Postmodern Anarchism

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For Mom and Dad, who taught me to question

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Introduction

The Postmodern Matrix

The recent advent of hypertext as a profoundly new form of writing has been heralded by some as a pedagogical gold mine; it also seems to confirm certain postmodern predictions regarding the decline of linear narrative.[1] Hypertext, which deconstructs conventional text by interspersing such text with nonlinear hypertextual links, is now used by wide segments of the population throughout the postindustrial world. Hypertext also makes it tempting to view ideas, concepts, and intellectual developments not in terms of a linear progression, as was once fashionable, but rather through the metaphor of the web, or as cyberpunk pioneer William Gibson would have it, "the matrix."[2] The metaphor of the matrix is especially tempting, not only because it seems to conform to our present technological condition, but also because it fits nicely into an interpretive framework which has been employed with some success by a number of prominent structuralist anthropologists and literary critics. While Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz inquired into the deep structure of certain non-Western mythological traditions, Roland Barthes and Marshall Sahlins provocatively pointed out that the same technique could easily be applied to an analysis of contemporary Western bourgeois culture.[3] Could we not, as an interesting experiment in structuralist intellectual history, apply the same methodology to the history of postmodern philosophy? Indeed, if we provisionally accept the provocative thesis of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, perhaps a certain insight may be gained by abandoning those histories of thought which articulate suspicious teleologies in favor of a new model, more "rhizomatic" in nature, in which thought is conceived as a web or matrix, with every "node" connected to every other.[4]

This approach might also address some of the historiographic concerns raised by Jacques Derrida, who has pointed out that "successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names. The history of meta-

physics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix . . . is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this word."[5] Derrida is right to be skeptical of the centered "metaphysics of presence" which has dominated Western thought since Plato, for presence implies absence, and any fixed center must depend for its very existence upon an excluded margin. The matrix I wish to propose, however, is the very Other of the "matrix" of Western metaphysics which Derrida describes here, for the postmodern matrix has no center. It develops according to the model of the decentered computer network, and therefore has what Jean Baudrillard would call a certain *hyperreality,* but no "Being as presence." It is much closer to Barthes's vision of an "ideal text" in which "the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one."[6] The postmodern matrix, like the "ideal text," is thus profoundly pluralistic and nonhierarchical: it has neither a single concrete origin nor a definite teleology, and none of its strands or nodes may be said to rule over the others. Taking the centerless, hypertextual matrix as our model and postmodern philosophy as our topic of inquiry, we might then proceed as follows.

Strand One begins, of course, with Friedrich Nietzsche. Sometimes regarded as "the last metaphysician in the West," sometimes hailed (or denounced, with equal enthusiasm) as the philosopher who marks the "turning point" into postmodernity, Nietzsche's importance in the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy is without parallel.[7] If Nietzsche's apologists and critics are in agreement on any point, it is surely this: that Nietzsche's thinking represents what some postmodernists might call a *rupture*. After Nietzsche, philosophy cannot proceed as it did before. His dispersed, nonlinear, aphoristic style combines with his powerfully destabilizing genealogical method to produce a thinking which calls everything into question: our epistemological confidence in our ability to understand the truth about ourselves and the world, and even our ontological confidence in our own existence as rational selves in possession of free will. Nietzsche's thinking lays waste to every received truth of the modern world, including those of science, politics, and religion. His philosophy is thus anarchistic in the strong sense of the term: it includes important elements of an anarchist politics, but (more importantly) it also contains an *anarchy of thought.* Nietzsche's writing attacks hierarchy not only at the political level but at the philosophical level as well, undermining the very foundations of the deeply entrenched metaphysics of domination upon which the West has come to rely.

Where, one might well ask, is philosophy to proceed after *this* critique? The answer to this question is provided in large part by the author-positions who occupy the next two nodes on Strand One, namely Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. Foucault radicalizes Nietzsche's thought—not epistemologically, which would be almost impossible, but in the more straightforward sense that Foucault gives the genealogy a specifically political dimension. Whereas Nietzsche used genealogy primarily as a weapon against Judeo-Christian morality, Foucault is much more interested in genealogy as a strategy for the subversion of judicial discourses about prisons and punishment, or psychological discourses about sexuality. And Foucault employs the genealogical strategy in a more patient, detailed, and empirical way than Nietzsche did in his *Genealogy of Morals*. Genealogy reaches its maturity in the works of Foucault. Like Foucault, Deleuze deploys Nietzsche's genealogy in a politically radical way, particularly in *A Thousand Plateaus,* the collection of profoundly nonlinear, genealogical counterhistories which Deleuze wrote with Felix Guattari. And it is in the work of Deleuze and Guattari that the genealogy develops a specifically anarchist agenda. To be sure, Foucault's genealogy is heavily politicized, to the point where (as I argue below) his thinking may be read as a "thought outside the state." Deleuze's texts are much more explicit in this matter, however. Particularly in the "Treatise on Nomadology," Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge that the kind of "nomad thinking" initiated by Nietzsche is profoundly at odds with all forms of statist thought.

Strand Two begins with Sigmund Freud. Like Nietzsche, Freud obliterates the easy confidence in the primacy of reason and in the unity of the self which dominated Western thinking prior to the late nineteenth century. But whereas Nietzsche launches his assault with the weapons of poetic philosophy, Freud employs psychoanalysis, demonstrating that beneath our thin veneer of rationality lurk untidy sexual obsessions, neuroses, death instincts, and monsters of the id. The unconscious is a battleground for Freud, a place where the ego engages in a courageous but improbable effort to mediate between the conflicting drives of id and superego. The first casualty to appear on this battleground is surely any unified conception of the self. Strand Two continues to Jacques Lacan, who dramatically radicalizes Freudian psychoanalysis by employing a symbolic logic based upon structuralist linguistics. This approach inspires Lacan to launch a devastating attack upon the conventional Cartesian concept of subjectivity. "Man speaks," Lacan tells us, " . . . but it is because *the symbol has made him man.*"[8] For Lacan, the structure of symbols is prior to the construction of subjectivity, and indeed stands as a prerequisite for such construction. In an effort to transcend repressive forms of subject-centered logic, Lacan proposes a Freudian equivalent to the Cartesian cogito: *desire*.[9] By

privileging desire in this way, Lacan radically destabilizes a philosophical tradition which has, since Descartes, grounded subjectivity in the operations of reason; as we shall see, this has serious implications for postmodern politics. Julia Kristeva is being provocative, but not entirely unrealistic, when she suggests that "perhaps the Freudian discovery of the unconscious was merely the cautious start of an epistemological and existential revolution which destroyed the whole rational system installed by the classical age."[10] Furthermore, it appears that desire may be quite useful for the construction of a postmodernism which can finally move beyond an endlessly spiraling, recursive critique towards the articulation of a positive theoretical and political agenda; as Rosi Braidotti has quite rightly pointed out, desire can help us rescue postmodernism from the charge of nihilism.[11]

