assumes a particular relationship with the historical past. History and memory are by no means oppositional categories; they interact, overlap and help construct each other. All “historical” films are in some sense concerned with cultural memory, whether the period piece and its historically decorative tableaux (*The Age of Innocence*, *A Room With A View*), or the grandiloquent stagings of the past in movies that use history as a vehicle for genres like the action adventure and the romance (*The Last Of The Mohicans*, *Titanic*). These films differ in kind, however, from movies where the historical past is understood as contributive to, or at least exerting a contextual bearing on, contemporary life and its structures of belief. Marita Sturken writes that “cultural memory is a field of contested meanings in which Americans interact with cultural elements to produce concepts of the nation . . .”¹ By this definition, films that are in some way “about” cultural memory participate in a dialogue that equates how we remember with who we are. The representation of the historical past is not just a question of atmosphere or decoration but of cultural identity. In the 1990s, Hollywood films that engaged debates about cultural memory, especially in relation to negotiations of national identity, can be seen to include, among others, *Dances With Wolves* (1990), *JFK* (1992), *Malcolm X* (1993),

Schindler's List (1993), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Amistad* (1997) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). I want to concentrate on two of these films - *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* - and consider their stylistic use of monochrome and their more general intersection with the politics of memory in the climate of the early 1990s.

In the last two chapters, I have established the workings of a particular visual discourse in nineties mass media, a discourse of "black and whiteness." In this chapter and the next, I want to relate this discourse to specific discussions that emerged at the beginning of the decade concerning the form and status of American cultural memory. Shifting from the still to the moving image, I will consider the discourse of "black and whiteness" in both American film narrative and in cultural narratives about the status of American film. This chapter will look at the political stakes of documentary-based memory films. In cultural terms, I am interested in the production of cinematic master memories in the early 1990s and the political interests they serve; I will consider how the attempt to galvanize a core national memory was also often a question of defending a social formation that has long privileged the white, straight, middle-class male.

Liam Kennedy suggests that one consequence of the uncertainties and paranoias that characterized the early 1990s - from moral panics over crime, drugs, family values and multiculturalism, to the uncertain ending of the Cold War and the requiem for the American Empire brought about by the challenge of Asian fiscal influence - was "that it (has) led to a growing recognition of whiteness as a social category and more particularly to white male selfhood as a fragile and besieged identity."² Linked to the disruption of ideological moorings, the early 1990s can be seen as a period when new

relations between centre and margins were generating a crisis of cultural and critical authority, acutely experienced by the white male. The debates gathered under rubrics such as “identity politics” and the “culture war” were symptomatic of the social, cultural and economic changes that were beginning to question (or renew old questions about) the basis of hegemonic power in American life. Debates in the academy over canonicity and “political correctness” were just one expression of the struggles fought in the cultural sphere over the structures of privilege and (related) systems of knowledge that sustain and legitimize a governing order that has normalized whiteness, masculinity, and heterosexuality as dominant social categories.

Not only in education, like struggles were being waged also in the realm of popular culture; attempts were made in Hollywood film both to challenge and, also, *to restore* national mythologies and their invested relations of identity and power. Memory, in particular, became a field of negotiated meaning. If the academy was debating how, if, and in whose interest, a culture remembers the past, similar issues of memory and identity were being figured cinematically. I want to situate the black and white image in this context, considering the documentary style and patriarchal stakes of two lauded Hollywood movies from the early 1990s. In terms of my broad interest in monochrome, this chapter examines “documentary memory” and the identities served in filmic constructions of a nationally remembered past. Before turning more specifically to the black and white image, it is necessary to expound on the choice of films in this chapter and establish the terms of analysis.

Schindler's List and *Forrest Gump* may not seem like obvious films to compare. One is a sober, true-life tale of a Nazi war profiteer and his rescue of 1200 Jews from certain death in Auschwitz, and the other is a sanitized political allegory of the baby-boom generation, based around an idiot savant from the American South. Each film has been given extended treatment in a range of critical comparisons, but rarely together. This is somewhat surprising for, beside their obvious difference in subject matter and technical method, there is much that can be seen to connect them. This is not based simply on the fact that both films swept the Oscars in consecutive years (including the prize for "Best Picture") or that Steven Spielberg and Robert Zemeckis, the respective directors, are personal friends who have acknowledged each other's influence on their work. I would suggest that a comparison between *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* can be made on four related grounds: their figuration of cultural master memories, their dependence on techniques and/or credentials of documentary, their demonstration of stylized nostalgia judged within the framework of contemporary "genericity," and their valorization of white masculinity as an agent of historical redemption. The monochrome effects of *Schindler's List* are the starting point for this chapter. However, my analysis of the film's (black and white) memory work can profit significantly by drawing it into relation with that of *Forrest Gump*. Echoing an essay on *Schindler's List* by Miriam Hanson, one might say that each film "demonstratively takes on a trauma of collective historical dimensions; and (each) reworks this trauma in the name of memory and national identity, inscribed with particular notions of race, sexuality and family."³

Schindler's List and *Forrest Gump* are both self-conscious in foregrounding the issue of cultural memory. Concerned with trauma of quite different kinds, they each claim a

technical and aesthetic pedigree in their representation of a past that is, or should be, remembered. Each must be seen in relation to specific kinds of memorial discourse. On release in 1993, *Schindler's List* was part of widespread fiftieth year Holocaust commemorations which in America saw the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum on Washington Mall. At a time when "negationists" were denying that mass killings ever took place and living survivors who could refute the charge and explicate the horror were becoming numbered, Holocaust remembrance was a matter of apparent urgency. Both films deal in one way or another with the question of victims and the nature of survival. If one film remembers victims created by the genocidal rupture of the Holocaust, the other politicizes victims "created" by the social rupture of the 1960s. *Forrest Gump* can be set in the context of debates about the meaning, legacy and memory of the 1960s. With the first baby-boom President in office and the film released several months before the Republican Congressional landslide in 1994, bringing with it Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America," *Gump* intervened, and was politically invoked, in attempts to define the significance of the sixties. Both films developed a sense of incorporative memory. If, as Yosefa Loshitsky suggests, "*Schindler's List* attempts to provide the popular imagination with a master narrative about the Holocaust," *Forrest Gump* did the same for the generational experience of the baby-boom.⁴ In the words of Martin Walker, it surged "beyond the sealed enclave of the cinema into the wider national discourse, to become a parable of the American condition."⁵ With the accentuated cultural legitimacy that both films drew from their respective rush of Oscars, *Schindler* and *Gump* became veritable touchstones of remembrance.

If *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* deal with a past marked by trauma - the Holocaust in one and the impact of divisive social turbulence in the other - the filmic re-enactment of that past assumed a function of catharsis and healing, a process of endowing events with narrative coherence and redemptive closure. It is not insignificant that each film ends with a scene at a gravestone, accompanied by a sense of a new generation made possible by those now mourning or mourned. Freud would call this a process of "working through." By creating a narrative, or "construction," a sense of wholeness and coherence can be given to the past, countering the fragmentary nature of "screen memories" with their basis in wish and repression. In a primary sense, *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* are comparable in that each film tells not *a* story but *the* story of events. They are both episodic in dealing with the past, containing the experience of the Holocaust and the baby-boom within a chronological and iconographic frame that moves from a discernible beginning to a tangible end. In their representational strategies, both films are iconic and intertextual, either discreetly subsuming other cinematic treatments of the Holocaust or explicitly "quoting" moments from America's recent cultural and media history. *Schindler* and *Gump* both work stylistically to incorporate familiar images and representations of the past within subsuming master memories. The status of each film *as* a master memory was at the time compounded by explicit denials by each director regarding the perspectival, attenuated or necessarily political nature of their respective memory narratives. Unlike *JFK*, which became riven with controversy about its historical (mis)interpretations - related to the perception of Oliver Stone's own conspiratorial obsessions - Spielberg and Zemeckis sought to position their films in a way that forestalled accusations of directorial subjectivity.

When filming *Schindler's List*, Spielberg said to his crew: "We're not making a film, we're making a document."⁶ Meanwhile, Robert Zemeckis said that his purpose in making *Forrest Gump* was "to present this (baby-boom) generation *without commenting on it*" (my italics).⁷ If Spielberg relied on a concept of witnessing to authorize his representation of the Holocaust, Zemeckis played upon a suggestion of neutrality in mapping the contours of postwar America. The status of each film as a "master memory" is, of course, related to the way that both were taken up in public discourse and sanctified through industry prize-winning. At the outset, however, each film sought validation through an implied sense of historical objectivity and/or impartiality.

In representational terms, both films execute the same two-step in claiming the past as cultural (master) memory; the remembered past is structured as a narratively rounded and morally resolved parable while, at the same time, it is given the status of, or at least a relation to, documentary "reality." Their incorporative memory narratives play with codes of fiction and history, faction and historicity. They both effectively create a sense of "documentary memory," a form of cultural remembrance that, while shaping the past for present needs, is authorized by the aura of recorded history. Examining Hollywood cinema's attempt in the 1990s to articulate narratives of nation through recourse to memory and the past, Robert Burgoyne writes of "current cinematic struggles to redefine the national text."⁸ While cinematic negotiations of nation would seem to apply more accurately to *Forrest Gump* than to *Schindler's List*, both films use historical trauma to establish the basis of a nationally shared sense of memory and/or remembrance. They strive to articulate and fix a common past based on their re-enactment and resolution of ruptured histories. What interests me are the techniques

and terms on which their memory narratives are written and achieved. The two films are, of course, markedly different in style and focus. However, the difference between them may not seem quite as profound if their cinematic effects and terms of remembrance are understood in a particular way. Put succinctly, both engage modes of documentary memory which - seen in terms of emergent (postmodern) genre categories - are nuanced by a stylized nostalgia. I would argue that this corresponds with, and helps to condition, a more politicized nostalgia organized around the figuration of white male agency and authority, something that can be set in relation to contemporary discourses of identity in the early 1990s and to the “crisis” of white masculinity.

The documentary claims of *Schindler* and *Gump* are different in form. If *Schindler's List* was to be an artefactual “document” in its own right, *Forrest Gump* was described by Zemeckis as a “docu-fable,” a distinction that I shall briefly elaborate on. Insisting upon a documentary link between representations of the Holocaust and the actual event itself is common not simply among film-makers but also novelists and playwrights. James Young posits two explanations. He suggests that claims of documentary reinforce the factual authority of the Holocaust, stemming the fear that a certain fictiveness may be conferred on the events through the rhetoricity of the literary or filmic medium. However, he suggests that there may also be aesthetic and dramatic reasons. By creating an ambiguity between fictional and factual elements, an author or director is relieved of certain obligations of historical accuracy while being able at the same time to exploit the documentary aura of real events, of true stories.⁹ Spielberg inherited a documentary-based narrative from Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark*, the book on which Steven Zaillian's screenplay was based. Published in 1982, Keneally's so-called “faction,” or

documentary novel, inspired critical debate when at the time it won the Booker Prize, a fiction award. Relying on the scripting, sequencing and dramatization of reality, documentary has never been a purely indexical form and has strong fictive elements. Robert A. Rosenstone has discussed this in the context of film, demonstrating the continuities between what he calls “history as drama” and “history as document.”¹⁰ Despite their similarities, documentary nevertheless differentiates itself from fiction by an appeal to some kind of truth, provenance or what has been called “heightened epistemic authority.”¹¹ *Schindler’s List* sought to achieve this through various kinds of authenticity effect: geographically by using locations in Poland, through non-diegetic elements such as a coda that relates characters to real survivors, and stylistically by employing the documentary credentials of (hand-held) black and white cinematography, what Spielberg has likened to a “truth serum.”

If the documentary claims of *Schindler’s List* are intimately bound with the status of the Holocaust and questions arising from the nature and limits of representation, those of *Forrest Gump* can be set in the context of a surge of documentary styles in mainstream and commercial culture from the late-1980s. Paul Arthur relates this to the development of home video and cable TV, to the success of non-fiction genres in the publishing industry, and to the promise of documentary addressing social issues with greater verisimilitude.¹² He develops a theory of documentary having had moments of high visibility at particular historical junctures, often those of crisis but growing from a combination of social, economic and technological elements. Previously witnessed, for example, during the Depression in the 1930s with New Deal sponsorship and at the end of the 1960s with the emergence of cinema vérité, the most recent emergence of

documentary has been distinguished in form by considerable degrees of hybridization, blurring the very boundaries between fact and fiction. Documentary has become a cinematic, televisual and marketing mode based on ideas of indexical reality but never bound by strictures that preclude overt fictionalizing. Typified by the proliferation of docudramas in the 1980s, the status of *Forrest Gump* as a “docu-fable” is symptomatic of the more general hybridization of generic forms in contemporary cultural production.

The documentary effects of *Schindler* and *Gump* reflect the poignant and parodic nature of their respective memory narratives. This difference in style must be set in relation to the subject matter at hand, but it is also, I would say, a matter of genre; the mode of each film is indicative of their relative position in the terrain of contemporary film “genericity.” Broadly speaking, one might argue that each film reflects, and can be characterized, in terms of emergent cinematic genres that Jim Collins has defined in the difference between “new sincerity” and “eclectic irony.”¹³ He suggests that these genres have developed in response to the saturation of images in postmodern media culture. While eclectic irony greets new forms of textuality by recycling images in playful and hybrid combinations, the new sincerity rejects irony outright, favouring instead an imaginary age before the mediated character of contemporaneity. If the former relies heavily on cinematic quotation and textual referencing, the latter pursues a lost authenticity before the emergence of postmodern hybridity. While films that belong to the genre of eclectic irony utilize the sophistication of media culture (*Back to the Future*, *Blade Runner*, *Batman*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*), those which might be described as “new sincerity” retreat into an imagined cinematic and/or thematic purity, even while depending on the special effects and blockbuster budgets of the culture they

reject (*Dances With Wolves*, *Field of Dreams*, *Hook*). In terms of their respective embrace/rejection of the mediated character of postmodernity, *Forrest Gump* and *Schindler's List* fit a broad description of these generic tendencies. While Robert Zemeckis, whose biggest hits came with the *Back to the Future* series, continued with an eclectic historical approach in *Gump*, Steven Spielberg marked his directorial coming-of-age with a film that proved his own "new sincerity."

The genres of new sincerity and eclectic irony help, in one sense, to think about the basis of documentary in *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump*: one strives for an unmediated representational authenticity and the other depends on the playful arrangement of mediated representations. However, the genre categories also help, in a different sense, to think about various kinds of (textually figured) nostalgia. Collins states that: "Narrative action now operates at two levels simultaneously – in reference to character adventure and in reference to a text's adventures in the array of contemporary cultural production."¹⁴ If character adventure in *Schindler* and *Gump* is given a certain documentary feel, the so-called "textual adventure" is defined in each movie by a mode of cinematic and/or stylized nostalgia. In *Schindler*, this remains implicit and is part of the film's more general authenticity claims, linked significantly to the film's use of black and white cinematography. To think of the Holocaust in terms of nostalgia is clearly perverse. However, if one concentrates more on the (monochrome) mode of *Schindler's List* than its actual subject matter, there is perhaps a character of nostalgia for a previous cinematic moment. As I shall later discuss, critical opinion was quick to praise the film's cinematic achievement, a "masterpiece" within the larger canon of Spielberg frivolity. In its technical and aesthetic devices, *Schindler's*

List was praised for its “superb editing,” “starkly beautiful cinematography,” “abundant virtuousity,” and “harrowing authenticity.”¹⁵ The visuality of *Schindler’s List*, most significantly its use of black and white, was deemed to create a sense of both documentary *and* cinematic authenticity. One might argue that *Schindler* appeals to aesthetic and narrative conventions that invite nostalgia for an “authentic” film past, ostensibly based on classical Hollywood.

Forrest Gump is more explicit in its nostalgic effects; it actively courts nostalgia in the face of trauma that includes war, assassination, domestic violence and fatal illness. Stylistically, the film is a paradigm of Fredric Jameson’s “nostalgia mode.” The past is realized through pop images and informational props, traversing decades of recent American history using what Robert Zemeckis calls “familiar icon imagery.” The eclecticism of *Gump* can be found in its interplay of generic forms and cinematic quotation. It evokes everything from *Midnight Cowboy* to *Platoon*. Threading the entire narrative is mediated (and in this film manipulated) archival footage, together with a soundtrack of emotive hits. *Forrest Gump* is very much a product of new media technology and that technology’s capacity both for increasing the volume of visual imagery in cultural life and for digitally manipulating its character. Stylistically, the film engenders a form of affective nostalgia based on quotation and pastiche - a geography of pastness marked by iconic, or pop, simulacra. If the memory narrative of *Schindler’s List* is based on a concept of archival and cinematic authenticity, pre-dating the eclectic signifying strategies of postmodern culture, that of *Forrest Gump* is defined by the playful negotiation of the array of signs that constitute its very textual character.

In each case, and in different ways, the explicit documentary status of *Schindler* and *Gump* can be measured alongside an implicit mode of stylized nostalgia.