Lacan's work has certainly generated a great deal of controversy, especially among feminists. Yet it seems clear that feminists, while they might well raise legitimate concerns about Lacan's phallocentrism, cannot afford to ignore the radical implications of his thought. Indeed, as Elizabeth Grosz has pointed out, "if . . . Lacan is guilty of a certain logocentrism, as Derrida claims, and a certain phallocentrism, as [Luce] Irigaray argues, this does not mean that feminists must abandon his work altogether. On the contrary, it may be *because* of his logocentric and phallocentric commitments that his work is so useful in the projects of many feminists."[12] This may help to explain why Lacan's theories of desire and subjectivity continue to have such resonance among post-Lacanian feminists such as Grosz, Irigaray, and Judith Butler. While Lacan's work does point up the dangers of phallogocentrism (a term into which the Lacanian dual problematic tends to collapse), Lacan's categories also open up vibrant new theoretical terrain for postmodern feminism. Irigaray, for example, has provocatively expanded the Lacanian concept of desire, to suggest that women's pleasure has the potential to put into question all prevailing economies.[13] For Irigaray, women have this remarkable power precisely because they are themselves the fundamental commodities which underwrite exchange. And if it is women who establish the validity of the economy in the first place, then that economy will always be vulnerable to a fission of its elementary particle, its unit of trade.[14] It is, perhaps, this intriguing revolutionary possibility which leads Irigaray to reject those feminisms which equate emancipation with the appropriation of a discourse of subjectivity. For Irigaray, any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the masculine.[15] Women have thus always been excluded from subjectivity, and from the activities of exchange carried out by speaking subjects. Indeed, it is precisely here that women's most interesting revolutionary potential may lie. Irigaray writes: "this situation of specific oppression is perhaps what can allow women today to elaborate a

'critique of the political economy,' inasmuch as they are in a position external to the laws of exchange, even though they are included in them as 'commodities.' A critique of the political economy that could not, this time, dispense with the critique of the discourse in which it is carried out, and in particular of the metaphysical presuppositions of that discourse."[16] For Irigaray, then, woman is the potential site of a radical rupture in the prevailing political and economic order. And when Irigaray speaks of "political economy," she uses this term in its broadest sense. To be sure, women—understood by Irigaray as commodities who speak, who take themselves to market—can be seen as deeply subversive of the capitalist commodity-exchange system.[17] But the revolutionary potential of woman and her desire goes far beyond that. Much more importantly, woman and her sexuality represents a fundamental threat to the entire discursive or signifying economy upon which capitalism is founded. "When women want to escape from exploitation, they do not merely destroy a few 'prejudices,'" Irigaray declares. "They disrupt the entire order of dominant values, economic, social, moral, and sexual. They call into question all existing theory, all thought, all language, inasmuch as these are monopolized by men and men alone. They challenge *the very foundation of our social and cultural order,* whose organization has been prescribed by the patriarchal system."[18]

Like Irigaray, Judith Butler is deeply skeptical of any feminist politics which relies upon problematic modern concepts of subjectivity. Indeed, for Butler, "the question of women as the subject of feminism raises the possibility that there may not be a subject who stands 'before' the law, awaiting representation in or by the law."[19] Butler's work thus suggests that there is a crucial convergence between post-Lacanian feminism and what I call postmodern anarchism. In their postmodern modes, both anarchism and feminism aim to move beyond the critique of specific laws or governments; they aim instead at the overthrow of the Law as an epistemological category. In the case of postmodern feminism, this radical challenge involves an attack on the Law of the Father, which is the proto-Law that underwrites all patriarchy and all phallocracy. It is Lacan's inability to move beyond this Law which marks, for postmodern feminists, the ultimate limit of his thinking. Elizabeth Grosz argues that for Lacan, "it is not men *per se* who cause women's oppression, but rather the socio-economic and linguistic structure, i.e. the Other. Yet in [Lacan's] formulation of this structure as an inevitable law, patriarchal dominance is not so much challenged as displaced, from biology to the equally unchangeable, socio-linguistic law of the father."[20] In a similar vein, Butler suggests that "there does seem to be a romanticization or, indeed, a religious idealization of 'failure,' humility and limitation before the Law, which makes the Lacanian narrative ideologically suspect."[21] The project of postmodern feminism, then—much like the project of

postmodern anarchism which I shall outline below—is concerned with articulating strategies for the subversion of the Law as a psychological, linguistic, and epistemological category. Such strategies appear to require the rejection of any fixed or static concept of human subjectivity and the simultaneous deployment of fluid, flexible postmodern subjectivities. "As opposed to the founding Law of the Symbolic that fixes identity in advance," Butler suggests, "we might reconsider the history of constitutive identifications without the presupposition of a fixed and founding Law."[22] To reject the Law of the Father (Lacan's Symbolic Law) is to call into question the foundation of all laws, all states, all economies. Such a rejection is therefore a revolutionary gesture which holds powerful implications not only for feminism, but also for radical thinking in general, and especially for the radical critique of bourgeois political economy.

The first two strands in our matrix of postmodern theory have proceeded in a predictable enough fashion, so much so that the alert reader is now presumably prepared to insert the inevitable missing third term. Derrida might call this missing term a "specter of Marx." The term is missing, however, for a reason. For some time now, those who write about postmodern politics have unfortunately insisted that postmodernism is best viewed through the interpretive lens of Marxism. Discussions regarding the politics of postmodernism tend to invoke the terms, categories, and concepts of a Marxist discourse; sympathetic discussions of postmodernism exhibit this tendency, and it is perhaps even more evident in those discourses which are critical of the postmodern project.

I believe that this ongoing obsession with Marxism really misses the point of postmodern politics. That point is simply this: although Marxism was undeniably successful at inscribing itself as the one and only true destination of nineteenth-century radical politics, it was not radical enough to produce genuine liberation in the modern world, and *it is not nearly radical enough to confront adequately the exigencies of the postmodern condition*. The theoretical problems inherent in Marxism are too numerous to articulate fully here, but perhaps a few observations will suffice. First, Marxism is often blind to crucial cultural forces which, far from being mere ghosts of ideology, are instrumental to the construction of structures of oppression. Interesting attempts have been made to expand Marxism's awareness of culture, notably through Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Louis Althusser's idea of overdetermination. Nonetheless, culture remains secondary in many Marxist analyses; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have quite rightly pointed out that even for Gramsci, "political struggle is still a zero-sum game among classes. This is the inner essentialist core which continues to be present in Gramsci's thought, setting a limit to the deconstructive logic of hegemony."[23] Perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that, as Baudrillard has observed, Marxism may be radical in its content, but

certainly not in its *form*, which retains the vocabulary of bourgeois political economy almost in its entirety.[24] It is for this reason above all that Marxism's medium—the eminently orderly, rational science of the Hegelian dialectic—must always contradict and undermine its message.

Aware, perhaps, of its own theoretical Achilles' heel, Marxism has attempted to reinscribe its authority in the only way it knows how to do so. Just as it thoroughly eclipsed anarchism during the struggle for control over the First International during the nineteenth century, Marxism now attempts to eclipse postmodernism as well—or more precisely, it attempts to incorporate postmodernism into a preexisting Marxist intellectual tradition, in order to turn postmodernism into the latest term in the nonstop dialectical critique of political economy. It does this by way of the Frankfurt School, an impassioned and fascinating attempt to fuse Freudian thought with Marxism. The Frankfurt School has offered some of this century's most radical postmodern pronouncements; particularly interesting is the attempt by Herbert Marcuse to envision, in *Eros and Civilization* and elsewhere, a culture which might get beyond repression and alienation by replacing modern civilization's debilitating reality principle with an erotic "Logos of gratification."[25] Yet ironically, the most influential late twentieth-century heir of the Frankfurt School is not Marcuse but Jürgen Habermas, who is certainly no radical critic of modernity. Habermas's main project involves the attempt to move critical theory beyond the critique of "instrumental rationality" developed by Frankfurt School luminaries Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Habermas hopes to do this by placing instrumental rationality—the "rationality" of concentration camps and hydrogen bombs—within the context of a broader and more hopeful "communicative rationality" which, Habermas asserts, can operate within a kind of cultural and political "public sphere" to produce viable (and implicitly liberal) communities.[26]

The present destination of the Frankfurt School, then, is apparently not postmodern or even particularly Marxist. Habermas's work reads more as a manifesto for the contemporary welfare state. To be sure, we might well understand why a German thinker of the late twentieth century, acutely aware of the twin historical dangers of Nazism and East German state communism, would be tempted to seek a theoretical "middle ground" whose politics correspond, roughly, with those of the Federal Republic. The danger here is that by articulating the legacies of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud as he does, Habermas renders invisible some of the most interesting and important *critical* impulses of the postmodern project. This danger is further exacerbated when Habermas's work intersects yet another strand—one which, we could easily imagine, has no place at all in the Continental web which we have so far been spinning. This strange

and possibly aberrant strand appears to come from a different web altogether, one which is spun by an Anglo-American spider whose name is Pragmatism.[27] The nodes of this strand range from John Dewey to William James and, most importantly for our purposes, to the American political philosopher Richard Rorty. A self-proclaimed "postmodern bourgeois liberal," Rorty has been even more explicit than Habermas in his rejection of all radical postmodern politics. Like Habermas, Rorty tries to use the terms and categories of the debate about postmodern politics to reinforce the rapidly eroding theoretical and epistemological foundations of the modern liberal state.

My argument is that postmodernism can and should be read as more radical than this. I therefore postulate that Strand Three should begin not with Marx, as might be the case in a more conventional "radical" analysis, but with Emile Durkheim. A truly radical critique of political economy—a postmodern critique—must accept neither the language nor the structure of the model which it wishes to criticize. The postmodern critique of political economy must stand entirely *outside* that seemingly hegemonic system. It must articulate alternative models of exchange, models which are so alien to capitalism that at first they seem truly bizarre to us—and yet as we begin to examine them, we realize that their ghosts and echoes are still to be found even in this most heavily commodified of cultures. Strand Three, then, uses the methodology of Durkheimian sociology to trace such an alternate political economy. From Durkheim, this strand proceeds to Marcel Mauss, whose extremely influential essay *The Gift* offered gift-exchange as a radical Other to capitalism. The next node on this strand is surely occupied by Georges Bataille, who radicalized Mauss's concept of the gift in *The Accursed Share*, a full-fledged, multivolume assault on that most basic concept of bourgeois political economy: the principle of scarcity. The destination of Strand Three is the work of Jean Baudrillard, who uses gift theory to develop a critique of political economy that is radical in both content and form. Baudrillard's work is especially crucial to the postmodern project, for his critique implicates not only bourgeois economics but bourgeois semiotics as well; Baudrillard offers us a critique of the political economy of the *sign* which is increasingly relevant as questions about control over the means of production are eclipsed by questions about control over the means of information.[28]

So far I have been discussing what we might call horizontal strands of the postmodern matrix. By this I mean that each of these strands can, if the reader will forgive me a certain tactical microlinearity, be understood as a rather straightforward intellectual progression. Of course, this schematic by itself would hardly seem to be productive of any kind of subversive counterepistemol-

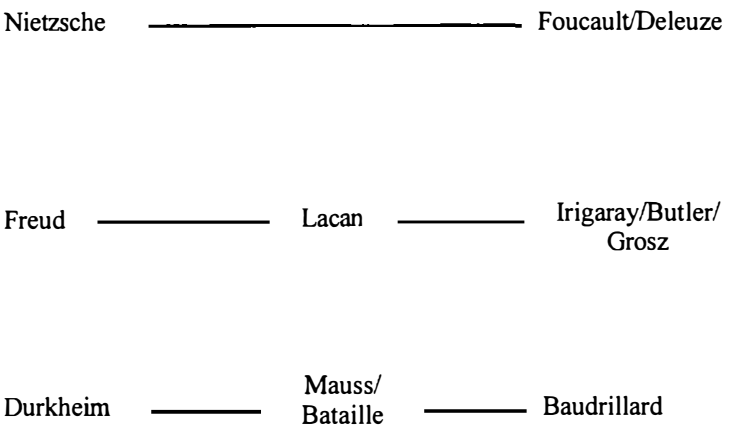

Figure One. Postmodern Matrix (horizontal strands).

ogy. It is only when we add what I call the vertical strands that this epistemology begins to manifest itself. By themselves, the vertical strands (like their horizontal counterparts) can be viewed as rather orthodox models of linear development. But when these vertical strands intersect the horizontal ones, something very interesting happens. The vertical strands disrupt the tidy linear progression of the horizontal, deflecting thought in strange and unpredictable new directions. What emerges with the addition of these vertical strands is something more than a simple grid. The addition of the vertical strands creates a series of junctions which rapidly begin to multiply in complexity, in much the same way as neural pathways develop within a child's brain. It is with the addition of these vertical strands that the postmodern matrix becomes truly rhizomatic; in other words, it becomes a cognitive model in which every node can be linked to every other, *and must be*. The model now becomes quite analogous to the decentralized network architecture of the Internet, an architecture in which every IP node is joined to every other in a remarkably nonhierarchical way.[29]

No one who is familiar with the postmodern literature will be surprised at the first vertical strand I wish to propose. This strand begins with the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and continues in the work of structural anthropologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz, and Marshall

Sahlins. For our purposes, the essence of this strand lies in the *thesis of the arbitrary sign.* As a kind of thought experiment, Saussure proposed a model of language in which the relationship between spoken sounds or written letters (signifiers) and the ideas and objects they purport to refer to (signifieds) was taken to be without foundation. This seemingly innocent experiment in structural linguistics, of course, turned out to be epistemologically revolutionary, for it would eventually evoke the profound *crisis of representation* which characterizes much of the postmodern project. Once we begin to question the comfortable certainty that words must surely equate to things, entire categories of thinking are rendered untenable. These include, but are not limited to, ideologically motivated attempts to represent the working class in such a way that all revolutionary impulses are circumscribed by discourses of militaristic nationalism or "law and order," racially motivated attempts by the West to represent "Oriental" cultures in a way which will inscribe imperialism upon such cultures, or attempts by a patriarchal culture to represent the "essence" of women in a way which will inscribe the basic terms of the phallocracy upon female bodies.[30] To the extent that the thesis of the arbitrary sign makes possible profoundly radical new understandings of class, race, and gender, we must provisionally accept Baudrillard's assertion that the hypothesis of Saussure is, like Mauss's hypothesis of gift-exchange, "more radical than Marx's or Freud's, whose interpretations are censored by precisely their imperialism."[31] This Saussurian vertical strand is radical not only in its political implications; it is also (not surprisingly) *structurally* radical. For wherever it intersects the horizontal strands of the postmodern matrix, it creates new links, new possibilities. To give but one example, it is in large part the structuralist fascination with language which diverts the Freudian strand into the interesting *post*structuralist critiques of psychoanalytic discourse which are to be found in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* or Foucault's *History of Sexuality.*

The second vertical strand I wish to propose is more strictly political, though it also contains a significant linguistic component. This is the strand of anarchist political theory which begins in the nineteenth century with the work of Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, and continues in the twentieth century with the work of Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin. If the present book provokes controversy, I suspect that it will be on the basis of my inclusion of this strand, at the expense of a more conventional foregrounding of the Marxist political philosophy. But I make this theoretical and interpretive choice for several important reasons. First, the anarchist tradition does not suffer from what seems to be an inherent danger of Marxist thought, namely that Marxism, despite its pretenses to liberation, too easily turns into a totalizing and totalitarian theory which runs the risk of obliterating theoretical nuances in its haste to co-

opt postmodernism. To be sure, there have been some noble attempts to rescue Marxism from this danger, notably Michael Ryan's admirable effort in *Marxism and Deconstruction* to challenge a stultifying, monolithic Leninism in favor of a far more pluralistic Marxist theory. Still, one cannot help but suspect that a theory which is built upon the Hegelian dialectic—surely one of the most totalizing grand narratives in the history of Western thought—is likely to remain totalitarian.