Jim Collins suggests that “eclectic irony” and “new sincerity” are different kinds of response to semiotic excess; they both work within a media-sophisticated culture that has enabled new forms of textuality to emerge. He writes: “Both types of genre have a meta-mythological dimension, in which the cultural terrain that must be mapped is a world already sedimented with layers of popular mythologies, some old, some recent, but all co-present and subject to rearticulation according to different ideological agendas.”¹⁶ Having aligned *Schindler* and *Gump* with tendencies in contemporary genre formation, one might ask what can be said of their comparative ideological agendas. It is, of course, impossible to provide any single or concrete response. Both films are wrapped in complex discursive conjunctions, and enter particular cultural debates. *Schindler’s List*, for example, can be measured in relation to enduring cultural and ethical questions about the representational status of the Shoah, the question of showing/not showing, the so-called “Americanization of the Holocaust,” and the emergence of a cinematic discourse of Nazism that Saul Friedlander has defined in relation to “kitsch and death.”¹⁷ *Forrest Gump*, on the other hand, participates in a range of cultural discourses surrounding the status of the 1960s, the experience of the baby-boom, the loss of American innocence, and the nature of decency and “dumbing down.” While there is no ideological denominator linking the two films, there is perhaps a common dimension between them that can be read in ideological terms. This, put simply, is their elevation of a redeeming and/or redeemed white “father.” Although different in form, both *Schindler* and *Gump* create documentary based, but morally

resolved, memory narratives that give the power of historical redemption to their eponymous male protagonists.

One could rightly argue that Hollywood has long privileged the white male as hero and protagonist; if the representation of history in mainstream cinema is invariably a story of individuals, these individuals will almost certainly be men. It should not be surprising that two Hollywood films by renowned directors should give the past the form of a story, or centre upon the white male as a moral and historical protagonist. However, the films must be situated in the cultural climate in which they were produced. The early 1990s were not only marked by a dual discourse of “fragmentation” and “amnesia,” raising the stakes of a consensual and documentable past, they were also defined by cultural struggles that transformed white masculinity into a troubled identity. Numerous critics have examined this, suggesting a series of causal explanations: the threatened role of “protector-provider” masculinity in the face of a downturn in real wages and an increase in job insecurity, the development of multiculturalism and the growing recognition of whiteness as a social category, debates in education about canonicity (“dead white males”) and affirmative action, and the more general dissolution of national myths that have normalized white, male, middle-class, heterosexual power.¹⁸ In their construction of cultural master memories, both *Schindler* and *Gump* in some sense bear out Robert Sklar’s suggestion that in nineties film “the problem of historical memory appears as a variant of patriarchy’s crisis: what we lack in the present, what they had in the past, were true father-leaders.”¹⁹ At some level, one could argue that the textual mode of nostalgia in each film provides a stylistic frame for an affirmation of white male selfhood, nostalgic in kind.

Forrest Gump has been widely discussed as a film that works to homogenize American national identity in ways that nostalgically restore the authority of the white, male subject. Jude Davies and Carol Smith write: “*Forrest Gump* silences the politicisation of gendered, ethnic and sexualised identity because its articulation would disturb the film’s construction of American identity as white, mainstream and heterosexual.”²⁰ Their argument is situated within a broad discussion of contemporary American film and its appropriation of modern discourses of identity. Whether in “talkies” which court controversy (*Falling Down*, *Disclosure*) or in those based around, and which sell themselves upon, constructions of previously marginalized identities (*Glory*, *Philadelphia*), Davies and Smith suggest that Hollywood has taken up identity politics by playing upon, and attempting to manage, relations of cultural difference. While professedly apolitical, *Forrest Gump* is, in fact, a highly politicized revisioning of America’s cultural past. For Thomas B. Byers, this has the express effect of “remembering” a particular historical subject. He suggests:

To an alarming degree, the beleaguered white, middle-class, baby-boomer father is America in the iconography of popular narratives such as *Forrest Gump* and other products of the New Hollywood. Indeed, this figurative identification, as compensation for the white male subject’s cultural and political castration anxiety, is one key to the success both of these films and of the New Right ideology that has recently come to dominate American political discourse. To “remember what made America great” is to re-member the great white Father.²¹

At first, it would seem hard to fit *Schindler's List* into this particular scheme. The film bears no direct relation to the fashioning of American identity as witnessed in *Forrest Gump*; nor does it have any connection with the American middle-class, the generational baby-boom or with conspicuous tenets of New Right ideology. However, the film is not entirely removed from the cultural debates and discursive formations that locate *Gump*. Indeed, *Schindler's List* became a virtually sacrosanct text of cultural memory (at least within American public discourse) structured around the documentary "reality" of benevolent male authority. In both *Schindler* and *Gump*, re-enacting the past gave rise to a form of historical coherence and moral closure based on the white male as saviour, healer, redeemer.

I have so far established certain grounds of comparison between *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* based on various cultural, textual and discursive elements. The purpose of this lengthy introduction is to set up a discussion of their respective figurations of cinematic memory. By relating *Schindler*, and its stylistic devices, to *Forrest Gump*, I want to consider the way that both films construct memory narratives that privilege, and congratulate, white masculinity. This chapter has two remaining sections. The first section will address the stylistic techniques of *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump*, considering the representational status of each film as (nostalgically nuanced) memory texts. This will use the black and white image as a basis of comparison, demonstrating the difference between genre forms organized around ideas of sincerity (authenticity) and eclecticism (irony). In one sense, I want to use this chapter as an opportunity to explore the different ways that monochrome memory was taken up stylistically during the 1990s. The second section will look more closely at the political stakes of the

remembered past in *Schindler* and *Gump*, judged in terms of white male identity “crisis.” It is here that, despite different generic orientations, the two films evidence similarities in certain of their ideological prescriptions and determinants of value. In general, my aim in this chapter is twofold. Firstly, I want to expand my discussion of monochrome memory by demonstrating the use of black and white in two very different “documentary” film texts. Secondly, I wish to explore the specific political interests served in *Schindler* and *Gump* as incorporative (national) master memories.

Documentary Memory

Gentlemen, in a hundred years still another colour film will portray the terrible days we are undergoing now. Do you want to play a role in that film which will let you live again in a hundred years? Every one of you has the opportunity today to choose the person he wishes to be in a hundred years. I can assure you that it will be a tremendous film, exciting and beautiful, and worth holding steady for. Don't give up!

Joseph Goebbels, 1945²²

Joseph Goebbels could hardly have known that one of the most influential films about the “terrible days” of World War II - at least in terms of global distribution, media interest and commercial success - would not be in colour as he assumed, but rather in black and white. *Schindler's List* is perhaps not what Goebbels had in mind when inviting Nazi rank and file to consider their chosen role for cinematic immortalization, but then history is hard to predict, the conditions of memory even more so. How could

he possibly imagine that within fifty years, *monochrome* would, in one significant case, become a more befitting aesthetic for the terror of the times? How, indeed, could he foresee that a major film depicting Nazism would itself be undertaken by an American Jew who would begin shooting while in post-production of a dinosaur movie? In treating *Schindler's List*, I want to focus on the status and function of the black and white photography that distinguishes the film and that earned Janusz Kaminski an Oscar for Best Cinematography. I am concerned, in particular, with the way that monochrome establishes different kinds of visual effect (documentary, archival, elegiac, nostalgic) in the film's layered claim of cultural and cinematic "authenticity."

Schindler's List tells the story of a charismatic yet complex hero, a Nazi war profiteer called Oskar Schindler, who fulfils ambitions of wealth and luxury by establishing a metalware factory in Cracow, exploiting the war economy and cheap Jewish labour to make enormous personal profits. As the war continues, and his workforce is subject to greater threats from Nazi racial policy, exercised by Amon Goeth at the Plazsow labour camp, Schindler finds himself in a growing position of conscience. Gestures of comfort, aid and individual rescue culminate in the purchase and transportation of 1200 Jews from Poland to his home town in Czechoslovakia, saving them all from the terrifying inevitability of Auschwitz. In this context, black and white serves the film in several ways. It is a documentary aesthetic and provides *Schindler's List* with a mode of unobtrusiveness, contributing to a supposed *witnessing* of events. At the same time, however, black and white takes on a character of remembrance through its association with visual representations of the Holocaust and through its elegiac contrast with colour. We remember as we witness; we witness as we remember. On another level,

monochrome locates *Schindler's List* within a concept of cinematic tradition, emulating the style of classical Hollywood and providing a visual cue for Steven Spielberg's new directorial seriousness. Cultural memory is figured in terms of the Holocaust *and* Hollywood. In all of these ways, the use of black and white cinematography makes *Schindler's List* a complex memory text; it creates a visual effect of witnessing *and* remembrance, terror at the topic but nostalgia for its style.

The immediate effect of black and white, a point that has been made many times and in most reviews, is to create for the film a sense of documentary authenticity. *Schindler's List* drew upon a concept of authenticity in several different ways: the film was shot in original Polish locations, including Schindler's metalware factory (although not Auschwitz for which permission was denied by the World Jewish Congress on the grounds that it is a memorial to those who perished beyond its gates); the original Schindlerjuden were participants, some as consultants and many appearing in the film's coda; there was even a sense of the cast and crew undergoing a certain authenticity of experience, harrowed by the trauma of shooting a film so close to the original scene of events. Spielberg said afterwards that: "I'm recovering from this film. And my wife thinks the recovery is going to take a long time."²³ When filming, temperatures were bitter, there were publicized incidents of anti-semitism directed at the cast and crew, and many scenes were so harrowing, especially those involving nudity, that cameramen tried not to watch the events they actually filmed. Spielberg remarked that "every day was like waking up and going to hell." A character of documentary was integral to the filming of *Schindler's List* and this was manifest in its stylistic techniques, notably the use of hand-held cameras that helped create deliberate imperfections and, more

generally, the use of black and white photography. Instead of the seamless, glossy, high-tech effects more usual to Hollywood (and Spielberg) productions, *Schindler's List* sought a restrained photojournalistic quality where the viewer is positioned to witness, not watch. As Kaminski himself comments: "The newsreel quality of the black-and-white seemed to fade the barriers of time, making (the footage) feel like an ongoing horror that I was witnessing firsthand."²⁴

While associated with the documentary traditions of photojournalism, the black and white image retains a suggestive archival pastness. The vast majority of photographic and filmic images taken during the Second World War exist in black and white. As cinematographer, Kaminski prepared for *Schindler's List* by studying photographs of Jewish settlements in Poland taken between 1920 and 1939 by Roman Vishniac. To Spielberg, the black and white image was representationally more "real" than colour. He said: "I think certainly colour is real to the people who survived the Holocaust, but to people who are going to watch the story for the first time, I think black and white is going to be the real experience for them."²⁵ The effect of "witnessing" the Holocaust in *Schindler's List* is linked to mediated memory, or rather, to the memory of images that dominate contemporary impressions of the Nazi genocide. From the outset, the documentary effect of *Schindler's List* works through, and in relation to, a sense of period "reality" shaped by the visual determinants of photographic memory. Its strategies of transparency are shaped by an archival familiarity that makes black and white the most appropriate mode of 1940s "realism."

If memory was central to the discourse surrounding *Schindler's List* when it opened in 1993, an explicit character of remembrance is established within the film through particular chromatic juxtapositions between colour and black and white. In the film's colour prologue and coda, and in moments where particular images appear in colour, the contrast with monochrome gives the film a distinct memorial character. The prologue of *Schindler's List* shows the lighting of a Sabbath candle and a group of people listening to a man intone a Jewish prayer. As the flame of the candle expires, it creates wisps of smoke, providing a visual link between the contemporary observation of Judaism and a black and white image of a steam train's belching funnel. This image is significant not least for the reason that trains are used iconically throughout the film to symbolize the presence of death at the end tracks of Auschwitz. In a different visual shift, the coda moves from a black and white image of people lined against the horizon as they walk towards the camera (the weak and dislocated Schindlerjuden beginning their journey of recovery at the war's end), to a colour shot of people lined against the horizon as they walk towards the camera (the real Schindlerjuden gathering to pay respects at Schindler's grave in Israel). These chromatic movements reinforce the connections between past and present in terms of cultural memory; Judaism cannot forget the Holocaust, the Schindlerjuden refuse to forget their saviour.²⁶ The most significant use of colour *within* the film's monochrome narrative is that of a Jewish child whose dress is shown red as she wanders, lost, during the liquidation of the ghetto in 1943. This signifies a decisive moment for Schindler whose attention to the girl is symbolized by the visual effect. When he sees her red tunic later in the film, she is strewn with a pile of dead bodies, awaiting incineration. As a symbol of innocence, the colourized child is a turning point in the moral identity of Schindler; the red coat marks

the individual memory of a life once observed, ending in anonymous death.²⁷ Colour, in this case, brings out the elegiac character of the film, composed within and against the documentary and archival pastness of black and white.

The visual strategies of *Schindler's List* construct the film as both document and memory, experience and elegy. Monochrome is instrumental in achieving these effects, but the use and significance of the black and white image cannot be explained in these terms alone. A sense of documentary authenticity and historical memory is matched with black and white's articulation of cinematic authenticity and Hollywood memory. It is impossible to divorce the function of black and white in *Schindler's List* from Steven Spielberg's directorial presence. *Schindler* was a new departure for a film-maker who has pioneered the spectacular, and some would say emotionally simplified, blockbuster. While several of his movies have taken on weighty socio-historical themes, such as *The Color Purple* (1986), *Amistad* (1997) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), Spielberg has identified *Schindler's List* as the film that first marked a movement away from the character of sentimentality that has defined much of his work. *Schindler's List* was never conceived as a box-office smash; gone are the caricature Nazis of the *Indiana Jones* series. At the time, the film was both a departure in style and mood for a director who, perhaps for his cartoonish vision of the world, had been conspicuously ignored in the American Academy Awards. In one sense, the use of black and white in *Schindler's List* is linked to a seriousness generated by the very subject and the director's relationship to it as a Jew. Spielberg claimed the film was intimately tied to a personal rediscovery, commenting that: "I've never identified more as a Jew as I have in the process of researching and producing and directing this film."²⁸ In other terms,

however, black and white was a self-conscious mark of Spielberg's new directorial maturity; it was part and proof of his, and by turn Hollywood's, capacity to treat serious themes in a serious style. As Leon Wieseltier argued in *The New Republic*: "What is at stake (in *Schindler's List*) is the honor of Hollywood."²⁹

If the New Hollywood has been criticized for its outpouring of vacuous, if spectacular, movie blockbusters, *Schindler's List* appealed to a form of cinematic authenticity associated with classical Hollywood. Reviewing *Schindler's List* in *The New Yorker*, Terrence Rafferty wrote that "few American movies since the silent era have had anything approaching this picture's narrative boldness, visual audacity, and emotional directness."³⁰ This was typical of critical response in the media press. *Schindler* was described as having a quality rarely witnessed in contemporary cinema; it was a "masterpiece" reminiscent of an era before the dominance of visceral and kinetic thrills. *Premiere* called it a "tribute to the heritage of black and white film."³¹ Retreating from the signifying excess and spectacular effects of New Hollywood, *Schindler's List* appeals to a form of cinematic authenticity located in the past. Miriam Hansen argues that Spielberg is trying with *Schindler's List* to inscribe himself into American film history by referring pivotally to *Citizen Kane*. There are, she suggests, similarities of style between them in their low-key lighting, montage sequences, angles and compositions in frame, and self-conscious use of sound. She even likens *Schindler* to an inverted *Kane*, transforming as he does from a character of surface and presentation to one of moral depth and fortitude. All of this contributes to an aesthetic which fuses "modernist style, popular storytelling and an ethos of individual responsibility." Hansen demonstrates how *Schindler* gestures towards the day when films could reflect upon the

“shocks and scars inflicted by modernity” while remaining accessible to the general public.³² The essential point is that *Schindler's List* creates a filmic pastness that is concerned with, and refers to, *Hollywood* as well as the Holocaust.

Yosefa Loshitsky has examined how *Schindler's List* is both iconic and highly intertextual in its recreation of the cultural/cinematic past. Its referencing strategies depend on a particular kind of quotational practice that work invisibly so that stylistic transitions do not draw attention to themselves. Firstly, the film incorporates images from other works on the Holocaust, from abandoned heaps of luggage (taken from Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*) to the figure of a Pole symbolically pulling a finger across her throat (an image inspired by Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*). Secondly, it quotes different kinds of black and white film style. *Schindler's List* is cast in a realist tradition, using a classical mode reminiscent of the 1940s and 1950s. Within this format are various cinematic conventions based on their use of monochrome. While interplays of light and shadow evoke film noir and the chiaroscuro lighting associated with Hollywood studio films, black and white street scenes of the Cracow ghetto are strongly reminiscent of Italian Neorealism and its depiction of Italian life after the war. Loshitzky suggests that Spielberg's “use of black and white is indebted more to cinematic traditions associated with black and white than to any claim to truth. In fact, black and white cinematography today has more the aura of ‘arty’ glamour than a claim to formal authenticity.”³³ If monochrome has a range of connotations that can produce different signifying effects in the same signifying moment, the black and white cinematography of *Schindler's List* is not simply a documentary aesthetic but can suggest a host of (nostalgically inscribed) cinematic memories.

There are vigorous debates, cultural and philosophical, concerning the representation of the Holocaust in literature, film, museums and memorials. Can it be represented? How should it be represented? By and for whom? *Schindler's List* has been criticized by scholars and the likes of Claude Lanzmann for failing to respect the uniqueness of the Holocaust, for trying to represent events within conventional narrative forms, and for portraying the Jews without giving any one the substance of character. On other terms, it has been praised for problematizing Nazi clichés and for dealing with the Holocaust in affective terms. Black and white is embroiled in these debates. For Leon Wieseltier, the particular use of monochrome in *Schindler's List* proves that Spielberg has not grasped the humility required of the subject; it is a mark of the film's "self-regarding" quality. He writes: "Renunciation of color is adduced a sign of its stringency; but the black and white of this film is riper than most color. The glints and gleams are smart. The edges of the frame are faded. The shadows are exquisite. The darkness of this film about darkness is, in sum, gorgeous."³⁴ This kind of objection reflects something of Saul Friedlander's concern that the re-evocation of Nazism in the West has shifted from one of "subdued grief and endless meditation" to "voluptuous anguish and ravishing images."³⁵ In a different sense, the use of black and white has been praised for its visual gravity and mark of seriousness. Spielberg had to resist pressure from Universal to shoot a version of the film in colour for television release. Monochrome was an unusual, and in some sense brave, choice for a director striving for an effect of authenticity that may well have left audiences cold. For better or for worse, black and white advertised the film as different and significant. By transcending the colour norms

of Hollywood, black and white raised the status of *Schindler's List*; in aesthetic terms, it would become the cornerstone of a reverential discourse helping to sanctify the film as Hollywood's "statement" on the Holocaust, its ultimate, and incorporative, master memory.