Anarchism, which is by its very nature skeptical of fixed structures, is a far more fluid and flexible theory. Anarchism is thus a political philosophy which seems perfectly well suited to the postmodern world. While the demise of the Soviet Union or the recent moves which "Communist" China has made towards the establishment of a market economy might be taken as evidence that Marxism's revolutionary project has failed, the same cannot be said of anarchism. Despite much recent talk about the way in which the state is being eclipsed by the power of multinational corporations, state power remains a crucial form of oppression in the postmodern world. In certain instances, the level of state power may even be increasing.[32] Anarchism continues to provide the most effective and compelling critique of all varieties of state power. And because it is such a flexible body of theory, anarchism is perhaps better suited than any other political philosophy to articulate the critiques which must be spoken in our rapidly fluctuating postmodern world. Today it may not be enough to speak out only against the armies and the police, as earlier anarchists did. No matter: a postmodern anarchism can just as easily speak out against consumer culture, against the erosion of privacy through the proliferation of databases and surveillance systems, or against the environmental degradation which threatens postindustrial societies everywhere. I therefore argue that the strand of anarchist political theory—frequently ignored, typically misinterpreted, and often dismissed as "infantile" Leftism[33]—is a key strand in the postmodern matrix. This apocalyptically radical strand deflects postmodernism in some of its most interesting and important directions.

Our postmodern matrix is almost complete. It lacks only one strand—or perhaps I should say "metastrand," for this particular strand will at first glance seem so tangential to the project of intellectual postmodernism that the reader may well suspect that it belongs (as I suggested with respect to pragmatism) on some entirely different grid. I wish to argue, however, that at second glance the agendas and concerns of this strand are, in fact, directly relevant and perhaps even indispensable to the postmodern project. I am speaking of the strand of science fiction literature known as cyberpunk. The concepts of postmodernism, and specifically of what I call postmodern anarchism, are to be found throughout

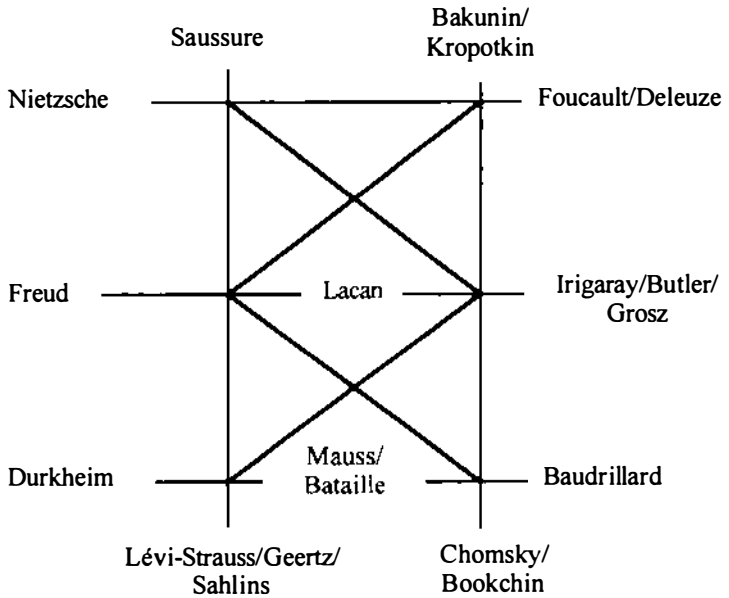

Figure Two. Postmodern Matrix.

a great deal of popular science fiction. Kim Stanley Robinson explores radical gift economies in his *Mars* trilogy. Radical gender theory is to be found throughout the novels of Samuel Delany, and also in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Anarchist politics infuse the work of Ursula K. LeGuin, particularly in *The Dispossessed*. Unfortunately I do not have space here to give all of these science fiction subgenres the critical attention they deserve, so I will focus on cyberpunk as a vital case study in the reception of postmodern philosophy. Cyberpunk, as developed especially in the novels of William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, articulates nearly every major theme of radical postmodernism: the deconstruction of the self, the erosion of Cartesian spatial concepts, the elaboration of new network-based models of identity and communication. Though some might dismiss these novels as mere popular literature, they actually serve a vital translation function, for they take the undeniably inaccessible ideas of radical postmodernism and make them available to a much wider audience. It is in the novels of Gibson and Sterling that postmodern anarchism emerges from its ivory tower and takes to the streets. I therefore suggest that cyberpunk may reasonably be understood as a metastrand which circumscribes the entire project of radical postmodernism, and serves as a vital in-

terface between that project and the concerns of the ordinary citizens of our "wired" world.

Postmodern Anarchism

I am now in a position to articulate in more detail the meaning of the theoretical construct which is named in the title of this book. Let me begin with the "postmodern" part of the "postmodern anarchism" couplet. First, I must admit that I do not have a great deal of interest in exploring the subtle distinctions between "postmodernism" (understood as a philosophical or critical movement) and "postmodernity" or the "postmodern condition" (understood variously as a mood, a stage in the development of the mode of information, and/or a socio-economic condition which exists beyond the industrial phase). While I readily acknowledge that these distinctions are important, I would prefer to emphasize the commonalities which exist within the postmodern. To be sure, I am acutely aware here of Lyotard's charge that within the postmodern condition "consensus has become an outmoded and suspect value,"[34] and I would sooner delete the computer file which contains the manuscript of this book than embark upon any intellectual project which might eradicate difference and Otherness in the name of a specious agreement. Nonetheless, I must insist that the exclusive focus on difference hides another danger, one which is less obvious and therefore more insidious. This is the danger of extreme fragmentation. Granted, one of the crucial contributions of postmodernism (particularly in its radical genealogical mode) has been that it "fragments what was thought unified."[35] However, when the technique of genealogical fragmentation turns upon *postmodernism itself* (as it inevitably does), the postmodern project runs the risk of fracturing into an incoherent multiplicity of mutually antagonistic "postmodernisms."

It seems to me that such a fragmentary ethos cannot be the basis for a viable revolutionary theory or praxis. Therefore I wish to argue not in favor of a suspect consensus among postmodernisms, but at least in favor of a provisional tactical alliance. Let us suggest as a hypothesis that postmodern feminists, postmodern socialists, postmodern subaltern theorists, and others have, in addition to specific agendas which are and must remain unique, a good deal of common theoretical ground. I would map the terrain of this postmodern "commons" as follows: construed as a fairly broad group, postmodernists generally share a certain incredulity towards metanarratives, a suspicious attitude towards the unified and rational self characteristic of much post-Enlightenment philosophy, and a powerfully critical stance towards any and all forms of power (including those produced by the state and by capital, but also those produced in

families, in hospitals, in psychiatric offices, and so on). Broadly construed in this way, postmodernists typically also possess a strong interest in semiotic theory, or at least a critical awareness of the ways in which language can produce, reproduce, and transmit power. I shall therefore make the somewhat controversial claim that what has been called poststructuralism may be construed as a variety of postmodern thinking.[36]

This somewhat broader theoretical perspective distinguishes the present study from some previous attempts to relate anarchism to twentieth-century Continental thought. In his interesting and important book *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism,* Todd May draws a viable connection between the anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin and the poststructuralist philosophy of Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard. However, May explicitly excludes Baudrillard from his theoretical framework, arguing that whereas the poststructuralist thinkers are primarily "tactical" in their approach, Baudrillard is more "strategic."[37] My approach is intended to broaden the horizons of postmodern anarchism considerably, by adding not only the Mauss-Bataille-Baudrillard strand of gift theory and radical symbolic critique, but also the Gibson-Sterling strand of cyberpunk fiction. I believe that this broader perspective is justified by certain recent trends and developments within the postmodern condition itself. The expansion of advertising into previously unheard-of realms,[38] plus the growth of a massive "information economy" in which data is now the major commodity form, suggest that it is now imperative to launch a critique of the political economy of the *sign*, i.e., a critique of the semiotic forms which underwrite all manifestations of capitalist exchange. Similarly, the spiraling schizophrenia which has allowed the Internet to become simultaneously a thoroughly commodified medium *and* the site of some of the most outrageous revolutionary declarations in history points to a need for the kind of radical cultural analysis which is to be found in cyberpunk.[39]

Let me now turn to my use of the term "anarchism." In its classical context, of course, anarchism refers to the radical critique of all state systems, including so-called worker's states, undertaken by political philosophers such as Bakunin. It also refers to the critique of private property relations developed by Proudhon. And it includes the concept of solidarity and "mutual aid" which Kropotkin developed as a radical alternative to nineteenth-century Darwinist models of "natural" competition.[40] Classical anarchism is fundamentally opposed to the hierarchical social relations implicit in the capitalist mode of production, and to the coercive politics implicit in all state systems. Such anarchism envisions strictly voluntary (and typically small-scale) forms of social organization. Like Marxism and most other forms of nineteenth-century radical thinking, classical anarchism purports to liberate some kind of authentic human essence which has

supposedly been repressed by capitalism and/or the state. As Bakunin observed, classical anarchists "desire the full and definitive abolition of classes, the unification of society, the economic and social equalization of all human beings on earth."[41] To the extent that it dreams of a secular paradise on earth, classical anarchism is therefore (like orthodox Marxism) a variety of utopian thinking.

The influence of anarchism upon twentieth-century politics, while not as dramatic as that of Marxism, has been considerable, particularly in the Spanish-speaking world.[42] But classical anarchism, much like classical Marxism, suffers from certain theoretical liabilities. First, it carries out its revolution under the banner of a problematically unified human subject. This may be Bakunin's worker-peasant subject rather than Marx's strictly proletarian subject, but it is a disturbingly homogenous subject nonetheless: unified in its wants and aspirations, allegedly responsive to historical forces which operate according to natural laws, supposedly susceptible to rational and scientific analysis. "Behind us is our animality and before us our humanity," declares Bakunin; "human light, the only thing that can warm and enlighten us, the only thing that can emancipate us, give us dignity, freedom, and happiness, and realize fraternity among us, is never at the beginning, but, relatively to the epoch in which we live, always at the end of history."[43] Voltaire himself could not have said it better. Bakunin's anarchism is quite clearly a humanistic political philosophy; in that sense, his worldview should be read not, perhaps, as an all-out radical assault on the very foundations of modern political theory, but rather as a continuation of the emancipatory project inaugurated by the philosophes of the Enlightenment. The problem with this humanist anarchism, of course, is that its ontology and its epistemology are nearly indistinguishable from those of bourgeois political economy. As the twentieth-century "green" anarchist Murray Bookchin has astutely observed, "socialism and canonical anarchism—the 'isms' of *homo economicus*, of 'economic man'—were born with the emergence of commercial and industrial capitalism. And however oppositional they may be, their underlying assumption that the wage worker is inherently subversive of capital tends in varying degrees to form the counterpart of the very system they profess to oppose."[44] The great twentieth-century proletarian revolutions have almost universally failed to realize the social, political, and economic utopias envisioned by nineteenth-century radical philosophy; contemporary anarchists like Bookchin are certainly entitled to ask why this is the case. Bookchin's answer—that these utopias were perhaps constructed on the basis of a concept of human subjectivity which is inherently flawed—seems compelling.

Bakunin and other orthodox anarchists must also confront the charge that, by focusing almost exclusively on the undeniably repressive power structures characteristic of capitalist economics and bourgeois states, they unfortunately

overlook the equally disturbing power relations which are to be found outside the factory and the government ministry: in gender relations, in race relations (and indeed, if we are to believe Foucault, in each and every social relation). Anarchist theory can ill afford to disregard such power relations, especially since it is becoming increasingly obvious, in the postmodern world, that these relations precede and enable both state power and economic power. Since these omnipresent elements of microscopic power remain largely invisible to conventional forms of radical analysis, one could argue that they actually represent a greater threat than the more obvious, traditional forms of power. Micropower is also more easily internalized than macropower, and because of this, micropower presents two unique dangers. First, it is extremely hard to get rid of, because it flourishes and flows within and between individual subjects. Second, internalized micropower saves capital and the state a great deal of work. Thanks to the internalization of power, we carry out the project of oppression largely within the framework of our own consciousness. From this perspective, the engines of capital and state, ominous as they are, seem epiphenomenal and perhaps even a bit superfluous. "The internalization of hierarchy and domination," laments Bookchin, "forms the greatest wound in human development and the most deadly engine for steering us toward human immolation. Temples, palaces, factories, yes, even prisons, concentration camps, barracks, police, and the vast legal and executive power of the State, form the flesh and organs that hang on the skeletal structure of our own perverted sensibilities."[45] Unless and until anarchist theory finds a way to reverse this deadly internalization, it is difficult to imagine how any revolution can avoid the spectacle of eternally recurring states.

Finally, classical anarchism is haunted by a rationalist semiotics which seriously limits its radical potential. Kropotkin, for example, argued that "by applying the method of natural sciences, we are enabled to prove that the so-called 'laws' of bourgeois social science, including present political economy, are not at all laws."[46] Surely this is a noble endeavor. The problem, however, is that the rationalist linguistic structures employed by nineteenth-century anarchism are substantially equivalent to those of bourgeois science, which in turn grow out of the European Enlightenment. Kropotkin—himself a geographer and biologist of some repute—could conceive of anarchism only in purely scientific terms. His political philosophy and his scientific viewpoint were one and the same. "Anarchism," he declared, "is a conception of the Universe based on the mechanical interpretation of phenomena, which comprises the whole of Nature, including the life of human societies and their economic, political, and moral problems."[47] It is understandable that Kropotkin would wish to deploy the semiotics of modern science against capital and the state, for in his time, scientific

analysis appeared to be capable of addressing any and all problems. But Kropotkin's era was to be followed by a century of instrumental reason run rampant, and it is for this reason that postmodernists such as Jean Baudrillard have argued that a rational, scientific language cannot possibly be used to articulate a truly radical politics.

Twentieth-century anarchists have tried to confront these concerns in a variety of ways. The noted linguist Noam Chomsky, for example, has attempted to expand the critique of power relations beyond the boundaries of the state. Chomsky's analysis of the structure and functioning of the mass media in postindustrial "democracies" is especially important; in *Manufacturing Consent* and elsewhere, Chomsky argues that for certain structural reasons, mass media institutions tend to function essentially as propaganda organs for the state, despite the fact that direct state control over the media is relatively rare in such "democracies."[48] Not surprisingly, given his dual background as a linguist and "libertarian socialist," Chomsky does occasionally try to develop a connection between linguistic structures and radical political ideas.[49] However, he does so only in a very cautious and tentative way. The connection between language and politics always remains elusive for Chomsky; it seems to have the status of an agenda rather than a developed project for him, and one is tempted to wonder why this is the case. The answer may have to do with the fact that, although his work does represent a significant attempt to update classical anarchism in order to take into account new issues surrounding the creation, control, and distribution of information, Chomsky nonetheless remains within the horizons of the modern world. A self-proclaimed "child of the Enlightenment," Chomsky asserts that "it is libertarian socialism that has preserved and extended the radical humanist message of the Enlightenment."[50] Chomsky might question the limits of bourgeois rationality and he might look beyond the state into the media world, but he clearly is not prepared to challenge the humanism of the Enlightenment. His work represents an interesting and important attempt to expand the boundaries of classical anarchism—but only up to a certain point.