The black and white image does not, on its own, confer the status of "master memory" on *Schindler's List*. This can be explained through a range of related factors, from the attempt by Spielberg to tell a representative story of human suffering and survival, to the larger discourse of Holocaust remembrance in America that elevated the film to a position of educational authority. While it is just one stylistic feature in a film that can be discussed in many different ways, black and white is central to the cultural and cinematic authenticity claims of *Schindler's List*. The same can hardly be said of *Forrest Gump*, a film that also laid claim to a concept of documentary, that became another Hollywood master memory, and that emerged as the most lucrative and Oscar-laden film in the year following the release of *Schindler*. If black and white helped legitimate *Schindler's List* as a memory text by locating both the action and the style of the film in a documentable and remembered past, *Forrest Gump* drew its effects, and established its status, in a quite different way. The black and white image was taken up playfully in ways that subverted the documentary and memorial authenticity of monochrome, re-narrating American postwar history in more overtly fictive terms.

On release, *Forrest Gump* became both a talking point and touchstone, a film that made sense of four decades of turmoil in American life and brought it to a tender resolution. Victims of the counterculture and Vietnam are joined in symbolic harmony, bitterness

and divisions are salved, and hope is laid on an innocent generation neither knowing nor burdened by the traumas that once befell the nation. At the centre is Forrest Gump, an innocent himself who, by literally witnessing events that impressed a powerful, destructive turbulence into the slipstreams of American society and culture, is able to redeem and heal the suffering through his innate sensitivity, emotional honesty and homespun wisdom. Gump sits calm and uncomprehending within the eye of a storm that rips across the landscape of American life, killing Presidents and throwing society into violent conflict. Born in Alabama in the 1950s, Forrest becomes an accidental hero of every shape and form: a football all-star, Medal of Honor recipient, multi-millionaire, philanthropist and celebrity cult. He meets three Presidents, Elvis, and John Lennon, and unwittingly participates in both the notorious confrontation between George Wallace and black desegregationists and the exposure of the Watergate break-in. The film has two interweaving narratives, historical and romantic. *Forrest Gump* is both an iconic journey through recent decades of American history and a story about love and the family ideal.

I have argued that *Schindler's List* uses monochrome to achieve various cultural and cinematic authenticity effects. In broad terms, this can be conceived under the generic category of "new sincerity," what Jim Collins describes as the purposeful evasion of "the media-saturated terrain of the present in pursuit of an almost forgotten authenticity that avoids any sort of irony and eclecticism."³⁶ By contrast, *Forrest Gump* is based on the very qualities that *Schindler* avoids. Characteristic of "eclectic irony," its production of pastness relies upon the recycling of media texts, from footage and music to the filmic quotation and pastiche of cinematic genres. When Forrest meets an army friend

in New York who is crippled, alcoholic and disillusioned having returned from Vietnam (reminiscent of Ron Kovic in *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989)), we see Forrest pushing him in a wheelchair to the song "Everybody's Talkin." This, of course, is the musical theme of *Midnight Cowboy*, a story about a cripple in New York living a similar kind of metropolitan suffering and alienation. This is typical of the way that *Forrest Gump* plays upon a shared filmic, as well as historical, past. Trawling images and evocations that realize, in whatever way, an iconic sense of common memory, *Gump* replays and rearticulates history through a range of textual traces, including that of (black and white) documentary footage.

Forrest Gump draws specific attention to the mediated nature of history. The presence of television in the film is unstinting and the status of documentary is built up through the sustained presence of archival footage, from the Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination to the first moonwalk and the resignation of Richard Nixon. Typically, the archival images are taken from footage that has become deeply ingrained in the visual iconography of American culture and, in particular cases, it is used to locate Gump as an agent and observer of "official" national history. This is achieved through the digital insertion of Gump within specific archival vignettes. In the course of the film, Forrest is introduced to Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, meets John Lennon and watches the Wallace stand-off. In *Schindler's List*, the sense of documentary is achieved through chromatic and technical effects simulating a mode of indexicality; we are made to witness history being lived. In *Forrest Gump*, the status of documentary is based far more on the representation of history in the media; historical reality is evoked not through our witnessing events but our familiarity with its archival character in the mass

media. Both *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* ground their narratives in historical "reality," but while the former claims a transparent relation with this reality, the latter manipulates it playfully to expedite a moral narrative of national reconciliation.

Black and white is one of many stylistic effects used in *Forrest Gump* to map an iconic, and affective, postwar terrain. Technically, decades are evoked through different film stock and colour diffusions. The fifties are given a softer grain than the hard texture of the sixties which are different in turn from the clean, sharper aspect of the eighties. Don Burgess, director of photography, said that: "Because the film jumps around so much we made a conscious effort to have the visual imagery telegraph exactly what zone you're in."³⁷ Integral to this "zoning" process is the use of archival footage and a soundtrack of period hits. Both help implicate Forrest within the very fabric of American national and popular history; he becomes a cypher of cultural experience, an omnipresent shadow in the nation's common past. Just as Gump is placed, quite literally, in the historical archive, the lyrics of period music often describe the diegetic events of the film itself: "California Dreamin'" when Forrest writes home from Vietnam, "Stoned Love" when Jenny, the film's countercultural emblem and Gump's childhood sweetheart, takes drugs, "Running on Empty" and "It Keeps you Running" when Forrest jogs across America.³⁸ Through a range of iconic and acoustic markers, *Forrest Gump* plays upon a shared sense of the past, explained and experientially distilled through a figure whose simple-minded decency can heal the pain and distemper of a bruised history. As a "docu-fable," the film draws upon the historical and cultural archive while, through the experience and narration of Gump, it paints the 1960s as a "fall" from which the nation must recover.

I have been concerned in this section with the techniques through which cultural memory is stylistically realized in two Hollywood “master memories” of the 1990s. Both *Schindler’s List* and *Forrest Gump* lay claim to a particular kind of documentary memory; they are both concerned with the memory of, and meaning ascribed to, traumatic periods in the historical past. If one film reconstructs the past through poignant authenticity effects, the other is playful in its textual manipulation and pastiche of cultural genres. In different ways, both films draw upon the “heightened epistemic authority” of documentary to ground master memories of the Holocaust and of the boomer past. The sense of documentary is underwritten, however, by the association and/or stylistic inscription of nostalgia. In *Forrest Gump*, this is quite explicit; the film has a discernible and self-conscious “nostalgia mode.” In this, periods of American history are given not significance but *feel*. In the Jamesonian sense, history becomes a scopic flow where the past is realized through pop image and textual pastiche. While *Schindler’s List* is highly resistant to any concept of nostalgia, it, too, acquires a certain nostalgic effect through Spielberg’s appeal to cinematic authenticity, based on the models and monochrome of classical Hollywood.

In the next section, I want to consider how the documentary-based, but nostalgically nuanced, style of each film conditions a more politicized figuration of masculine authority. If each film became a “master memory” in the early 1990s - an incorporative, figuratively impartial visioning of the collectively remembered past - they both established a distinct relationship between historical victims and redeeming male protagonists. I want in the final part of this chapter to consider how the different modes

of documentary-nostalgia in *Schindler* and *Gump* correspond, at some level, with a narrative nostalgia for the benevolent white “father.” This will necessitate a shift in critical focus. Working with the assumption that film technique can refine and reflect the terms of cinematic remembrance, I shall overlay my consideration of (black and white) movie style with specific points of representational comparison. This will bear centrally upon the role and construction of Oskar and Forrest.

Ravishing Oskar, decent Forrest

The first time we see Oskar Schindler in Spielberg’s film, he is sitting at a table in a cabaret, immaculate and charismatic, framed by shadows and holding a cigarette with the deliberateness of a film star. The scene demonstrates Schindler’s svelte charm and, every time the camera rests on him, it is with the chiaroscuro lighting of film noir. The tonal elegance of the cinematography matches that of Schindler’s own self-styled panache. He is a picture postcard from classical Hollywood; the back lighting keeps his figure separate from the background, giving depth to the image, while lighting from above creates a sense of translucence and substance that Richard Dyer has linked to Hollywood conventions for presenting the (white) star. Dyer suggests that “movie lighting valorises the notion of the unique and special character of the individual, the individuality of the individual.”³⁹ In *Schindler’s List*, Oskar is the agent and, in many respects, the subject of the film; he is the key individual. The narrative centres upon his emotional development and moral awakening; he transforms himself from a self-interested entrepreneur and unfaithful husband, willing to exploit Nazi connections and

cheap Jewish labour to make enormous wartime profits, to a benevolent figure of redemption, committed both to his workforce and to his wife. Schindler is a laissez-faire Lothario but a character of integrity in the last instance. Spielberg's treatment of the Holocaust is figured, in part, as a narrative of male identity, of the charismatic masculinity captured in the form of Schindler and Amon Goeth.

It is not my intention, and I do not presume, to provide a comprehensive narrative reading of *Schindler's List* or *Forrest Gump*. This has been done effectively by a number of critics in each case.⁴⁰ Instead, I want to relate their memory narratives quite specifically to the "crisis" of white male identity in the early 1990s. This is not the only reading possible for either film but it is, I would suggest, an important one in judging the cultural stakes of two movies that were elevated almost to the status of cultural rite at the beginning of the decade. Most significantly, such a reading can relate the nostalgic nuance in their documentary re-enactments of the past to the destabilization of patriarchal legitimacy in the early 1990s, and to a discursive nostalgia for recuperated male authority.

The film rights to *Schindler's List* were purchased in 1983 and Spielberg has explained the lapse of time before making the film by several related factors: the problems of adapting a suitable screenplay, his own need to mature as a director, and the pressing conditions which gave the film significance like the atrocities in Bosnia and the declining number of Holocaust survivors. The early 1990s were also a time, however, when questions were being asked about the status of victimhood and the nature of trauma. From sexual harassment in the workplace to affirmative action in education,

from debates about recovered memory to the increased awareness of child abuse, the status of the victim was being discussed in both the courtroom and the mass media. Although at times appropriating the status of victim himself, heterosexual, white manhood was coming under increasing scrutiny in cultural life, whether for his (present) part in the creation of “hostile environments” and exclusive literary canons, or for the (past) enslavement of blacks and the genocide of native Americans. While a “cult of victimhood” was periodically diagnosed and dismissed as a worrying symptom of a new therapeutic ethos in American life - what Robert Hughes linked to an emergent “culture of complaint” - a fundamental stake in the politicized discourse of victimhood was the legitimacy of white, male, middle-class, heterosexual power.⁴¹

Liam Kennedy suggests that the crisis of white masculinity was not only recognized by white males in the early 1990s but also successfully managed by them, notably in the way that liberal rhetoric recognized diversity but in ways that helped reinvent and reassert the authority of white male identity. He writes: “The very rhetoric of crisis is one that has been franchised and mobilised by those incarnating it.”⁴² Concentrating on the way that Hollywood “has played a part in the ideological management of the visible crisis in white male authority,” Kennedy examines the case of *Falling Down* (1992), a film that sought actively to dramatize white male anxieties while reinforcing the centrality of white male experience as the organizing, normative identity through which societal issues and problems are framed. With a similar interpretive framework, but using different filmic examples, Fred Pfeil examines a series of films that either inscribe their male protagonists in narratives of redemption and conversion (*Regarding Henry*, *City Slickers*, *Hook*, all in 1991) or that “cash in on the crisis of white

masculinity by appealing to our ambivalence about what it should be or become” (*Falling Down, In The Line of Fire* (1993), *Forrest Gump*).⁴³ The point to make here is that white male identity developed as an implied or, at times, explicit cinematic theme in the 1990s as Hollywood took on, and responded to, discourses shaped by identity politics.

Schindler's List is not concerned with white male identity in any obvious sense, as could be said of *Forrest Gump*. This does not mean to say, however, that the film has no relation whatsoever to contemporary discourses of identity. As James Young has shown, the Holocaust is remembered in different countries according to various national myths and political needs.⁴⁴ While Young concentrates on memorials, the same principle applies to media texts. For example, there is an argument that the emphasis on family and local community in the American docudrama, *Holocaust*, which began in 1978, reflected contemporaneous debates about the status and breakdown of the nuclear family.⁴⁵ Likewise, *Schindler's List* can be set in relation to cultural debates about identity, memory and trauma. The early 1990s were a period when the status of victimhood had become a contested badge in claims of cultural redress. *Schindler* helped suggest, and authenticate, an idea of Jewish historical victimization. (Considering the tension between Jews and African-Americans over the significance and degree of racial oppression in their respective histories, it is not incidental that Spielberg's next historical film, *Amistad*, should be about slavery). This was structured, however, around a relationship between historical victims and the oppressive *and* *redemptive* agency of patriarchal authority. *Schindler* concentrates not on the victims themselves, who are often represented in a pasteboard manner, but on their relation to

charismatic masculine authority, neither innocent of callous and/or violent domination nor unable to undo its effects through virtuousity and “family” commitment. The meaning of the Holocaust in the film is not simply a question of remembering the dead. It is about survival and those who make it possible.

Quite simply, it is Oskar Schindler who makes it possible and it is here that nostalgia in the black and white film style might be seen to figure and frame a more political nostalgia for the ravishing authority of the central, male protagonist. In using narrative and aesthetic conventions associated with classical Hollywood, Miriam Hansen points to relationships in the film that are predicated on masculinist hierarchies of gender and sexuality and to the fact that larger problems are resolved through the formation of family. The nostalgic cinematic pastness of *Schindler's List* authenticates a certain style of nostalgic, masculine hero. In Schindler this becomes a mixture of the dashing bon vivant and the authoritative yet benevolent “father.” Throughout the film, Schindler takes increasing responsibility for his workforce, growing from a distant patriarch to a more caring father-figure. He even renounces promiscuity and returns to his wife in the last third of the film. As the symbolic “father,” Schindler frequently identifies his workforce as personal to him, disguising an emotional responsibility with a language of economic common sense. “I want *my* people,” he explains to Goeth, negotiating the transportation of his Jewish workforce to Czechoslovakia. “Who are you? Moses?” Goeth replies. In many respects, Schindler *is* the figure of Moses, a patriarch leading his people to safety and freedom. There is even a symbolic sense of Christian virtue in the film, a powerful, handsome and tall Christian redeemer set against physically small and puny Jewish victims. Throughout the film, Schindler's heroism is cast in terms of his

power to act, to intervene, to save. Underlying the complexity of his character is a trajectory of patriarchal virtue which, in the climate of the early 1990s, can be seen in terms of, and is perhaps commensurate with, a discourse of nostalgia figured around the loss and recuperation of male authority.

Schindler's List manages to avoid polarizing a scheme of good versus evil by making the two central male protagonists, Schindler and Goeth, similar in temperament. Oskar came to Poland with the intention of making money. He indulges a taste for good wine and beautiful women and, at the beginning of the film, the fate of his Jewish workforce is largely a question of costly interruptions to his own factory's productivity. Amon Goeth has similar tastes in wine, women and finery, and is less fanatical about his position as Nazi commandant than he is burdened by its bureaucratic demands, demonstrating the fact that genocide was more routinized in its terror than openly sadistic. Schindler tries to account for Goeth's violence, suggesting to Itzack Stern, his Jewish accountant, that it is the war that brings out the worst in people and that he can't enjoy the killing. He says: "In normal circumstances he wouldn't be like this. He'd be alright. There'd just be the good aspects of him, what . . . he's a wonderful crook, a man who likes good food, good wine, the ladies, making money . . ." Schindler and Goeth manage to slip the cliches of the good German and the Nazi villain by reflecting each other's basic preoccupations, or rather, the temperaments they would have shared pre-Occupation. For all the seeming complexity of character, however, *Schindler's List* remains a story of heroes and villains, of moral agency in a battered world.

Schindler's energies become increasingly selfless and political as the film unfolds. Once his moral conscience and sense of responsibility have been awakened, Schindler is never blemished with doubts about his virtue. At his new factory in Czechoslovakia, he is a loyal husband in charge of a factory that purposefully makes defunct ammunition, and he goes bankrupt funding the safety of the Schindlerjuden. His moral virtue is finally established in a rather heavy-handed scene where Schindler breaks down for not having saved more lives. It is at this moment that his Jewish workforce present him with a ring bearing the Talmudic inscription: "He who saves a life, saves the world entire." The Schindlerjuden give coherence to their experience by framing it within the moral wisdom of the Talmud. As such, they turn the events, and the film, into the form of a parable, the sense of which bespeaks of singular (male) heroism. This informs the colour coda of *Schindler's List* in which the real Schindlerjuden, accompanied by the actors who played them, individually lay a stone on Schindler's grave in Israel. The factional status of the film comes together here with some force. A caption on the screen reads: "There are fewer than four thousand Jews left alive in Poland today." It is followed by another which reads: "There are more than six thousand descendants of Schindler Jews." Schindler not only redeemed 1200 Jews, he provided for their regeneration. Even if the final caption remembers the six million Jews who died, the coda honours the memory of one Gentile, Schindler. He is the focus of the film's closure, Liam Neeson, the actor who played him, laying a rose upon a gravestone covered in stones.

There are many ways that one can discuss the "Americanization" of the Holocaust in *Schindler's List*. The film is, most obviously, a product of an American culture industry

and it works within Hollywood conventions that figure an epic narrative around a central protagonist who transforms the course of events. The film comes to a resolute closure and, according to Sara R. Horowitz, it “reassures the audience of the rightness of the workings of history” by showing the survival of those who in some way earn it.⁴⁶ That the film is concerned with survivors at all is perhaps an indicative American Holocaust trope. *Schindler’s List* concentrates on 1200 who survived when *six million* perished. One of the most resonant details, however, revealing the film’s cultural genesis, is in Spielberg’s own dedication. While *Schindler’s List* remembers the six million Jews, the film is dedicated to Steven Ross, chief executive of Time-Warner and personal friend of Spielberg. Ross was apparently a model for the portrayal of Schindler; Spielberg told Neeson to watch and learn from his mannerisms. This is not to draw any deep conclusion about the character in light of the fact. It simply suggests that *Schindler’s List* was never based on characters and events in any strict documentary sense. From the outset, Spielberg had a particular model of paternal masculinity in mind for Schindler, drawn from a knowledge of Oskar, but also influenced by contemporary models and male identities. As portrayed by Spielberg, Schindler is a charismatic capitalist and benevolent father who, in a world unhinged by war and genocide, is figured heroically in the nostalgic, monochrome, tones of cinematic classicism.

Susan Jeffords has argued that representations of masculinity in mainstream Hollywood film changed during the 1990s. Her argument is couched in a starkly periodized framework where 1991 represents “the big switch,” moving from hard-body action heroes (*Rambo*, *Lethal Weapon*, *The Terminator*) to sensitive, nurturing family-men (*City Slickers*, *The Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, *Regarding Henry*). Jeffords suggests

that nineties masculinity does not represent a simple warming of the male heart but a “wholesale social patterning” that shows men providing, in their role as father, for future generations.⁴⁷ One may be suspicious of the blanket claims she makes about restructured male identity, especially in light of the range of films that may complicate her theory, from *Basic Instinct* to *Pulp Fiction*. However, if her claims are read in a less schematic and determined fashion, they can be suggestive of particular kinds of negotiated identity in nineties film. Indeed, *Schindler* and *Gump* each demonstrate tendencies in Hollywood film that Jeffords relates to “increasingly emotive displays of masculine sensitivities, traumas and burdens.” In the case of Oskar and Forrest, both men undergo a process of emotional maturation, developing into father figures who provide for the future.

The relationship expressed in *Schindler's List* between historical victims and a redeeming male protagonist would perhaps have less cultural significance if it wasn't for the proximity of *Forrest Gump*. As touchstones of remembrance, sanctified by the American Academy, both films produce forms of historical coherence and moral closure based on the (nostalgic) visioning of male saviours; they base documentary memory narratives upon the redemptive and regenerative virtues of men. In *Forrest Gump*, this is more explicitly related to American history; it enters debates about the status and significance of the 1960s and, implicitly, the crisis of white, male identity. Stylistically, *Gump* creates a nostalgic currency of shared participation that is mobilized in particular, and highly politicized, ways. If monochrome engenders a mode of nostalgia in *Schindler*, framing a particular kind of “authentic” masculine hero, *Gump's* strategies of pastiche locate Forrest in a lapsarian history that makes him the singular

force of reconciliation. Analysing the dual tendencies of *Forrest Gump* both to forget history (notably, the history of popular struggles undertaken by, and for, the rights of marginalized “others”) and to re-write history in patriarchal narratives of consensual nationhood, Thomas Byers suggests that the film’s “nostalgia mode” helps “clear the way for a renarration of the history of struggle that serves the most powerful of entrenched interests and carries a vicious edge under its carefully contrived demeanor of historical innocence.”⁴⁸ *Forrest Gump* creates a terrain of pastness through a nostalgia mode of pop iconography. Within this recognizable and shared past stands Gump himself, a character whose decency, honesty and clarity of vision represent the best hope for recovered harmony in the wake of the turbulence caused by the cultural struggles and social dislocations associated with the 1960s. As Robert Burgoyne writes: “With the slate ‘wiped clean’ of female presence, of racial others, and of social discord, the period can, in effect, be retrofitted to an emergent narrative of white male regeneration.”⁴⁹

Taking \$100 million in its first three weeks and moving on to become the fifth highest-grossing film of all time, with \$270 million in domestic earnings, *Gump* was claimed by various political groups. The film was taken to “prove” both liberal and conservative value structures; it was, at once, a critique of racism, sexism and child abuse, and a defence of national integrity and family values. Appealing to the widest possible market, *Gump* was promotionally savvy in that it offered itself up for a conservative reading while also providing a view whereby conventional values appear to be satirized. For all its self-professed apoliticism, however, I would agree with a number of critics who read *Forrest Gump* as a powerfully conservative film.⁵⁰ This can be measured in

several ways but, endemic to it, is a consensus view of American history and national reconciliation based upon the authority of the white male and the marginalization of “others,” notably the histories of feminism, African-American civil rights and gay liberation. As Burgoyne continues, “the film associates the imagined community of nation with the saintly singularity of identity embodied in Gump.”⁵¹

As narrator, Forrest Gump cannot understand historical and political conflict, only its effects. He experiences division and disruption without ever grasping the causal forces. This “enlightened” naiveté enables him to witness events with little or no capacity for social critique. At the level of historical narration, violent death is a denominator of the social turbulence that befalls America. Reference to individuals and icons like Elvis, George Wallace, John and Robert Kennedy, John Lennon, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan all reinforce premature death, assassination or attempted assassination. Thomas Byers notes the astonishing absence of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X in *Gump*'s catalogue of assassinations. This is symptomatic, he suggests, of the victim status given to white men and the film's complex disavowal of white racism.⁵² Death is never explained or set in context; it is simply an ongoing consequence of disharmony. In remembering little of the politics of the 1960s but everything about its turmoil, *Forrest Gump* centres the white male as a calming centre of gravity without exploring how imperial white manhood may have been a cause of resistance and revolt. While the film gestures with some deliberateness towards sexual and racial oppression, it frequently becomes little more than a foil for Gump's own incomprehension, a means of disavowing the white male narrator from the processes of social power. Forrest is totally

unable to understand or conceptualize oppression. He is a figure who didn't need the sixties to hone his sensitivity and, in consequence, the period seems both disruptive and productive of undue turmoil. Protest was never the answer, simply the flowering of Gump-like decency.

Forrest Gump is a story of recovery and redemption for the victims created by the social and political turbulence of the 1960s. As Forrest at one point comments: "You've got to put the past behind you before you can move on." Through his inveterate place in the nation's collective past, and because of his ability to transcend (through ignorance) socio-cultural division, Gump is given the symbolic power to reconcile victims of the baby-boom generation. The victims, in this case, are given a caricatured portrayal in the figures of Jenny and Lieutenant Dan. Both are realized less as people than *types*; they each carry the weight of histories that define the 1960s, namely that of the counterculture and Vietnam. Jenny is a drug-taking, anti-war demonstrating, sexually promiscuous flowerchild whose "liberation" begets addiction and physical abuse. Thomas Byers suggests that Jenny embodies "the revisionist version of the counterculture, which collapses together (as 'liberal' and 'evil') any and all behaviours that deviate from the repressive norms of the 1950s."⁵³ Jenny becomes a single mother in the 1980s and eventually dies of an AIDS-like virus, fulfilling conservative fears about moral breakdown and its effects. Lieutenant Dan is a career soldier, an officer in Vietnam who cannot readjust on return and becomes bitter, resentful and alcoholic. With the film's tendency to evade political critique, Dan's bitterness is the result of being crippled, not his experience of the war or the political fallout that questioned America's entire involvement. Both Jenny and Dan are rescued from emotional and

spiritual tail-spins by the integrity and generosity of Forrest. This is brought together with metaphorical brio towards the end of the film when Forrest and Jenny get married.

Once childhood friends, the marriage of Jenny and Forrest is not a romantic culmination but the realization by Jenny that her life has been ruined and that, dying of AIDS, she needs Forrest to provide the family and fatherhood that her/their child will depend upon. Before she left on her abject journey through the counterculture, decades before, Jenny told Forrest that he didn't know what love is. Forrest is the childish innocent and Jenny the comprehending adult. She is undone, however, by a ruinous freefall at the hands of a morally suspect "revolution." At the film's conclusion, it is Forrest who seems better equipped to achieve happiness and fulfillment. Their wedding is a culmination not of romance but of Gump's wisdom, of lives rescued by a family ideal. When Lieutenant Dan arrives on "magic legs" with his *Asian* fiancée, another victim is seen to be redeemed through romance and impending marriage. Dan has made a symbolic peace with Vietnam and even American technology, his legs made from titanium alloy used on the Space Shuttle. The wedding is a ceremony of healing and reconciliation; victims of the counterculture and Vietnam are brought together by Gump in a concluding, allegorical scene of national restoration.

In *Schindler's List*, it is Oskar's complexity of character that motivates the film. He is a hero despite himself, transforming from an opportunist with a taste for the good life to a morally resolute figure whose goodness preserves the value of life itself. In *Forrest Gump*, it is Gump's simplicity and innocence that motivates the film. He is also a hero

despite himself, although more because he is unable to recognize his agency upon people and events than through any necessary personal transformation or moral awakening. While *Schindler's List* sets a charismatic figure of male authority in relation to victims of historical oppression, *Forrest Gump* sets an innocent child-man in relation to victims compromised by a historical period. Although markedly different, both films structure relationships that depend fundamentally on a redeeming male figure, saving, healing, and establishing the basis for a future generation. It has been my argument that both films are a product, and must be seen in the context, of the early 1990s. In a time when the white, heterosexual, middle class man had become a bogey of oppression, *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* gave him the capacity of saving victims, not creating them. Both films trafficked in a certain kind of nostalgia for white, male, agency and authority. Who, indeed, could doubt the redeeming capacities and regenerative virtues of white masculinity when, in nostalgically nuanced master memories, Oskar met Forrest at the beginning of the nineties?

Against the Grain?

My intention in this chapter has been to bring out particular stylistic and discursive dimensions in two different, but equally venerated, memory texts of the early 1990s. Drawing *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* together may seem to go against the grain, especially when compared on the grounds of documentary-nostalgia. However, by proceeding from an interest in cinematic style, situating the movies in relation to contemporary film genericity ("new sincerity" and "eclectic irony"), and considering

their projection of white male identity, I would argue that the techniques and terms of remembrance in each are not entirely at odds. Implied in my consideration of *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* is a relationship between the mode of the two films and their articulation of white masculine authority. The black and white image is significant in each case, although taken up in different ways. If in *Schindler*, black and white is instrumental to the film's claim of cultural and cinematic authenticity, in *Gump* it is one of a number of textual codes that help create a terrain of American postwar pastness. While creating an authenticating documentary effect in each film, monochrome also insinuates a nostalgic nuance that, at some level, frames a more politicized nostalgia for the vivified power and/or legitimacy of the white, male subject.

Considering the attempt in nineties film to rearticulate the cultural narratives that define America, newly accounting for the nation's polycultural reality, Robert Burgoyne writes of a "desire to remake . . . the 'dominant fiction,' the ideological reality, or the 'image of social consensus' within which members of a society are asked to identify themselves."⁵⁴ He argues that those on the cultural margins have increasingly been brought to the centre of the national imaginary, compelling a new configuration of America's self-image and of the nation's collective past. This is not the whole story, however. As Burgoyne's consideration of *Forrest Gump* is forced to acknowledge, along with the proliferation of identities and histories treated in contemporary American film, there has been an attempt to stabilize a sense of common memory based around, and serving the interests of, centred (that is to say white, male, heterosexual) identity and power. *Gump* is an aggressive example of the attempt to restore investments in narratives of nation that are unburdened by, or have silenced, the claims of cultural

difference. *Schindler's List* may operate in relation to a different set of cultural discourses but, like *Gump*, it attempts to fix an incorporative master memory based on regenerative masculine authority. In tone and style, it may appear that *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* could not be further apart. However, their respective cultural memories are figured in ways that can be set in a similar context, respond to similar demands, and are structured in a similar way. Both proffered documentary master memories at a juncture where the cultural past was becoming a site of increasing fracture and debate, and both nostalgically figured, and served to congratulate, a benevolent and redeeming "father" in a moment of white patriarchal "crisis."

NOTES

¹ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 2.

² Liam Kennedy, "Alien Nation: White Male Paranoia and Imperial Culture in the United States," *Journal of American Studies*, 30 (1) 1996: 87.

³ Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Schindler's List is not Shoah: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism and Public Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Winter) 1996: 292.

⁴ Yosefa Loshitsky, "Introduction," in Yosefa Loshitsky, ed., *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997) 2.

⁵ Martin Walker, "Making Saccharine Taste Sour," *Sight and Sound* 4 (10) 1994: 16.

⁶ Cited in Richard Schickel, "Heart of Darkness," *Time* 13 Dec. 1993: 49.

⁷ Cited in Martin Walker, "Making Saccharine Taste Sour," 17.

⁸ Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 121.

⁹ James E. Young, "Holocaust Documentary Fiction," *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988) 51-63.

¹⁰ Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 45-79. He suggests that both personalize and dramatize history, telling it as a story with progressive and moral messages, and both insist on history as the story of individuals, using the special capabilities of the filmic medium to heighten and intensify feeling. In short, he argues that documenting the historical past depends on many of the same codes and cinematic conventions that shape its more overt dramatization

¹¹ Paul Arthur, "Jargons of Authenticity (Three American Moments)," in Michael Renov, ed., *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 108.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jim Collins, "Genericity in the Nineties: Eclectic Irony and the New Sincerity," in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, Ava Preacher Collins, eds., *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 242-260.

¹⁴ Ibid., 254.

¹⁵ David Ansen, "Spielberg's Obsession," *Newsweek* 21 Dec 1993, 43.

¹⁶ Jim Collins, "Genericity in the Nineties," 262.

¹⁷ Saul Friedlander, *Reflections on Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993).

¹⁸ See, in particular, Fred Pfeil, *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Difference and Domination* (London: Verso, 1995); Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997); and Liam Kennedy, "Alien Nation: White Male Paranoia and Imperial Culture in the United States," 87-100.

¹⁹ Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 371.

²⁰ Jude Davies and Carol R. Smith, *Gender, Ethnicity and Sexuality in Contemporary American Film* (Keele: Keele UP, 1997) 148.

²¹ Thomas B. Byers, "History Re-membered: *Forrest Gump*, Postfeminist Masculinity, and the Burial of the Counterculture," *Modern Fiction Studies* 42 (2) 1996: 426.

²² Cited in Saul Friedlander, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, epigraph.

²³ Cited in Edward Guthman, "Spielberg's List," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 Dec 1993, in Thomas Fensch, ed., *Oskar Schindler and His List: The Man, the Book, the Film, the Holocaust and its Survivors* (Vermont: Paul S. Eriksson, 1995) 51.

²⁴ Cited in Karen Erbach, "Schindler's List Finds Heroism Amidst Holocaust," *American Cinematographer*, January 1994: 49.

²⁵ Cited in Curt Schleier, "Steven Spielberg's New Direction," *Jewish Monthly* 108 (4) 1994, 12.

²⁶ The same framing device is used in *Malcolm X*, suggesting connections between the lived present and the remembered past. The film begins with documentary footage of the Rodney King beating and ends with a selection of images that include children proclaiming "I am Malcolm X," Nelson Mandela teaching children in a classroom, and black stars like Bill Cosby and Janet Jackson wearing "X" caps. Black and white is used in both *Malcolm X* and *JFK* to reinforce the aura of documentary authenticity, although each film is in colour.

²⁷ A pointed illustration of intertextuality, using the effect of a red dress, can be found in the ad of a car manufacturer which deployed a "Schindler aesthetic" to sell one of its models. A television ad for the Peugeot 306 (Britain, 1997) is entirely black and white except for a cherubic girl with a colourized red dress. She appears several times within a montage of images that show, together with a man driving a car, life scenes of passion, emotion and distress. The girl stands in a road where a truck bears down upon her. The ad concludes with the man, who we have by now seen driving the car, running to catch and save the girl. The ad plays out to a hit by M People with the refrain, "Search for the Hero Inside Yourself." Black and white recreates the visual character of *Schindler's List* in a narrative of character-building heroism.

²⁸ Cited in Edward Guthman, "Spielberg's List," 54.

²⁹ Leon Wieseltier, "Close Encounters of the Nazi Kind," *The New Republic*, 24 Jan 1994, 42.

³⁰ Terrence Rafferty, "A Man of Transactions," *The New Yorker*, 21 Dec 1993, in Fensch, ed., *Oskar Schindler and his List*, 88.

³¹ John H. Richardson, "Steven's Choice," *Premiere* Jan 1994: 66.

³² Miriam Bratu Hansen, "*Schindler's List* is not *Shoah*," 310.

³³ Yosefa Loshitzky, "Holocaust Others: Spielberg's *Schindler's List* versus Lanzmann's *Shoah*," in Loshitzky, ed., *Spielberg's Holocaust*, 109.

³⁴ Leon Wieseltier, "Close Encounters," 42.

³⁵ Saul Friedlander, *Reflections of Nazism* 21.

³⁶ Jim Collins, "Genericity in the Nineties," 257.

³⁷ Cited in Paula Parisi, "Forrest Gump Gallops Through Time," *American Cinematographer* Oct. 1994: 40.