A somewhat more radical version of twentieth-century anarchist thinking is to be found in the work of Murray Bookchin. Particularly in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism,* Bookchin uses language reminiscent of Mauss, Bataille, or Marcuse to argue that postindustrial societies are also postscarcity societies which can imagine "the fulfillment of the social and cultural potentialities latent in a technology of abundance."[51] Writing in 1971, at least a decade before the advent of cyberpunk, Bookchin could already imagine that cybernetic technology might be a key factor in the development of human potentialities. Like Chomsky, Bookchin recognizes that developments in information technology are not *necessarily* liberatory, since the "bourgeois control of technology" makes the prop-

agation of propaganda fairly simple.[52] But unlike Chomsky, Bookchin does not hesitate to counter communicative control by deploying radical and innovative new technologies of the self. Following an impulse which is to be found in the later Frankfurt School—not, of course, in the work of the neoliberal Habermas, but rather in the considerably more radical writings of Herbert Marcuse—Bookchin declares that "power can only be destroyed by the very process in which man acquires power over his own life and in which he not only 'discovers' himself but, more meaningfully, *formulates his selfhood* in all its social dimensions."[53] Nor is this the only point where Bookchin's thinking intersects the Marxist tradition. Indeed, there is a remarkable affinity between Bookchin's analysis and that of the "autonomist Marxism" developed by Antonio Negri and others. Speaking on behalf of this tradition, Nick Witheford has described the postmodern technological condition with words which could easily have been written by Bookchin himself: "as [the] virtual proletariat emerges, there . . . appears a tension between the potential for freedom and fulfillment that it sees in its technological environment, and the actual banality of cybernetic control and commodification."[54] It is important to remember that, Bookchin's frequent anti-Marxist polemics notwithstanding, the kind of post-industrial anarchism which Bookchin advocates is not necessarily incompatible with Marxism per se. The "autonomist" Marxists remain deeply skeptical of state power, and their line of thinking suggests (among other things) that the decentralized and democratic allocation of resources through computer networks could "undermine capital's imperative of monetary exchange without substituting the centralization of state authority."[55] This vision of a radically decentralized, poststatist social and economic order could exist in perfect harmony with the Bookchinite vision.

Nonetheless, Bookchin (like Baudrillard) does remain somewhat skeptical about the radical possibilities of any critical theory which relies upon the two great modernists, Marx and Freud. This is especially true as Bookchin develops and articulates his ecological views. "Here is the nub of the problem," Bookchin provocatively asserts in *The Ecology of Freedom*: "the Victorian veil (to which Marx and Freud gave a radical dimension) that obscures the function of *ecology* as a source of values and ideals."[56] However, a closer examination of Bookchin's critique reveals that the real problem, for him, is the inability of certain critical theories to move beyond the dialectical dead ends in which "Victorian" thinking must remain perpetually trapped. "It would be a grave error to view my remarks on Marcuse as a critique of Marcuse as an *individual* thinker," Bookchin hastens to warn us. "Inasmuch as his theoretics have dealt more directly with social problems than that of any other neo-Marxist body of theory, they more clearly reveal the limits of the neo-Marxian project. Habermas is veiled by a formalism

so abstract and a jargon so equivocal and dense that he is almost beyond the reach of pointed criticism."[57] Here Bookchin emphasizes the crucial importance of the ongoing debate regarding the meanings and legacies of the Frankfurt School.[58] Marcuse's thought, with its radical denial of scarcity and its quasi-anarchistic politics of desire, represents for Bookchin a revolutionary possibility which might well be appropriate to life in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The problem, of course, is that this possibility has been eclipsed by Habermas's quixotic attempts to rescue the project of modernity by constructing an eminently Victorian "public sphere" through which "communicative rationality" might flow. And this is a problem which Richard Rorty shares with Habermas; thus "an activist rationalism of the kind so endearing to both German idealism and American pragmatism is a rationalism of conquest, not of reconciliation."[59] Bookchin recognizes that Habermas, Rorty, and others like them foster a dangerous illusion: the illusion that a problematic modernity can or should be saved. Bookchin proposes instead that we should look away from the modern world—either to the deep past, where he investigates the same kinds of "preliterate" or "organic" societies which fascinated Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, or to the future, where he envisions a technologically sophisticated and ecologically sustainable cybernetic utopia.

To be sure, Bookchin's radical vision has generated a good deal of controversy. Although Bookchin has frequently challenged other schools of environmental thought—particularly "deep ecology"—as overly mystical, Bookchin himself has been taken to task for promoting a self-acknowledged "messianic" project, especially in *The Ecology of Freedom*.[60] Along similar lines, Bookchin has been charged with retaining a "religious" faith in the revolutionary potential of contemporary American society.[61] Such critiques are perhaps a bit too easy. After all, a great many radical political visions—including most anarchist visions—contain an eschatology which is recognizably "religious" in its structure, if not its content. If anarchist theory is to move beyond critique towards the articulation of a positive social, political, and ecological agenda, then the messianic element is perhaps unavoidable. More troubling are the accusations that Bookchin has profoundly misunderstood the nature of technology in the modern and postmodern worlds. David Watson, for example, argues that Bookchin has not recognized the new problems and pathologies which emerge in societies built upon mass technology.[62] And John Clark has pointed out that Bookchin's utopian faith in the liberatory possibilities of technology—especially communications technology—ignores the vast potential for manipulation through mass media and commodity consumption.[63]

These critiques are valid, to the extent that they point out the dangers inherent in a naive faith in the liberatory potential of technology. It is undeniable that

postmodern communicative technology has been forged in the fires of capital; specifically, this technology is the child of a deeply reactionary American military-industrial complex. But Bookchin's critics would do well to remember Donna Haraway's important point: the cyborg may have been conceived by the Pentagon's cold warriors, but she is notoriously unfaithful to her origins.[64] To be sure, in recent years, the level of commodification on these postmodern networks has increased steadily. But so too has the level of resistance, according to a formula which is recognizably Foucaultian: since power creates its own transgressions, an increase in the level of power or control inevitably generates a corresponding increase in the level of subversion. The situation is therefore considerably more complex than Bookchin's critics have recognized. While it may be the case that Bookchin sometimes overstates the liberatory potential of cybernetics, some of his critics show a disturbing disregard for those emancipatory impulses which communications networks enable and generate. An unreflective ecological Luddism disregards the crucial possibility that Bookchin's cybernetics might offer a way out of the theoretical trap which the Frankfurt School could not escape. Stephen Duplantier has persuasively argued that Bookchin's "organic society" is the ontological matrix of a society not of communicative rationality, but of communicative ecstasy.[65] Perhaps the "Habermas problem"—specifically, the apparent phenomenological impossibility of separating "communicative rationality" from a destructively nihilistic "instrumental rationality"—can be solved, then, by a turn towards what Jean Baudrillard has called the "ecstasy of communication." Bookchin's invocation of a politics of desire against the repressive rationality of a "Victorian" modernism suggests that his cybernetics—along with Deleuze's "desiring machines," for example, or Irigaray's vision of women's sexuality as an assault on all prevailing systems of political economy—actually represents a profound challenge to the philosophical project of the Enlightenment. Bookchin's cybernetic utopia undermines the epistemological stability of the Enlightenment's speaking subject—and, not incidentally, the system of political economy which presumes and requires that subject. I must therefore disagree with John Moore, who has argued that "Bookchin's defence of Enlightenment rationalism against Nietzsche and post-leftist anarchy neatly complements the liberal democratic defence of rationalism."[66] In fact, Bookchin's radical cybernetic gestures stand in stark opposition to the Enlightenment's repressively rationalistic project, just as his antihierarchical, anarchist politics stand opposed to the kind of rationalistic liberalism advocated by late modernists like Rorty and Habermas.