³⁸ Music is a key demarcation of period "zones" and is used according to various cultural associations that have developed between artists and events. While Jimi Hendrix is used for the rock 'n' roll soundtrack of Vietnam, Bob Dylan and Paul Simon play out the counterculture. Notably, the 1980s are evoked by hits of the time but from

artists with a baby-boom pedigree like Fleetwood Mac and Willie Nelson. *Forrest Gump* is very much about the boomer generation and the impact and legacy of the pivotal sixties.

³⁹ Richard Dyer, *White*, 102.

⁴⁰ In the case of *Schindler's List*, see the edited volumes by Yosefa Loshitsky, *Spielberg's Holocaust*, and Thomas Fensch, *Oskar Schindler and his List*. Suggestive readings of *Forrest Gump* are given by Thomas Byers, "History Re-membered," Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation*, 104-119, and Fred Pfeil, *White Guys*, 233-262.

⁴¹ Robert Hughes, *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993).

⁴² Liam Kennedy, "Alien Nation," 90.

⁴³ Fred Pfeil, *White Guys*, 238.

⁴⁴ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993). Young concentrates on memorials. He argues that while in Israel memorials frequently relate to the birth of the state, those in Germany invariably focus upon guilt and Jewish absence. American memorials often remember the Holocaust through ideals of liberty, pluralism and the experience of immigration.

⁴⁵ See Jeffrey Shandler, "Schindler's Discourse: America Discusses the Holocaust and its Mediation, from NBC's Miniseries to Spielberg's Film," in Loshitsky, ed., *Spielberg's Holocaust*, 153-168; and Marcia Landy, *Cinematic Uses of the Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁴⁶ Sara R. Horowitz, "But is it Good for the Jews?: Spielberg's Schindler and the Aesthetics of Atrocity," in Loshitsky, ed., *Spielberg's Holocaust*, 136.

⁴⁷ See Susan Jeffords, "Can Masculinity be Terminated," in Steven Cohen and Ina Rae Hark, eds., *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993) 245-260; and Jeffords, "The Big Switch: Hollywood Masculinity in the Nineties," in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, Ava Preacher Collins, eds., *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, 196-208.

⁴⁸ Thomas B. Byers, "History Re-membered," 439. Byers suggests that the "emptying out" effects of nostalgia art are not ends in themselves, as implied in Jameson's postmodern theory, but can equip a terrain of pastness that can then be re-written for particular, hegemonic, purposes.

⁴⁹ Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation*, 117.

⁵⁰ See Thomas Byers, "History Re-membered"; Fred Pfeil, *White Guys*; and Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation*.

⁵¹ Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation*, 121.

⁵² The film recognizes racism but then denies it by turning it into something incomprehensible or silly like the slogan-filled rants of a Black Panther or the portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan as men in bed-sheets, ridiculous more than repressive.

⁵³ Thomas Byers, "History Re-membered," 432.

⁵⁴ Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation*, 1.

CHAPTER SIX

RECLAIMING HERITAGE

Colourization, Culture Wars and the Politics of Nostalgia

It has so far been my argument that a discourse of “black and whiteness” was used in different cultural media during the 1990s to aestheticize and/or authorize a consensual past, a core memory - what might be called an archival essence - for a stable and unified concept of “America.” I have examined the visualization of shared history and common heritage in the news magazine and brand advertising, and have explored the political stakes of two documentary-based Hollywood master memories from the beginning of the decade. I have essentially been concerned with the way that monochrome memory has been *deployed* in the dominant media: how it has been used to create particular temporal and authenticity effects, and how these have been taken up in the negotiation of American nation. I want in this final chapter to consider the way that black and white has been *defended* in cultural debates that sought, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to affirm an idea of cultural identity and inheritance through recourse to the principle, and preservation, of monochrome memory. Highlighting the discursive continuities between a specifically liberal defence of cultural patrimony, evident in the debate over film colourization, and the culture war critique associated with neo-conservatism, I want to relate the discourse of “black and whiteness” to a particular, and politicized, discussion about the configuration and transmission of American cultural identity.

In the late 1980s, a skirmish broke out over the issue of film colourization, a culture war of a particular sort. The brouhaha began in March 1986 when Ted Turner bought MGM Entertainment and swiftly announced a plan to convert to colour twenty four films in his new back catalogue, among them *The Maltese Falcon* and *Father of the Bride*. As an economic venture, colourization would give new profit potential to films that had lost their market viability through age and the visual hindrance of their being in black and white. Proponents of colour conversion like Turner and the Hal Roach Company, which helped develop the conversion process, argued that technological enhancement would represent nothing short of “the rebirth of the film classics of yesteryear.”¹ Opponents were less sanguine about the virtues of colourization, bodies like the American Film Institute and the Directors Guild of America, along with figures such as Woody Allen and John Huston, denouncing the process as a threat to the originality of the art work and the moral rights of the creator. The colourization debate set art against commerce, creative rights against ownership, monochrome against the dastard colour of money. Fought in the media and then in court, it raised questions about intellectual property, but also, and significantly, authenticity and cultural heritage.

At the same time as the colourization fracas, another more pernicious culture war was beginning to unfold. In 1987, Allan Bloom published *The Closing of the American Mind*, a conservative jeremiad on higher education that would set the tone for a proliferating number of right wing broadsides against the legacy of sixties radicalism in American universities and the development of an invidious new relativism. From William Bennett and Lynne Cheney to Roger Kimball and Dinesh D’Souza, a crisis was being defined, “tenured radicals” conspiring to politicize knowledge, undermine

the Great Books of literature, and to threaten core values, liberal education and Western Civilization generally. As with colourization, the preservation of cultural heritage, or what Bennett would call reclaiming a legacy, became central to the barbed conflicts over educational standards and the challenge of multiculturalism.²

The colourization debate and the conflict over higher education have very different political stakes. If the former is a question of personal property in relation to moral rights and popular memory, the latter is a far more significant issue concerning the status of the university, the circulation of knowledge, and the representation of peoples and identities within what counts as legitimate knowledge and culture. One became a minor issue that had snuffed itself out by 1989, while the other became a defining controversy that would burn through the nineties, creating with it the smoke and bluster of “political correctness.” Colourization and multiculturalism are different in scope and scale, but they reveal similarities in the way they were and are defined in public discourse. Narratives of decline have been mobilized in each case, focusing upon the authenticity of the art work and the status of national patrimony. If colourization and multiculturalism can be examined together, a significant basis for comparison is perhaps their disrespect for the preserves of cultural tradition. More specifically, they (are seen to) disrupt a certain concept of tradition grounding particular ideas about educational practice and the popular circulation of cultural texts. At the end of the 1980s, the process of colourizing film and the politics of “colourizing” the curriculum induced a sense of discontinuity which gave nostalgia a concerted rhetorical currency within American cultural politics.

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In their appeal to a lost authenticity, the nostalgics of the culture war are most readily observed on the right. This is typified by Allan Bloom and his best-selling requiem for cultural authority and the Great Books. The broad conservative line, as normalized in the press at the beginning of the nineties, can be crudely summarized like this. Sixties radicalism has penetrated the academy and seeks to undermine “civilization,” “culture” and “reason” with political correctness, identity politics and the vagaries of French theory. In the opinion of right-wing radicals, nothing is “true” or “universal” any more, values and standards have flown with the breeze. The Great Books have been replaced by inferior works that do not advance the “timeless” meanings of a superior Western heritage, but instead serve as therapy to victimized groups. These groups - women, black, latino, gay, etc. - form the basis of a broad multicultural threat, farcical in their claims of injury yet fascist in their demand of rights. The consequent separatism and obsession with difference is facilitating the breakdown of America’s common culture, the basis of tradition and, ultimately, the nation’s societal bonds. The sense of loss and decline advanced in right-wing rhetoric combines a notion of crisis in higher education with the prospect of larger cultural enervation.

While nostalgia may underscore the polemical tenor of much conservative criticism, this does not limit the extent to which its rhetorical strategies have been engaged across the political spectrum. The left have developed their own narratives of decline in battles fought over multiculturalism. This has focused principally upon what is seen as the baleful emergence of academic theory and the parochial nature of identity politics, what Todd Gitlin describes as a “grim and hermetic bravado celebrating victimization and stylized marginality.”³ Beset by cant and cosmetic political triumphs, liberal-left critics like Gitlin, Russell Jacoby and Robert Hughes chastise the

shallow politics of a beleaguered left that now fights politics from the library, protests by means of abstract theory, cannot build majorities and sees political action in the confines of curricular revision. According to Andrew Ross, the focus on marginality in the academy has “run up against the same reactionary consensus of left and right, each unswervingly loyal to their own narratives of decline: charges of post-sixties fragmentation and academification from unreconstructed voices on the left, and warnings of doom and moral degeneracy from Cassandras on the Right.”⁴ If Bloom is an angel of doom within this scheme, Gitlin would be a test case of unreconstructed leftism.

In general terms, a politics of nostalgia can emerge from multiple, not simply conservative, conceptions of loss; it has been developed by the right *and* the left. On occasion, this has produced some intriguing parallels that cross the political divide. My interest in the colourization debate stems from the character of nostalgia it engendered among ranks of the liberal-left and the discursive continuities this revealed with key tenets of neo-conservative critique. Colourization gave rise to a liberal nostalgia that understood loss in terms of threatened cultural patrimony. The status of the “classic” text, the principles of aesthetic distinction, and the importance of cultural inheritance all became points of issue for a liberal lobby seeking to fend off the deleterious encroachments of commerce in the cultural sphere. In many respects, the anti-colourization camp trafficked in what Joan Wallach Scott has called the “fetishizing of tradition” in contemporary discourse.⁵ Scott associates this with conservative endeavours to shore up the “integrity” of American identity (and its structures of privilege) against multicultural discordance. The discourse of tradition has also been mobilized and refined by the left, however. The colourization debate

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complicates the discursive “territories” of left and right, joining rather curiously the likes of Woody Allen and Allan Bloom, Martin Scorsese and George Will, in a common defence of heritage and cultural transmission.

The colourization debate set liberal artisan guilds, film organizations, critics, directors and Democrat Senators against the powerful economic interests of Turner Broadcasting Systems, CBS/Fox, Hal Roach Studios, Colorization Inc. and Color Systems Technology. In framing their opposition to the conversion process, liberals rushed to the defence of the classic work; they justified the policing of taste against commercial opportunism and the vulgarities of consumer preference; they sought to counter the debilitating effects of postmodern technology and its digital manipulation of the visual image. These were similar, however, to the terms being deployed by the conservative assault on multiculturalism as it developed in the same cultural moment. Right-wing critics abhorred the attack on classic works of literature; arguments were made about the onset of ignorance and superficiality with the “politicization” of the humanities; conservatives sought to challenge postmodern theory and its corrosive impact on sense, clarity and standards of value. Colourization and multiculturalism created respective barbarisms against which defenders of culture, heritage, and good taste could unite. The significant difference between the two was the axis determining from where exactly a rhetoric of nostalgia, linked to particular notions of authenticity, was being voiced. Colourization was fought with rhetorical grapeshot compared with the heavy weapons wheeled out for the battles over multiculturalism. I want to consider how both debates nevertheless reveal a similar resistance, in a comparable language, to challenges made upon the “fixity” of tradition, the stability of artistic canons, and the formation of American cultural identity.

In the context of my thesis, this chapter relates black and white - as an aesthetic of the authentic and a mode of nostalgic memory - to quite specific discussions about national identity. It makes explicit some of the connotative ascriptions that underlie the discourse of "black and whiteness" in nineties image culture, demonstrating a particular equation drawn at the beginning of the decade between the visuality of monochrome and the negotiation of nation. In so doing, I will relate my discussion of the anti-colourization campaign to a more general discourse (and rhetoric) of nostalgia that grew in the early 1990s as a political response to the challenge of multiculturalism and to changes brought about by the global cultural economy. The previous chapters have supposed a tacit intersection between the discourse of "black and whiteness" and the articulation of stable nationhood. Whether in response to (the perception of) cultural fraying and fragmentation, to an emergent climate of postnationalism, or to the crisis of white masculinity, the black and white image has been used to help stabilize, or "centre," national identity through a figuration of shared history, common heritage, and documented memory. Central to this chapter are questions of taste and critical authority: I want to explore "black and whiteness" as it has been taken up both as a determinant of artistic value (authenticity) and within prescriptions of national tradition (temporality). In rounding off my discussion of monochrome memory, I want, finally, and with no claim of summation, to relate the black and white image to a particular debate fought over the preservation of aesthetic and cultural integrity.

Colourization

It has been said that “postmodernism’s politics will be a struggle for control - not over the means of production, but over the means of replication.”⁶ This speaks, in part, of the licensed re-privatization of culture, where capitalist energies enforce laws of copyright and ownership within areas that are, or should be, public. Colourization is one such example. Both the Hal Roach Studios and Turner Broadcasting saw the opportunity of forging new copyrights for old works through techniques of colour conversion. Adding colour, it was hoped, would be recognized as “new creativity” by the Copyright Office (which it was in 1987), colourized films therefore becoming an “original work of authorship.” Ted Turner sought to maximize the profit potential of works he already owned by securing copyrights for them as new commodities. This had the effect of creating private property out of an ostensibly public resource. While opponents tried moving the issue onto moral grounds - namely, was colourization a breach of the moral rights of the original creators? - there was short legal mileage to be gained from this argument. In 1988, President Reagan signed legislation for America to become party to the Berne Convention, an agreement for the protection of literary and artistic works, but with a provision that effectively meant that moral rights would not be recognized in America. Colourization was a legal victory for owners above artists, a triumph for those holding property rights and a digital paint brush.⁷

Colourization was first and foremost about money. As Ted Turner explains: “Movies were made to be profitable. They were not made as art, they were made to make money . . . anything that could make more money has always been considered to be OK.”⁸ The vehicle and medium for the colourized film was television; profit would be

made through syndication and video release. In 1986, Turner announced that he would market a series of colour-converted films on a barter basis, including *Yankee Doodle Dandee*, *White Heat*, *High Sierra*, *Father of the Bride*, *Dark Victory* and *The Maltese Falcon*. These were sold to television stations as part of the Color Classic Network. By 1987, the vice-president of marketing for Turner Broadcasting, David Copp, reported that 85 stations had decided to participate in the network, earning the company substantial revenues. For example, two colourized Errol Flynn movies (*Captain Blood* and *Sea Hawk*) grossed \$800,000 in less than a year. In black and white, these had earned only \$200,000 apiece. It was difficult to anticipate the failure of colourization from the initial furore that it caused.

Charles R. Acland suggests, rightly in my opinion, that it is not colour that attracts audiences but the very fact of colourization, “the spectacle of the re-finished product, a creation of technological wizardry.” He argues that “people are intrigued by the seemingly profane reworking of definitive moments in their collective cultural history.”⁹ There is perhaps a curiosity in digital alteration, of seeing a film artfully doctored in the name of creating what Acland calls the “new classic.” The fact that colourization failed to establish itself, that demand was eventually low and companies lost millions in the gamble, may illustrate the momentary fascination. Colourization became a fad, a short-lived exercise that expired with the public’s waning interest. By 1994, the *New York Times* wrote that “the mad dash to colorize classic black-and-white movies appears to be over.”¹⁰ After issuing 120 colourized films, Turner closed down his operations. For all its wizardry, colour conversion could not deliver a convincing visual spectacle, or compete with the revival of black and white movies on cable channels such as American Movie Classics (which, by the end of the 1990s, had

garnered 61 million viewers, just below that of MTV).¹¹ In the end, colourization became little more than a digitally inspired novelty.

What interests me is not so much the fact that colourization failed in popular, if not in legal, terms, but the manner in which it rallied opposition. While the debate was principally waged over rights (ownership versus the moral entitlements of the creator), the rhetoric of the conflict focused upon a few central themes. Prominent among them were those of authenticity, canonicity and cultural heritage. Notions of originality and authenticity have been problematized in a climate where cultural production has become ever more hybrid, intertextual, and digitally reproduced.¹² Authenticity remains a powerful cultural category, however, evident in the colourization debate. Opponents decried the process of colour conversion as a “desecration” of the art work (Martin Scorsese), a “mutilation” (Woody Allen), an impropriety not unlike “robbing a grave” (Robert Redford). The Directors Guild of America called colour conversion “cultural butchery.” Colourization was portrayed as an encroachment on the rights of the creator but moral arguments were often linked to an idea of the authentic, that is to say black and white, work of art.

Authenticity is conceptually linked to the idea and possibility of fraud. Exactly how fraudulent the colourized film is or can be said to be was basic to the legal and aesthetic debates that governed the issue of colour conversion within public discourse. There were two main areas of discussion. The aesthetic debate questioned the grounds on which colourization was (im)moral (*should it be done?*) and the legal debate questioned the grounds on which colourization was (il)legal (*can it be done?*). There is considerable overlap between the two for, as I have said, legal arguments were

fought in terms of moral rights. The concept of authenticity was framed somewhat differently in each case, however. While the legal debate contested the degree of control a film-maker could expect to have over his or her original (authentic) work, the aesthetic debate focused more upon the formal properties of black and white in defining a work's very originality (authenticity).

Flo Leibowitz argues that black and white can affect the entire mood of a film; monochrome performs expressive work in its own right. A monochrome movie is not simply a film without colour but has a tonal quality that is often used quite deliberately in genres like film noir.¹³ Describing the high-contrast tones of black and white film stock, used to great effect in film noir "mystery lighting," James Naremore suggests that "certain directors and cinematographers - even when they work in color - repeatedly aspire to *the condition of black and white*" (my italics).¹⁴ Monochrome, in this view, is an aesthetic modality with particular conventions and connotations. Whether for its graphic quality, its dependence on light and shade, its association with gritty realism or with aesthetic refinement, black and white has specific properties that have been taken up in various genre forms and film traditions. Woody Allen writes that: "The different effect between color and black and white is often so wide it alters the meaning of scenes."¹⁵ One line of defence in the anti-colourization campaign was that monochrome, even in the heyday of the black and white movie, was not used out of pure technical necessity, but was, and remains, intrinsic to the creation of film mood and atmosphere.