Bookchin's thought contains many crucial elements of a postmodern anarchism. His thinking rejects conventional forms of subjectivity and emphasizes the importance of cybernetics and other forms of "high" technology. It also chal-

lenges our fascination with the modern, looking back to those societies which all Victorians dismiss as "prehistoric" to find models of sustainability, abundance, and political freedom which are relevant, perhaps, to the postmodern world as well as to the premodern. Finally, Bookchin's thinking contributes to the postmodern anarchist position by insisting "that every revolutionary movement must be a cultural one as well as a social one . . . the revolutionary project remains incomplete if it fails to reach into the problems of hierarchy and domination as such."[67] Postmodern anarchism begins with this premise: a Marxist or classical-anarchist "radical" position which insists upon the primacy of economics and class analysis lacks meaningful revolutionary potential. As Bookchin suggests, it is necessary to develop a much broader critique of power, by making the concept of hierarchy itself into an object of analysis. This can be done only by expanding the conventional anarchist project into the cultural and linguistic realms. And this is the project of postmodern anarchism.

How might such a postmodern anarchism fit into the broader theoretical and political project of contemporary anarchism? First, let me emphasize that postmodern anarchism represents only one strain of contemporary anarchism—an interesting and important strain, I believe, but a single strain nonetheless. I wish to avoid the temptation to create a monolithic vision of contemporary anarchism; such a vision would be contrary to the very spirit of anarchism itself. It is perhaps a bit of a cliché to suggest that there are as many anarchisms as there are anarchists, but there is nonetheless some truth to this observation. The strength of contemporary anarchism comes precisely from its diversity. Anarchism, with its emphasis on decentralization and local control, has been very useful to those who would challenge the ongoing deployment of a global economic system. As a theory and practice of working-class organization and action, anarchism also represents a strategy for challenging sweatshops and other forms of economic exploitation, especially in those areas of the Third World where such exploitation is frequently sanctioned by state power. Whereas Marxism sometimes exhibits a frustrating lack of concern for the concerns of indigenous peoples and agricultural societies in general, anarchism sees peasant societies as legitimate and vibrant systems which may in fact have some advantages over industrial societies; this has made anarchism interesting and useful to organizations such as Mexico's Zapatista Liberation Front. And anarchism, with its deep skepticism of the logic of perpetual economic growth which is common both to capitalism and to Marxism, remains committed to projects of economic sustainability which have made the anarchist tradition of great interest to contemporary environmentalists. The anarchism which I discuss in this book—postmodern anarchism—is meant to be one voice in this large and growing chorus of anarchisms. By no means should it be seen as a substitute for or a chal-

lenge to these other varieties of anarchist thought and practice. Indeed, it is my hope that anarchists of a premodern or modern persuasion might actually benefit from thinking through the postmodern anarchist position. A look at postmodern anarchism might help such anarchists to identify and solve possible theoretical problems in their own worldviews, thus strengthening their positions.

An anarchism of the postmodern kind would certainly include the traditional critiques of capital and the state, but would also go well beyond these conventional critiques to develop a political theory which is appropriate to the postmodern condition. One: against the suspiciously unified subject of classical anarchism, postmodern anarchism declares, beginning with Nietzsche, an *anarchy of the subject*. The postmodern subject is and must remain multiple, dispersed, and (as Deleuze would have it) schizophrenic. This anarchy of the subject encourages the preservation and cultivation of difference and Otherness within the postmodern project. By insisting that all subjectivities must be strictly provisional, and by encouraging the development of multiple strands of subjectivity within a single "person," this anarchy of the subject precludes the possibility of a totalitarian subjectivity such as that of the Leninist vanguard. To ensure that this anarchy of the subject will have the status of a permanent revolution, Nietzschean philosophy offers a corresponding *anarchy of becoming*. A postmodern anarchist in the Nietzschean mode must engage in a perpetual project of self-overcoming. By constantly reradicalizing the subject, by constantly immersing the "self" in the river of becoming, the Nietzschean anarchist evades the possibility that her subjectivity will recrystallize in a totalizing fashion.

Two: against the classical anarchist's obsession with capital and the state—or perhaps we should say "in addition to" the concern with economic and state power—postmodern anarchism offers a much broader and more nuanced understanding of power. This is the case especially, of course, in the works of Foucault. Eschewing a simplistic top-down model of power, Foucault insists that power is "capillary," i.e., that it is always already present in any social relation. Although Foucault is frequently criticized on the grounds that his omnipresent conception of power offers little space for resistance, I argue that his philosophy does indeed contain significant revolutionary potential. First, we should note that for Foucault, power *implies* resistance: wherever there is power there is always resistance, and power is everywhere. Second, Foucault's broad concept of power enables an equally broad concept of resistance, one which grows out of Bataille's concept of transgression, and includes not only traditional revolutionary activity, but student rebellion, prisoner's revolts, and gay or lesbian revolutions.[68]

Three: if Marxism and classical anarchism retain too much of the language of bourgeois political economy, postmodern anarchism offers a transsemiotic revolution grounded in radical *symbolic* theory. It is here that Baudrillard's work is crucial. Baudrillard's unrelenting critique of all rationalist semiotics, whether bourgeois-liberal or classically "radical," opens up a space for truly revolutionary symbolic subversions. And against those who would complain that this kind of radical symbolic critique is nothing but an abstract theory with no practical political application, I must point out that postmodern anarchism, particularly as articulated in Baudrillard's critique of the political economy of the sign, contains the formula for a profound revolutionary praxis. This is the formula of May 1968. It is the formula for a postmodern revolution which was carried out not by the politically suspect would-be bureaucrats of the Leninist vanguard, but by the students and workers themselves. The "events of May" were largely inspired and influenced by the Situationist International, a collection of vehemently anti-Stalinist artists and philosophers who were perhaps the first practitioners of a postmodern anarchism. Under the influence of the Situationists, the revolutionaries of May 1968 took to the streets of Paris and carried out a revolution of the symbol, a revolution of posters and graffiti, slogan and counterslogan, gesture and antigesture. This was a revolution which boldly asserted that, as Baudrillard put it, *even signs must burn.* It was revolution in a new register, revolution which abandoned all pretense towards rational bourgeois semiotics.

It was also a revolution, Baudrillard would later insist, which "shook the system down to the depths of its symbolic organization," creating a "catastrophic situation" which, he argued, still existed in 1976 (and which, we suspect, might still exist even at present).[69] The symbolic critique of bourgeois semiotics continues today, and finds its highest expression in Baudrillard's theory of simulation. The world of simulation, Baudrillard tells us, is inaugurated by the "liquidation of all referentials"; it is the "desert of the real itself."[70] It also happens to be the world in which we presently live. The sphere of simulation is that place in which thought and communication, image and representation are electronically mediated through the television, the laptop computer, the fax machine, the cell phone. Today simulation has become a massive social and cultural fact; it is therefore in the realm of simulation that any meaningful political action must take place. Against a dominant line of (predominantly Marxist) critical interpretation which dismisses Baudrillard's work as politically irrelevant, I therefore argue that Baudrillard's simulation theory actually enables a powerfully anarchistic neo-Situationist politics.