By giving the black and white image an aesthetic value in its own right, the anti-colourization lobby could better advance its case for preserving the art work in the

(monochrome) form intended by the original artist. At stake was the issue, and potential abuse, of creative intentionality. Woody Allen said that colourization is “an ugly practise, totally venal, anti-artistic and against the integrity of every filmmaker.”¹⁶ Fred Zinnemann - who as expatriate president of the Directors Guild of Britain initiated anti-colourization protest by calling for a limited number of classics to be “saved” - called the process “a cultural crime of the first order.”¹⁷ Liberal proclamations put a value on the authenticity of the art work. In framing this as an absolute principle, however, the anti-colourization lobby failed to acknowledge that authenticity has never been a fixed value in cultural life. Michael Schudson wrote in *Society*: “To make color versions of black-and-white films does not seem essentially different from other ways people update, to be vulgar, or reinterpret, to be precise, old works of art.”¹⁸ Of course, colourization does not restage an art work, as in the performing arts, but visually reconfigures it. To the likes of Allen and Zinnemann, this would no doubt be a crucial difference. It remains the case, however, that colourization does not alter or destroy the *original* form of any art work. By transferring a film image from the master copy to a videotape, the colourization procedure represents a modification rather than a mutilation of the original film text; the process does not destroy the single instantiation of the art work but is instead based on the digital production of colourized *copies*.¹⁹ The perception of colourization as “venal” and “a crime” was a form of hyperbole that developed from a somewhat fetishized notion of artistic authenticity.

There are numerous examples in cultural life where authenticity could, but has not, become an issue. This may pose questions about the particularity of film colourization's threat. Musicians such as Frank Zappa, for instance, have used digital

technologies to correct “flaws” in recordings made decades before; a host of CD reissues have “improved” sound recordings from the beginning and middle of the century by ridding them of various acoustic imperfections; digital technology has been used to remaster old films, notably demonstrated by the 1997 re-release of George Lucas’s enhanced and extended version of *Star Wars*. In no single case have the digital modifications in these examples been specifically questioned or opposed. This would suggest that the defence of authenticity in cultural and creative life is not consistently fought but is linked to the context and circumstances of modification. Hypothetically, this could apply to colourization itself. There may have been a different response in liberal critique, for example, if Frank Capra and not Ted Turner had been responsible for colourizing *It’s a Wonderful Life*. Colour conversion may have become a more legitimate enterprise if carried out in the name of artistic experimentation rather than profit. The point to make here is that authenticity is not a fixed state and standard. In the clamour to condemn colourization, however, authenticity became just that, pinned to the status and value of the black and white image. An editorial in *American Cinematographer* typified the tone of liberal reproach by suggesting that: “An artist’s original intent is what is most valuable to his or her culture and most characteristic of genius.”²⁰ In media comment and film critique, authenticity - by implication, the authenticity of monochrome - became a hardened principle used in the name, and taken up in the defence, of artistry and cultural integrity.

If the question and protection of textual authenticity depends on the context and conditions of modification, there are several reasons for the particular, and vociferous, liberal outcry over film colourization. Firstly, colour conversion was a flagrantly

commercial venture with no artistic pretensions; it was bank-rolled by a media magnate for whom property rights were paramount. Turner saw in colourization a way to recoup his substantial overpayment for the MGM back catalogue and, brandishing entitlements as legal owner, carried forth the less than conciliatory view that “if the director of *The Maltese Falcon* didn’t want it colorized, he should have wrote that into the contract when he went to work.”²¹ Anti-colourization was, in a primary sense, a fight against big business. Secondly, colour conversion fed the enduring perception in liberal discourse of the degradation of art through the medium of television; colourization was seen as the latest manifestation of television’s capacity to exploit the vulgarities of public taste for commercial profit. In the words of the National Society of Film Critics, the conversion and syndication of colourized movies was a “betrayal . . . of film as an art form.”²² Thirdly, and the point I shall develop, adding colour to black and white films upset notions of film classicism that were, in turn, linked to ideas of cultural heritage. While panning and scanning has long altered the original format of movies for the viewing demands of television, there was something about the modification of aesthetics that made the issue of colourization more grave. By digitally reinterpreting a monochrome movie, colourization was seen by its detractors to compromise not only a film’s authenticity, but also its place within cinematic history. If panning and scanning had never raised the heckles of the film community before, it was arguably because the classic (chromatic) status of the film, and the demarcation of cinematic tradition, had not been challenged in quite the same way.

The last point is significant for it situates the anti-colourization lobby within a more general critical reaction in the late 1980s and early 1990s to transformations brought

about by electronic media culture. Ava Collins suggests that a revolution based on computer, cable and video technologies has had “a profound effect (on) the way that information is disseminated, exchanged and circulated within the culture, with profound ramifications for those institutions involved in the cultural production and exchange of information and knowledge.”²³ Collins is concerned with the relationship between popular culture and pedagogy, but her argument is useful in demonstrating a parallel fear on the right and the left regarding the challenge of popular cultural forms to evaluative criteria and to prescriptions of cultural tradition. She suggests that one consequence of the increasing centrality of popular culture in everyday life, brought about by new information technologies, has been for critics to reassert “true Culture” and “to demonize popular culture as pure commodity product, inauthentic, mindlessly repetitive, imposed from above by a cabalistic culture industry that threatens civilization as we know it.”²⁴ Collins has in mind here staunch cultural warriors in the education debate like William Bennett, Allan Bloom and Roger Kimball, all of whom sought to banish popular culture from the classroom and reinstate the primacy of “classic” Western literature. However, the same principle of restoring a corpus of authentic works, defining a specific legacy and/or cultural tradition, can also be witnessed in the anti-colourization campaign. In each case, and in their own terms, classicism and canonicity became articles of faith, set against the ruinous encroachments of new and stupefying cultural forms enabled by the technological facilities and textual flexibilities of capitalist postmodernity.

It was the perception of an imminent threat to national heritage that came, in the end, to define the anti-colourization campaign. Rather than fight Turner and the colourization process by attacking the hegemonic dominance of property rights within

American life, the anti-colourization campaign appealed in somewhat righteous tones to the “authenticity” of creative genius and to the vitality of cultural tradition. The fight against big business did not focus on the terms and limits of ownership but on the defence of defining art works. In his seminal essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin describes the effect of technical reproduction on the authenticity, or aura, of the art object.²⁵ The production of copies, he argues, detaches the art object from the domain of tradition. Discussing colourization and the formation of popular histories through cultural works, Charles Acland adapts Benjamin’s argument. In a culture where authorship and originality have been undermined as never before in the age of digital reproduction, he writes: “There is a lot at stake in the establishment of stable reference points and in the re-installation of the aura, what might be referred to as the *reproduction of the authentic*”(my italics).²⁶ Acland suggests that the colourization debate - much like the conflict over the curriculum in higher education - revealed the need to construct a fixed history, to assemble a “consensual cultural heritage,” from works commonly agreed upon as “classic.” By the terms of the debate, the black and white image became equated semiotically with artistic authenticity, but also, and crucially, with the aesthetic temporality of film classicism.

The black and white “classic” became a fulcrum of the colourization controversy, giving rise to the issue of cinematic canons. Episodes of *Gilligan’s Island* could be colourized, but God forbid anyone should touch *Citizen Kane*. It was the digital threat to an assemblage of perceivable “classics” that inspired legal initiatives. In 1987, Democrat Representative Richard Gephardt put forward the Film Integrity Act. This was designed to give a measure of copyright protection to a film’s creator, but also to

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safeguard the classic motion picture. Senate hearings focused upon the Gephardt bill and testimony was given by Steven Spielberg (Directors Guild of America), George Lucas (Writers Guild of America), Ginger Rogers (Screen Actors Guild) and a panel consisting of Woody Allen, Sydney Pollack, Elliot Silverstein and Milos Forman. While the Congressional hearings failed to uphold the principle of moral rights - reluctant to follow France, Germany and Italy and establish concrete legal protections for artists as well as owners²⁷ - the Senate decreed that a limited number of films that were “culturally, historically and aesthetically significant” should be included in a National Film Registry. These films would not be exempt from digital alteration but would carry a label acknowledging the fact of alteration. It was a limited victory for the anti-colourization lobby, but interesting in what it revealed about the role of government in preserving “classic” works of art, and the stakes fought over the cultural transmission of canonical artefacts and the particular histories they designate.

A pivotal argument used by opponents of colour conversion was the effect it would have on heritage, memory and national identity. John Huston denounced colourization, saying that “it would almost seem as though a conspiracy exists to degrade our national character.” Fred Zinnemann echoed this sentiment, saying that colour conversion was “against the national interest.” Bonita Granville Wrather, chairperson of the American Film Institute, said that colouring “will destroy our national film history and the rich heritage which it represents.”²⁸ Although master copies of original films are always left intact after colour conversion and may even be better preserved, this fact was thought to be insignificant all the time a powerful entertainment industry controls distribution, circulation and access. With time, it was argued, a colourized film would replace the original version in the public memory.

Works of art would be replaced by inferior commercial spectacles. This would have severe consequences for any real understanding of film history and cinematic tradition.

It was in this context that Congress published findings that led to the creation of the National Film Preservation Board in 1988. It drew three main conclusions. Firstly, that “motion pictures are an indigenous American art form that has been emulated throughout the world”; secondly that “certain motion pictures represent an enduring part of our nation’s historical and cultural heritage”; and thirdly that “it is appropriate and necessary for the Federal Government to recognize motion pictures as a significant art form deserving of protection.”²⁹ The National Film Preservation Board was a committee of thirteen people who in 1990, under the auspices of the Library of Congress, began to consider a list of 1,500 films nominated by the public for selection as cinematic landmarks. Twenty-five titles would be chosen each year, the Library of Congress requiring the copyright owner to submit a high quality print or negative to its archive and obliging colourized versions to carry a sticker that read: “This is a colorized version of a film originally marketed and distributed to the public in black and white. It has been altered without the participation of the principal director, screenwriter and other creators of the original film.” Notwithstanding its legal infirmity, this was a rather toothless gesture, undermined by the fact that Turner simply put the label on everything he colourized, irrespective of whether the film had been given the revered status of cinematic landmark or not. As a political gesture, however, the decision appeared conciliatory: government established an apparatus that could decide upon the fixed constituency of national heritage but that did not substantially affect property rights. Protecting copyright ownership, but

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acknowledging the importance of film heritage, the federal ruling on colourization put the legal primacy on property while, at the same time, it validated the *principle* of patrimony.

One link between colourization and multiculturalism is that concerning the role of government in upholding standards and values within a notional cultural policy. This would become a hotly contested issue in the war over political correctness, focusing upon the level of public funding (administered by the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities) given famously to artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. While the standards in this case were about the protection of public morality - should the government sponsor work that is "pornographic" and "anti-Christian"? - and were, in fact, linked to Republican efforts to cut the NEA budget, the standards upheld by the colourization ruling were, in a different sense, about the protection of *public memory*. Government took steps to articulate a concept of heritage through its commitment, however empty it may have been in practical terms, to "classic" film. In a climate where the preservation of national tradition was gathering a discursive and polemical weight - especially in cultural debates over educational standards - the federal ruling symbolically affirmed, and formally endorsed, a collective inheritance of canonical texts: heritage was defined in a nationalist framework based upon the selection, and sanctification, of seminal art works.

The threat imposed to the transmission of heritage became a key issue in American cultural politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Colourization disturbed conventions of memory by visually reinterpreting artefacts of film history. Unlike the

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(multicultural) revisioning of history and canonicity within museal and academic discourse, colourization had pecuniary rather than political motivations. Similar issues about historical representation were at stake, however, and similar complaints were made against the perception of sacrilegious tampering. Compare these statements by John Huston, addressing the U.S. Congress on the issue of colour conversion, and George Will, writing in *Newsweek* about political correctness.³⁰

We are all custodians of our culture. Our culture defines not who we are but who and what we were. Those of us who have labored a lifetime to create a body of work look to you for the preservation of that work in the form we chose to make it. I believe we have that right.

John Huston, 1987.

The transmission of the culture that unites, even defines America - transmission through knowledge of literature and history - is faltering. The result is collective amnesia and deculturation. That prefigures social disintegration, which is the political goal of the victim revolution that is sweeping campuses.

George Will, 1991

These comments are different in that one emphasizes the question of artistic choice and the other emphasizes the question of cultural literacy. However, both examples ground their arguments in the custody and carriage of American identity; they both invoke a threatened tradition integral to the conception, and maintenance, of national heritage and culture. If the colourization debate illustrates some of the rhetorical tropes utilized in New Right attacks on multiculturalism, the main agent of "deculturation" for the anti-colourization lobby was never a tenured radical or member of the loony left but Ted Turner (hardly a radical even if he is married to Jane

Fonda). In the late 1980s, a defence began to mount in two different areas of cultural life and from different political positions, a discourse of tradition seeking to enclose and protect cultural heritage from insidious, or at best self-serving, corporate and pedagogical interlopers.

Heritage is a capacious term and battles fought in its name reveal different political constellations and commitments. Conservatives have spoken of the importance of “reclaiming a heritage” in education but have been instrumental in slashing federal funds to the National Trust and introducing property rights legislation that has crippled preservation efforts to save old buildings and communities.³¹ Meanwhile, the anti-colourization lobby was adamant about the protection of black and white film heritage but tended to neglect, or sideline, issues about the material threat to fragile nitrate-based film stock. Stuart Klawans notes that one of the ironies of colourization was that Ted Turner spent more money and did more to preserve film heritage by storing and making safe the catalogue of an entire studio (MGM) than any federal effort to do the same. He suggests that, in the end, the anti-colourization campaign did more harm than good by re-directing valuable resources away from efforts to physically preserve degradable film stock genuinely threatened by age.³² The point to make from these examples is that heritage has often become less a question of material preservation than one of maintaining continuities of knowledge - defending specific histories inscribed in cultural texts. Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett suggests that: “Heritage is not lost and found, stolen and reclaimed . . . (but) produces something new in the present that has recourse to the past.”³³ In the burgeoning culture wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s, heritage became an issue principally fought over *representation*. In political terms, this can be understood in the context,

and in terms of the negotiation, of critical authority, cultural hegemony and the determination of taste and tradition. It is the discursive continuities between anti-colourization and opposition to multiculturalism, evident in this fight, that I now want briefly to consider.

Multiculturalism

“Colorization represents the mutilation of history, the vandalism of our common past, not merely as it relates to film, but as it affects society’s perception of itself.”³⁴ So read a committee letter by the Directors Guild of America, submitted at the Senate hearings on moral rights. The tone here could be mistaken for that levelled against Afrocentrism and the “cult of ethnicity” in the work of a critic such as Arthur Schlesinger Jnr. In 1991, Schlesinger published *The Disuniting of America*, a best-seller that delivered a prognosis on the “new ethnic gospel” being instilled through education and the teaching of history. This was a book which, as Michael Bérubé suggests, served to delegitimize multiculturalism and authorize a backlash. It is not my purpose to examine Schlesinger but he does illustrate similar discursive ground occupied by the anti-colourization lobby in its concern with historical mutilations and vandalism. Lamenting the use of education to build self-esteem in minority groups, he argues that history should not be tampered with in the service of cultural therapy. How else but through the invocation of history, he suggests, “can a people establish the legitimacy of its personality, the continuity of its tradition, the correctness of its course.”³⁵ The colourization debate never entertained the polemics of (ethnic)

difference, but it did raise issues of pedagogy and historical transmission that were being expressed in the conflict over multiculturalism.

If we are to be precise, colourization was more about taste than pedagogy defined in any institutional sense. In his attack on colourization, Jerrold Levinson argues that “it is a bad thing to foster the degradation of taste in the general populace since this leads, at least for viewers who are not literally constitutionally unable to deal with black and white film, to lives intrinsically worse than they might otherwise be.”³⁶ This elitist view seeks to police the standards of value for those impressionable souls unable to distinguish between monochrome quality and colourized trash, heritage and heresy. It is left to those with enough cultural acumen to recognize and regulate the difference. A similar premise underwrites *The Closing of the American Mind*. Allan Bloom’s Arnoldian sense of cultural tradition seeks to preserve distinctions between high and low culture in the perpetuation of a discernible (Western) cultural heritage. He suggests that: “For Americans the works of the great writers could be the bright sunlit uplands where they could find the outside, the authentic liberation for which this essay is a plea.”³⁷ Authenticity is a byword for *true* cultural value; it is basic to a critique that decries superficiality, ignorance, fakers and those who no doubt traffic in postmodern theory.

I suggested earlier that colourization and multiculturalism both created barbarisms against which defenders of culture, heritage and good taste could unite. In each case, this “barbarism” is an expression of effects which might usefully be called postmodern. In the case of colourization, the conversion process is enabled by digital technologies that allow the film image to be altered in ways that previous techniques

of tinting and toning could never achieve. Colourization was seen to create a simulacrum of the classic film, undermining representational authenticity and tampering with tradition. In the multicultural debate, postmodern theory became a perceivable menace to originality and heritage, classic works of literature coming under the relativist cosh. Whilst a complex movement with diverse political investments, multiculturalism was relentlessly stigmatized in public discourse and by the media press. Reflecting upon the culture wars at the end of the 1990s, Frederick Buell writes: “‘Multiculturalism’ was repeatedly spoken of as a singular, easily-labeled position, one that amounted to 1) separatism and 2) cultural relativism.”³⁸ The “barbarism” attached to multiculturalism was a particular conflation of these two elements. The questions that the multicultural movement posed to the stability of artistic canons (namely, the concept of common culture) were linked, and often confused, with an assault on the very status of nationhood (the concept of common society). I realize that I am using the word “multiculturalism” without accounting for its ubiquitous use and meaning in social and political discourse.³⁹ However, its conceptual and political diversity was never something its detractors were careful to preserve. If the “barbarism” of multiculturalism can be compared with that of colourization, it is on the grounds that each were seen to fundamentally disturb the relationship between cultural canonicity and national identity.

Tropes of universal worth and timeless value can be witnessed in both debates. George Lucas said at the Senate hearings that technological advances “will alter, mutilate and destroy for future generations the subtle human truths and higher human feelings that talented individuals within our society have created.”⁴⁰ This implies an idea of cultural uplift (higher feelings) in works that transmit enduring values (subtle

truths). It is reminiscent of the bright sunlit uplands that Bloom finds in the great writers, those talented individuals of the literary world. Film colourization problematized the status of the classic by showing that, as a concept, it could be challenged, redefined and essentially fought over. This produced an outpouring of commentary in film journals lambasting the proponents and practitioners of colourization, “people who are unreachable by cultural, artistic or social appeals” and who possess “shrivelled sensibilities.”⁴¹ The status of the classic work also became the crux of the canon debate within higher education; the classic literary text was supposedly devalued through a process of “politicization” inspired by new left-wing orthodoxies. This produced a different, but contiguous, media outpouring levelled against academic “terrorists” and their “crimes against humanity.”⁴² In different ways, opponents of multiculturalism and colourization saw the ritual sacrifice of aesthetic and cultural standards in ill-considered attempts to accommodate injured visual and/or political sensibilities.

This “accommodation” was seen to have a powerful commercial dimension. Colourization was clear evidence to its critics of the vulgarities of the marketplace, corporate impresarios out to make a ready buck through the base exploitation of (a created) consumer fancy. Colourization was seen as an expression of impersonal market forces, global magnates seeking to extend their command over lucrative new markets. Ted Turner was no cultural patron but, as *American Film* literally pictured him, a dangerous “raider of the last archive.”⁴³ The market-based challenge to aesthetic value and cultural heritage also distinguished conservative complaints about multiculturalism within education. Academics, it was thought, were becoming self-aggrandizing careerists; disciplines like cultural studies were emerging as lucrative

cottage industries; the university was succumbing to a new consumerism less concerned with maintaining the “autonomy of knowledge” than showcasing a graduating roster of satisfied customers. Within a broad context, these kinds of criticism can be seen as a reaction to the “global cultural economy.”⁴⁴ They respond to the substantial weakening of national patrimony at a time when the transnational flow of persons, technologies, finance, information and ideology has both undermined local tradition and transformed the social function of the university as it was linked to ideas of national culture and the destiny of the nation state.⁴⁵

In the context of discussion about the formation and effects of capitalist postmodernity, Ien Ang writes: “The desire to keep national identity and national culture wholesome and pristine is not only becoming increasingly unrealistic, but is also, at a more theoretical level, damagingly oblivious to the contradictions that are condensed in the very concept of national identity.”⁴⁶ At some level, it is the desire to essentialize national culture through (the defence of) some conceptually authentic heritage that joins the liberal anti-colourization campaign and the neo-conservative critique of multiculturalism. It is not my intention, or objective, in this section to trace the intricate contours of the academic culture wars. The debates over higher education (focusing on the challenge of multiculturalism) had multiple stakes, various fronts, and many complex turns. A full account would have to contend with a range of issues: curricular revision, speech codes, affirmative action, the backlash against “theory,” and the fiscal crisis facing the humanities.⁴⁷ It would also have to account for the manifold alliances and antagonisms that developed in and between the cultural left and cultural right. This was especially marked in conflicts about the status and principle of “common culture.”⁴⁸ I do not want to involve myself deeply in these

issues. My aim is not to examine the culture war as such, but to read the colourization debate through certain of its dominant themes. In each case, canonicity - broadly understood as the formalization of knowledge and cultural literacy in key, or "classic," texts - became a site of critical contestation: an issue that revealed a mutual resistance to challenges brought to bear on the basis and determination of identity, inheritance, community and culture.

Placing the colourization and multicultural debates together is not as gratuitous as it may at first appear. There are common themes in each conflict despite their difference in political scale: both engaged a rhetoric of opposition based upon the stability of tradition, the need to maintain aesthetic value, the preservation of authenticity against fakery, the impositions of the marketplace, and the continuities of cultural and historical transmission. I do not want to bludgeon the similarities between quite different types of culture war, but each debate was distinguished by a narrative of decline. Nostalgia became an idiom of cultural complaint for the left as much as the right, an undertone extending itself in debates that, while separate, emerged in the same cultural moment. Colourization may have been local and slight compared with multiculturalism, which has become embracing and pivotal, but the discourse opposing them both was energized and thickened by a concept of loss advanced by conservatives *and* liberals. While fighting different enemies - left-wing "thought police" in one case and big business in the other - each used similar basic terms. Cultural manifestations in education and popular culture, call them postmodern if you like, were seen to undermine the systems of meaning that give order and unity to American tradition and, with it, national identity.

Nostalgia

If, as a mood, nostalgia is defined as a yearning for the past in response to a loss, absence or discontinuity felt in the present, conservatives like Allan Bloom, Roger Kimball and Dinesh D'Souza engaged a rhetoric that cast multiculturalism as a new fundamentalism. With it supposedly came the loss of tradition in the venal search for oppression, the absence of cultural value with the politicization of the humanities, and a break with communality with the new obsession with difference. A rhetoric of nostalgia developed, glorifying a past where the lunacy and totalitarianism of "political correctness" was ineffectual, and where cultural values (those of white male privilege) were seen to be more secure. In comparing multiculturalism and colourization, I have so far suggested that similar rhetorical modes were marshalled in quite different debates. My point, in making the connection, is about the development of a particular common sense in American culture. I want to demonstrate the hegemonic battles for cultural authority waged by right and left over the guardianship of taste and the protection of tradition. Michael Schudson writes: "Defending the purity of the 'classic' is as often an assertion of the privileged stance of a professional group defending its turf as it is a selfless allegiance to art."⁴⁹ So it can be said, I would contend, of the respective defenders of authenticity, classicism and heritage in the colourization and multicultural debates.

The allure of nostalgia became an emotive issue in the late 1980s and early 1990s that cut across conventional political demarcations. This was a result of new tendencies in postmodern culture rejecting the meanings and identities inscribed within traditional regimes of knowledge, reconstructing the work of art in an age of digital reproduction,

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and disrupting crucial distinctions between depth and surface, high and popular culture, authenticity and artifice. Put under pressure were certitudes of taste, value and cultural identity. The panic that ensued expressed itself in various forms but significant for both liberals and conservatives was the critical affirmation of a stable, authentic heritage inscribed within "legitimate" forms of cultural representation. At stake here is the policing of cultural distinction. More specifically, it illustrates how intellectuals and tastemakers of the left and right have mutually conceived the public as cultural dupes, in danger of being cretinized without the proper recognition and regulation of "timeless" cultural value. Nostalgia was embroiled in attempts to, in some sense, "reclaim" cultural heritage, rescuing the stupefied public from both cultural fragmentation and their own ignorance.

The anti-colourization campaign was arguably structured by two forms of nostalgia, buried within the legal contestation of moral rights: a nostalgia for authenticity and the value attached to authentic nostalgia. It is here that one can relate the colourization debate more directly to the status and meaning ascribed to the black and white image. In one sense, the debate demonstrates the strategic validation of black and white as a mode of temporality and authenticity. At another level, the colourization controversy affords a precise illustration of the way that, as a nostalgia mode, monochrome became discursively entwined at the beginning of the 1990s with negotiations of American nation. It has been my general argument in Part Two that a media discourse of "black and whiteness" was used during the 1990s with two principal effects: it helped penetrate the culture of simulacrum, and it was used to galvanize an archival essence for a national identity under strain. This can be understood in the context of, and as a response to, particular social, cultural and

material conditions brought about by capitalist postmodernity: what Zygmunt Bauman has called a historical moment of profound “contingency and ambivalence.” If the colourization debate can draw certain themes together, it is in the way that the black and white image became the crux of, and point of defence within, a struggle to affirm visual meaning and national memory in a seemingly depthless and amnesiac postmodern world.

Nostalgia for authenticity can be witnessed in a cultural moment where authorship and originality have been profoundly challenged by the capacity of new technologies to refigure cultural texts. Colourized movies were seen and discussed by the anti-colourization lobby in a way that made them akin to the postmodern retro film described by Jean Baudrillard: what he defines as being “to those one knew what the android is to man: marvelous artifacts, without weakness, pleasing simulacra that lack only the imaginary, and the hallucination inherent to cinema.”⁵⁰ Colour conversion was seen to create a depthless artifice with little or no artistic worth. While Color Systems Technology declared that scrupulous efforts were made by research teams to achieve “authentic” colour values (unlike Colorization Inc. which tried to make films look as modern as possible), any alteration to the colour and tone of the black and white original was seen by the anti-colourization lobby as an act of “destructive reinterpretation.”⁵¹ Authenticity was a black and white issue and resistance came in righteous tones that called the colouring process a moral abomination.

Andreas Huyssen has written: “It is no coincidence that the ‘work of art’ has come back in this age of unlimited reproduction, dissemination, and simulation. The desire for history, for the original work of art, the original museal object is parallel, I think,

to the desire for the real at a time when reality eludes us more than ever.”⁵² The status of the black and white image in the colourization debate was linked, in one sense, to the recovery of aura in a world of media spectacle and technological simulation. This was not without its political ramifications, however. In defending the integrity of the work of art, the anti-colourization campaign absorbed binary metaphors of (modernist) depth and (postmodernist) surface in a rhetoric that sought to affirm traditional modes of critical evaluation, as well as historical understanding. Privileging the creative originality and historical temporality of monochrome “depth,” set against the textual hybridity and amnesiac spatiality of colourized “surface,” the anti-colourization lobby appealed to a principle of timeless value, directorial genius, and, by implication, to the forms of critical authority that can designate their manifestation in “classic” texts.⁵³

The callous disregard for the work of art in the colourization process was seen to have grave implications for authorship and creativity, but also, and perhaps more profoundly, for heritage and popular memory. The value attached to “authentic nostalgia” put monochrome in direct relation to the question, and protection, of historicity and cultural identity. If the past must be represented in order to be remembered, colourization was seen by its detractors to have serious implications for cultural memory. By erasing the authentic artefact (the original representation), it was thought that the contours of film history would be mapped differently, or at least modified within the recall of the nation’s cinematic sensibilities. Andreas Huyssen has asked what a postmodern memory would look like in a world where the technological media affect the way we perceive and live our temporality.⁵⁴ For those suspicious of

meddlesome digital effects, it no doubt looked very much like a colourized film: false, crude and inherently amnesiac.

The colourized film is a digital product of algorithms stored in computer memory; it is simultaneously of the past *and* the present. The concept of authentic nostalgia was a critical response to the presentness of the “new classic,” and to the fear that memory is being short-changed in the reign of postmodern simulacra. Woody Allen wrote: “Part of the artistic experience of seeing old Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire movies is the period quality: the black and white photography gives it its entire feel.”⁵⁵ The digital alteration of a movie’s colour was seen as destroying the intrinsic visual pastness that might register a film within cultural memory; colourization was a contrivance that made it impossible for the work of art to be watched with the appropriate degree of visual nostalgia that might locate it within historical time. Theoretically, this view corresponds at some level with Fredric Jameson’s anxiety about the profound waning or blockage of historicity in postmodernism. Like the “nostalgia film” that Jameson famously treats, colourized movies would provide further evidence of what he suggests to be an incumbent memory crisis, a paralysis in “our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way.”⁵⁶ In appealing to authentic nostalgia, the anti-colourization lobby tried to revitalize a sense of the past unthreatened by the mutability of postmodern simulacra. “Authentic nostalgia” was valued against the spectre of postmodern forgetting. As a concept, it underwrote liberal-left complaints about the *ahistorical* experience of the colourized film, a crude cinematic spectacle caught symptomatically between the very words “new” and “classic.”

Ted Turner believed that the “new classic” would maintain memory in alternative, more contemporary, forms, affirming that “consumers have voted, they like it.”⁵⁷ Popular endorsement did not stem the fears of the anti-colourization lobby, however. The “sugar-water” of colourization, as John Huston put it, only proved that the public were lacking in the critical capacities that might safeguard creative authenticity and preserve the integrity of national tradition. As a mode of authenticity and temporality, monochrome became the rhetorical locus of a campaign that sought, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to establish the archival essence of American (film) heritage. The non-representational status of “black and whiteness” was at the centre of a discourse attempting to arrest meaning within, and stabilize identity against, the critical and cultural indeterminacy of postmodernism and its deconstructive impact on (aesthetic) values and (national) meaning.

The Culture War

The anti-colourization campaign set out to resist postmodern configurations of cultural transmission whereby artefacts of history can be digitally altered and made to circulate in ways that undermine conceptions of authorship, originality and fixed tradition. The debate over multiculturalism, while more varied, consequential and generating higher degrees of political venom, raised similar issues. This was notable in what conservatives saw as the crumbling foundations of Western cultural heritage in higher education and the humanities. It has not been my intention either to condone

or condemn colourization. Instead, I have sought to illustrate some of the discursive continuities between two debates that emerged in the same cultural moment and engaged left and right quite differently but with similar presuppositions. In each case, narratives of decline were mobilized, barbarians identified, and tradition sanctified.

I have distinguished the anti-colourization lobby as liberal, but this shouldn't imply that conservatives were, by implication, *for* the whole process. Considering the regimes of taste that organize and structure symbolic domination in the cultural field, Andrew Ross has discussed a mutual distrust between intellectuals and tastemakers of the left and right regarding "new technologies and the monstrous mass cultures to which they give birth." He says:

For the right this demonology takes the form of a brutally mechanical possession of the last cultural outposts of high civilization. For the left, the specter of hypercapitalism is omnipresent, looming up behind the cretinizing, stupor-inducing cultural forms produced by a dying system in the last throes of economic and ideological reorganization. Both strains of thought share a generally pessimistic view of cultural decline hurried on by the forces of technological rationality or determinism.⁵⁸

Colourization was a new digital technology sponsored by corporate finance; the "new classic" was industrially produced to make profit, a cultural form that for many compromised the borders of legitimate taste and fostered the idiocy of its popular audience. As a cultural and aesthetic issue, colourization received condemnation from left and right alike. It was in terms of ownership and property rights that colourization became more specifically mapped (although not specifically argued) as a liberal/Democrat crusade. Even the black and white film star Ronald Reagan could

not, in his new role as President, be moved to intervene and save the monochrome classic if it meant doing so at the expense of business principles and copyright law.

My interest in this chapter has been the means by which liberal criticism of colourization arguably helped to strengthen the legitimacy of right-wing discourse in its fetishizing of “traditional” knowledge and culture. Authenticity, canonicity and tradition became vital to right-wing rhetoric in its attack on superficiality, ignorance and politicization within American universities. These same terms were also used by the anti-colourization lobby, however. Before multiculturalism ever became a national issue, but in the same moment that conservatives were gathering steam, the defence of cultural heritage was being fought by the right *and* by the left. At the end of the 1980s, nostalgia developed a polemical currency in two separate debates. In each case, this was linked to issues of value, taste and cultural patrimony. Opposition to both colourization and multiculturalism has been, in part, the result of technological and intellectual transformations that have disturbed values and identities inscribed in a selection of “untouchable” texts. By rehearsing a particular common sense about the preservation of heritage and the status of the classic, the anti-colourization campaign fortified principles of cultural authority threatened by new postmodern connections between art, evaluation, education and the archive. I would argue that in their rhetorical nostalgia for the work of art and consensual cultural heritage, the liberal-left helped articulate themes that would reverberate powerfully in right-wing bromides against the “therapeutic” and “separatist” tendencies of multiculturalism. Effectively, the anti-colourization lobby enriched a discourse that advanced the vitality of traditional knowledge, the value of aesthetic taste, and the virtue of cultural inheritance: a discourse that would be developed, defined and deployed strategically

by the right in the hegemonic “war of positions” waged to control the terms of the multicultural debate.

A politics of nostalgia is commonly associated with conservative critique. This can understate, however, the degree to which it has shaped liberal anxieties about a jeopardized cultural heritage. The threat to historical transmission, whether by tenured radical or corporate parvenu, has been met with resistance in major *and* minor culture wars, producing oppositional configurations with a shared investment in principles of authenticity, historical continuity and consensual heritage. A rhetoric has developed *across political lines* roping off and defending versions of cultural patrimony. This may feed different debates with different discursive histories - namely, the critique of mass culture and the contested function of the university - but in the late 1980s concerns sharpened, for liberals and for conservatives, upon a similar basic fear: the dawning possibility that in being exposed to odious forms of PC (popular culture, political correctness, postmodern critique), American students and consumers were becoming, to use politically correct argot, “culturally challenged.”

Coda

Critics from Todd Gitlin to Nikhal Pal Singh have discussed the origins and context of the culture wars shaping public discourse in the 1990s.⁵⁹ Although providing different political interpretations, they both point to the political and economic, as well as specifically cultural, histories informing the struggles over multiculturalism. The culture wars were a symptom of a “crisis” of national identity at a juncture where

liberal ideologies of nationhood and mythologies of Americanness had come under particular, and intensified, strain. This can be seen in the context of various (decentring) transformations brought about by capitalist postmodernity: from transnational political and economic restructuring, to an emergent politics of difference, from the revolution in information technology and its impact on the circulation of information and knowledge, to the redefinition of international commitments in the wake of the Cold War. While the culture war debates had run their course by the end of the 1990s, including the jeremiads on the compromised nature of American tradition, the need to articulate a coherent sense of nation and national memory remains. If postmodernity is characterized by “institutionalized pluralism, variety, contingency and ambivalence,” as Zygmunt Bauman suggests, protective national strategies have been engaged, across a variety of cultural discourses, to articulate a purified national (archival) essence.⁶⁰ The media discourse of “black and whiteness” is one such example. Monochrome memory is a style. It is also a matter of taste. It performed cultural work in the nineties, however, by helping to aestheticize an essentialized history/heritage for unconflicted, unfractured, *authentic* “America.” If the desire to stabilize the configuration and perceived transmission of American cultural identity is a defining aspect of hegemonic memory politics, “black and whiteness” has been a significant, and strategic, visual discourse in the contemporary negotiation of nation.

NOTES

¹ Quoted from a promotional videotape made by the Hal Roach Studios, cited in "Homevideo," *Cineaste* 2 (1986): 56.

² William Bennett, *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education* (Washington DC: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1984).

³ Todd Gitlin, "The Rise of Identity Politics," in Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson, eds., *Higher Education Under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 311.

⁴ Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 211. There are, of course, interests at stake with any sense of loss. Gitlin has been accused of nostalgia by critics who point to his own threatened authority as a white male politico, someone who resists the challenge made by a new generation of academics and who, himself, can afford to disclaim identity politics because there is little personally at stake. Gitlin denies the charge of nostalgia, suggesting that there is no golden age to which he aspires or seeks to recover. This does not explain away the narrative of decline in his work, however, largely figured around the waning political capacities of an effective left, matched with a certain wistfulness for a spirit of change associated with, or remembered in, the early New Left.

⁵ Joan Wallach Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness: What's Really at Stake," in Jeffrey Williams, ed., *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 23-43.

⁶ Michael Bérubé, *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics* (London: Verso, 1994) 127.

⁷ For a comprehensive treatment of the legal turns of the colourization debate, see Stuart Klawans, "Colorization: Rose-Tinted Spectacles," in Mark Crispin Miller, ed., *Seeing Through Movies* (New York: Pantheon, 1990) 150-185; see also Craig A. Wagner, "Motion Picture Colorization, Authenticity and the Elusive Moral Right," *New York University Law Review* 64 (3) 1989: 628-725.

⁸ Greg Dawson, "Ted Turner" (interview), *American Film* 14 (4) 1989: 39.

⁹ Charles R. Acland, "Tampering With the Inventory: Colorization and Popular Histories," *Wide Angle* 12 (2) 1990: 15.

¹⁰ Bill Carter, "Colorized Films Losing Appeal," *New York Times* 19 Dec. 1994: 10.

¹¹ Barbara Klinger, "Remembrance of Film's Past: 'Classic' Cinema and Heritage Culture in the Home," paper delivered at conference, "Frontiers of Memory," University of East London, 17 Sep. 1999.

¹² On the issue of digital technology in film see Stephen Prince, "True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images and Film Theory," *Film Quarterly* 49 (3) 1996: 27-37.

¹³ Flo Leibowitz, "Movie Colorization and the Expression of Mood," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49 (4) 1991: 363-365.

¹⁴ James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 196.

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- ¹⁵ Woody Allen, "True Colors," *New York Review of Books* 13 Aug. 1987: 38.
- ¹⁶ Cited in Stuart Klawans, "Colorization: Rose-Tinted Spectacles," in Mark Crispin Miller, ed., *Seeing Through Movies* (New York: Pantheon, 1991) 160.
- ¹⁷ Cited in David Wilson, "Colour Box," *Sight and Sound* 55 (3) 1986: 147.
- ¹⁸ Michael Schudson, "Colorization and Authenticity," *Society* 24 (4) 1987: 18.
- ¹⁹ For a useful summary of the moral and philosophical dimensions of this issue, see Julie Van Camp, "The Colorization Controversy," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 29 (4) 1995: 447-468.
- ²⁰ Mathew Lee and Nora Lee, "Are Filmmakers Artists? Do They Have Rights?" *American Cinematographer* 72 (11) 112.
- ²¹ Cited in Greg Dawson, "Ted Turner," 52.
- ²² Cited in Craig A. Wagner, "Motion Picture Colorization," footnote 91, 644
- ²³ Ava Collins, "Intellectuals, Power and Quality Television," *Cultural Studies* 7 (1) 1993: 29.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.
- ²⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Fontana Press, 1992) 211-244.
- ²⁶ Charles R. Acland, "Tampering With the Inventory," 16.
- ²⁷ In 1988, a French trial court permanently banned the television broadcast of a colourized version of John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* on the basis that it would cause "unmendable and intolerable damage" to the integrity of the work and would therefore compromise Huston's moral rights.
- ²⁸ Huston is cited in Klawans, "Colorization" 165; Zinnemann is cited in David Wilson, "Colour Box," 147; Wrathier is cited in Susan Linfield, "The Color of Money," *American Film* 12 (4) 1987: 35.
- ²⁹ Cited in Craig A. Wagner, "Motion Picture Colorization," footnote 22, 631.
- ³⁰ John Huston is cited in Mathew Lee and Nora Lee, "Are Filmmakers Artists? Do They Have Rights?" *American Cinematographer* 72 (11) 1991: 112; George Will, "Literary Politics," *Newsweek* 22 Apr. 1991: 72.
- ³¹ Since 1981 rehabilitation tax credits had given incentives to investors to channel money into historic preservation. This changed when the right of ownership was championed by conservatives who gave support to a principle of compensation for those whose land and/or property encountered regulation in the name of preservation. Financial entitlements were established for those unable to realize the worth of their assets. For a good account, see Michael Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996) 224-246.
- ³² Stuart Klawans, "Rose-Tinted Spectacles," 182-184.
- ³³ Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 149.
- ³⁴ Cited in Craig A. Wagner, "Motion Picture Colorization," footnote 95, 645.
- ³⁵ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991) 48. For a perceptive critique of *Disuniting*, see Michael Bérubé, *Public Access*, 225-241.
- ³⁶ Jerrold Levinson, "Colourization Ill-Defended," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 30 (1) 1990: 65.

³⁷ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 48.

³⁸ Fredreick Buell, "National Postnationalism: Gloablist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture," *American Quarterly* 50 (3) 1998: 555.

³⁹ See Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁴⁰ Cited in Craig A. Wagner, "Motion Picture Colorization," footnote 95, 645.

⁴¹ Michael Dempsey, "Colorization," *Film Quarterly* 40 (2) 1986-87: 3.

⁴² These comments were made, respectively, by Eugene Genovese in *The New Republic* and by an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune*. They are cited in two perceptive articles on the constitution of political correctness as a media issue. These are by Jim Neilson, "The Great PC Scare: Tyrannies of the Left, Rhetoric of the Right," in Jeffrey Williams, ed., *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 60-89; and Michael Bérubé, "Public Image Limited: Political Correctness and the Media's Big Lie," *Village Voice* 18 Jun 1991: 31-37.

⁴³ The cover of the January 1989 edition of *American Film* shows Turner dressed as Indiana Jones, wearing a stetson and sporting a rifle.

⁴⁴ See Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2 (2) 1990, 1-24.

⁴⁵ See Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996).

⁴⁶ Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World* (London: Routledge, 1996) 144.

⁴⁷ Two valuable collections dealing with many of these issues are Jeffrey Williams, ed. *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson, eds., *Higher Education Under Fire: Politics, Economics and the Crisis of the Humanities* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁴⁸ Conservatives like Roger Kimball and Diane Ravitch argued that common culture should be valued against the threat posed by an incipient, and unruly, tribalism in American life. Writing from a different political position, Todd Gitlin also warned against "American-style tribalism." Lambasting the multicultural attack on commonality, he made attempts to rescue the political and civic legacies of the Enlightenment from anti-foundational theory and the praxis of marginality. In 1992, Gitlin wrote: "Authentic liberals have good reason to worry that the elevation of 'difference' to a first principle is undermining everyone's capacity to see, or change, the world as a whole." Typical of much liberal-left critique hostile to multiculturalism, Gitlin plays upon a concept of "authentic" political leftism, set against the vogueish and critically facile radicalism of identity politics. In contradistinction to those who see cultural commonality as a social imperative and politically strategic necessity, left-wing critics such as Janice Radway and Joan Scott have challenged the dominant set of assumptions, values and beliefs that underlie prescriptions of a national and cultural "commons." Radway argues that "the future of a diverse population will depend on the capacity to articulate a conception of shared public culture that will both depend upon difference and protect and celebrate it as well." Scott frames this within a

reconfigured concept of community (and commonality) that moves away from models of consensus and that recognizes that "conflict and contest are inherent in communities of difference." See Roger Kimball, *Tempered Radicals: How Politics has Corrupted our Higher Education* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Diane Ravitch, "The War on Standards," *Partisan Review* 60 (1993): 685-692; Todd Gitlin, "On the Virtues of a Loose Canon," in Patricia Aufderheide, ed., *Beyond PC: Towards a Politics of Understanding* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 1992), 185-190; Janice Radway, "What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November, 1998," *American Quarterly* 51 (1) 1999: 1-32; and Joan Wallach Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," 22-43.

⁴⁹ Michael Schudson, "Colorization and Authenticity," 19.

⁵⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans., Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) 45.

⁵¹ Mathew Lee and Nora Lee, "Are Filmmakers Artists? Do They Have Rights?" 112.

⁵² Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 101.

⁵³ For a discussion of the depth/surface metaphor and its problematization in postmodern culture, see Philip E. Simmons, *Deep Surfaces: Mass Culture and History in Postmodern American Fiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997) 1-21.

⁵⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 101.

⁵⁵ Woody Allen, "True Colors," 38.

⁵⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991) 21. In contrast to Jameson, Linda Hutcheon argues that postmodernism "does not deny the existence of the past: it does question whether we can know that past other than through its textualized remains." Underpinning her argument is the view that the recycling, hybridizing (perhaps even the colourizing) of past styles need not prefigure a postmodern "crisis of historicity" but may instead suggest a discursive rearticulation of the past. Linda Hutcheon, "Beginning to Theorize Postmodernism," *Textual Practice* 1 (1) 1987: 10-33.

⁵⁷ Cited in Greg Dawson, "Ted Turner," 39.

⁵⁸ Andrew Ross, *No Respect* 209.

⁵⁹ Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995); Nikhal Pal Singh, "Culture/Wars: Empire in an Age of Democracy," *American Quarterly* 50 (3) 1998: 471-522.

⁶⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992) 187.

CONCLUSION

PUTTING IT IN BLACK AND WHITE

What does it mean to put things in black and white? In the context of the 1990s, monochrome was a visual effect with a number of possible significations. I have not tried to account for every single use of black and white in cultural life, its every conceivable meaning. This thesis is not, in any strict sense, *about* the black and white image. Instead, it is concerned with a specific discourse of “black and whiteness” that emerged in the nineties; it examines how, as a visual mode of nostalgia, monochrome was used intertextually, and from particular institutional positions, to aestheticize an archival national essence. My argument has been at once conceptual and specifically cultural. Mediating between theories that understand nostalgia in terms of cultural longing and postmodern forgetting, I have tried to account for the manner in which nostalgia has become divorced from any *necessary* concept of loss, but, also, how particular modes of nostalgia have been used affectively in the mass media to perform specific cultural and memory work. Focusing critically upon the status and function of the black and white image, it has been my contention that “monochrome memory” was taken up during the 1990s within a dominant discourse of stable nationhood. In one sense, the black and white image served to arrest meaning within, and suggest something outside of, an image world of colour simulacra. However, in more political terms, and judged in specific media contexts, monochrome also helped to evoke what Janice Radway has called the ghostly presence of a phantasmatic, unitary “American” culture.¹

Conclusion

If national identity is constructed in and through relations of difference, Radway suggests that it is imperative that we recognize the constitutive relationships with "others" (group, community, national) that are used to mark the geographical and conceptual boundaries of American identity. America is not a self-contained entity, but is "brought into being through relations of dominance and oppression." Radway suggests that America should no longer be venerated as an organic or homogenous thing. Drawing upon a concept developed by Wahneema Lubiano, she argues that the "myth of America must be de-aestheticized." That is to say, national identity must be recognized as fluid, contested and fundamentally heterogeneous; the idea of nation must be "dislodged from its attachment to essentialized notions of culture and geography."² This view underwrites a cultural and critical reconception of American identity that has taken place largely in the 1990s. With the dissemination of multicultural and global perspectives, the concept of America as a bounded, internally coherent, entity has been questioned both socially and intellectually. It is not insignificant that Radway's comments are part of a Presidential address given to the American Studies Association in 1998. If the idea of a uniform, geographically determined, national identity has been challenged - what can be seen as the result of a combination of deconstructive, decentring, effects in social, cultural and economic life - so too have the forms of knowledge-production that have given national culture a specific conceptual legitimacy.³ In both cultural and critical discourse, focus has moved away from ideas of coherence and towards the question of *difference*; consensual frameworks of national meaning have been increasingly replaced by an awareness, and emphasis, on local and global conflicts structured around relations of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and gender.

Conclusion

American identity may well be fluid, contested, and subject to historical change, but this has not tempered various attempts in cultural and political discourse to shore up traditional narratives of nation: to justify the idea of common ground against the claims of multicultural difference, to reframe national exceptionalism in the context of contemporary globalization, to recuperate whiteness and masculinity as dominant social categories, to *re-aestheticize* American identity as stable, unitary and unconflicted. I have been concerned in this thesis with a particular, and quite literal, process of aestheticization within media culture; I have examined the deployment and/or defence of monochrome as it was used in the 1990s to articulate (and venerate) a core national memory, an essential American past. In a decentred culture where the past was, and remains, a contested domain, a media discourse of "black and whiteness" helped to affirm an archival identity for unified "America." As a nostalgia mode, black and white did not symbolize, or structure, any particular yearning for a golden past. Instead, it helped galvanize the interests of a dominant formation whose interests were served by, and inscribed within, a concept of shared history, common heritage, documentary memory, and consensual tradition. The memory politics of monochrome can be seen in the context of hegemonic attempts in the 1990s to stabilize American identity (eliminating difference, essentializing national culture, restoring the cultural and critical authority of privileged groups) through recourse to an authoritative, aestheticized past.

The revival of the black and white image in the 1990s must be understood in specific terms. It relates to the saturation of colour in the visual marketplace, to the taste regimes that have made memory and temporality categories of cultural value, and to

Conclusion

the broad commodification and aestheticization of nostalgia in architecture, commerce, film and fashion. Black and white is a disposable style, subject to the contingencies of taste.⁴ I have not made any specific claim about the resolute meaning or the visual durability of the black and white image in postmodern cultural life. It is one of many stylistic codes that appear and disappear in the commercial and cultural sphere, one of a number of images that are figured and refigured within different visual contexts. Whilst a transient code with multiple meanings, I have argued that black and white nevertheless became a pervasive memory style in the 1990s, a nostalgia mode where the (representational) content of the past was often less significant than black and white's (non-representational) feeling of pastness.

I have examined how the "feeling" - what might be called the "affective economy" - of the black and white image functioned *discursively* in the dominant media. "Black and whiteness" produced meaning in the 1990s through its temporal and authenticity effects. As an idiom of visual pastness, it helped punctuate the visual norm and suggest a depth beyond, or before, the mutability of postmodern simulacra. In more political terms, it was taken up in the tacit negotiation of nation. When, in the 1990s, the social, cultural and material transformations of capitalist postmodernity were beginning to unsettle the ideological moorings of American identity - including liberal notions of nation and culture, relations between centre and periphery, the organization of knowledge and the determination of cultural value - "black and whiteness" became a strategic mode used to visualize a unitary sense of American history, heritage, patrimony and past. Putting things in black and white became, as the saying might suggest, an exercise of distilling essence from a more complex meaning, extracting a core from a more conflictual reality. In the so-called "struggle to define America"⁵

Conclusion

that took place in the 1990s, monochrome memory aestheticized an archival national essence for a culture, and a power regime, confronting the vicissitudes of a heterogeneous, multi-vocal, and increasingly decentred world.

NOTES

¹ Janice Radway, "What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November, 1998," *American Quarterly* 51 (1) 1999: 8.

² *Ibid.*, 12.

³ Responding to political transformations in American life and society in the last few decades, the paradigmatic frameworks of American Studies have, themselves, begun to scrutinize and revise a host of disciplinary assumptions about national mythology and meaning. Donald Pease has described this in terms of a crisis in the "field imaginary," or "disciplinary unconscious," of American Studies. He finds a shift in the orientation of the field, moving from a concept of "America" as a cultural, expressive, unity, towards a focus on dissent, dissensus, and the relationship between culture and politics. See Donald Pease, "New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon," *Boundary 2* 17 (1) 1990: 1-37; and Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, eds, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993).

⁴ By the end of the 1990s, there were signs that black and white's visual stock was beginning to diminish, demonstrated not least by the transition of Giorgio Armani - the stalwart of black and white fashion advertising - to colour campaigns. See Colin McDowell, "A Man for all Seasons," *Sunday Times Magazine* 25 Jul. 1999: 13-16.

⁵ See James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

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