I conclude this book by examining the ways in which the politics of simulation are further radicalized (and dispersed throughout the much larger virtual

world which exists outside the academy) by the cyberpunks. The works of William Gibson and Bruce Sterling begin where Baudrillard's texts leave off. In his groundbreaking novel *Neuromancer,* Gibson describes the electronic matrix as a "consensual hallucination," a vast simulated sociopolitical space in which any gesture, no matter how radical, is possible. In later cyberpunk novels, the virtual space of the network becomes increasingly nonlinear. In these novels, the articulation of a non-Cartesian spatial order is no fanciful postmodern dream; it is the virtual geography in which the characters live their lives. Similarly, the deconstruction of Enlightenment subjectivity is no mere theory in the pages of cyberpunk science fiction; it is an established epistemological condition. Characters in these books routinely experience sensory perceptions which "belong" to someone else. Cases of postmodern schizophrenia and multiple electronic identity are common. A character might upload a simulation model of her mind to the net; it is not unheard of for the network itself to attain consciousness. The pages of cyperpunk fiction are also full of neo-Situationist revolutionaries like Gibson's Panther Moderns, or the young artistic avant-garde of Sterling's *Holy Fire.* These people, who shed conventional forms of consciousness and perception like some unnecessary modernist skin, are perhaps the true revolutionary vanguard. They are beyond ideology. They have no stake in theoretically bankrupt dialectical agendas. They experience power (and resistance) at a capillary level, and perhaps even at a molecular level. They create new vocabularies, new languages to replace the empty signifiers of political economy. They also create new cultures and new economic systems, and in doing so they provide an answer to a charge which is commonly leveled against both anarchism and postmodernism, namely that these bodies of theory contain a great deal of critique, but little in the way of positive alternatives. The nomad cultures of cyberpunk novels—e.g., the networked "prole" gangs in Sterling's *Distraction,* with their gift-exchanging "prestige" economies—provide that alternative cultural and economic vision. By articulating this kind of anarchist worldview, cyberpunk provides a possible response to the call which has recently been issued by postmodern sociologist Pierre Bourdieu: that we must restore utopia in order to counter neoliberalism.[71]

Heavily enhanced and deeply decentered, the citizens of these subversive cybernetic cultures are profoundly lacking in essence, but they do have a politics. It is a politics which occupies what I have been calling the postmodern matrix. It is a politics which eludes the charge that Foucault once made against Marxism, that it "exists in nineteenth-century thought like a fish in water: that is, unable to breathe anywhere else."[72] The politics of cyberpunk is, in short, a radical politics for the new millennium: a politics of postmodern anarchism.

Notes

1. See Landow, *Hypertext* and Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* especially p. 85-87.

2. *The Matrix* is also the title of an interesting cinematic exercise in postmodern anarchism. The film eschews its mainstream Hollywood origins by incorporating no fewer than two references to the French postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard. The film's narrative structure makes extensive use of Baudrillard's concept of simulation; indeed, the entire narrative takes place within an electronically simulated environment. The plot of the film is equally subversive: a postmodern proletarian (played by Keanu Reeves) seizes control of the means of simulation and launches a revolution against the dominant culture of his virtual world. It is perhaps these subversive elements which prompted the mainstream American media to undermine the film's interesting political themes by foregrounding stylistic similarities between Reeves' cybernetic anarchist character and right-wing youths who committed mass murder at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.

3. See Barthes, *Mythologies* and Sahlins, *Cultural and Practical Reason,* chapter 4.

4. See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 6 ff.

5. Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 279.

6. Barthes, *S/Z,* 5.

7. Heidegger, *Nietzsche,* volume 3, 8 and Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* chapter 4.

8. Lacan, *The Language of the Self,* 39 (emphasis added).

9. Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* 141. Here and elsewhere, Lacan's thinking intersects that of other theorists of desire such as Deleuze and Herbert Marcuse. The concept of desire which emerges from the writings of these authors is, I would argue, very different from what bell hooks has described as "a very postmodern vision of desire, as the new place of transgression that eliminates the need for radical politics" (hooks, *Outlaw Culture,* 44). Indeed, for theorists like Deleuze and Marcuse, desire is to be understood as a powerful revolutionary force which can potentially enable, through its transgressions of conventional subjectivity and the repressive "reality principle," political theories and practices far more radical than those which depend for their existence upon traditional concepts of identity.

10. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader,* 217.

11. Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects,* 197.

12. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan,* 189.

13. Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One,* 31.

14. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman,* 237.

15. Ibid., 133.

16. Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 85.

17. Ibid., 158.

18. Ibid., 165.

19. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 5.

20. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan*, 144.

21. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 72.

22. Ibid., 85.

23. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 69. Laclau and Mouffe point out that similar problems exist with Althusser's approach; thus "the most profound *potential* meaning of Althusser's statement that everything existing in the social is overdetermined, is the assertion that the social constitutes itself as a symbolic order." (Ibid., 97-98). Pending the perpetually deferred introduction of the cultural and the symbolic into the Marxist corpus, however, this does indeed remain merely a "potential meaning."

24. See, for example, Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, 32.

25. See Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, especially chapter 5.

26. See Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, especially volume 1, 386 and volume 2, 389.

27. For more on the connections between Habermas and the American pragmatic tradition, see Bernstein, *The New Constellation*, 48.

28. See Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information*.

29. For a good discussion of the origins of this decentralized network model, see Bruce Sterling, "A Short History of the Internet" at the Electronic Frontier Foundation: http://www.eff.org//Publications/Bruce_Sterling/FSF_columns/.

30. Edward Said's *Orientalism* provides an excellent poststructuralist critique of the Orientalist discourse. Good examples of postmodern feminism are to be found in Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, especially chapter 6, and *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*, ed. Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman.

31. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 1.

32. Consider the recent alarming growth of the American prison-industrial complex, for example. Between 1972 and 1996, the combined state and federal prison population increased from 93 prisoners per 100,000 residents to 427, an increase of no less than 359 percent (Miringoff and Miringoff, *The Social Health of the Nation*, 113).

33. Michael Walzer, for example, charges Foucault with such "infantile leftism" in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy, 51.

34. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 66.

35. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 147.

36. Poststructuralism, as the name suggests, is a line of thinking which takes as its point of departure the strand of structuralist linguistics and anthropology I discussed briefly above. Despite the sometimes strenuous protests of its major proponents, notably Foucault, I therefore contend that poststructuralism intersects the postmodern matrix at many crucial junctures.

37. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism,* 12. Another helpful, though very brief, sketch of the relationship between poststructuralism and anarchism can be found in Karen Goaman and Mo Dodson, "A Subversive Current? Contemporary Anarchism Considered," 86-88.

38. There has also been a corresponding increase in the technical sophistication of the advertising techniques themselves. For a good description of the latest developments in the advertising industry—and for a compelling neo-Situationist critique of those developments—see the web site for Adbusters magazine at http://www.adbusters.org.

39. Manifestations of the electronic anarchist revolution are far too numerous to mention; interesting examples include "(An) Anarchy Home Page" at http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/~ctb/anarchy/, the Situationist archives at http://www.nothingness.org/, the Seattle-based radical "paper" Eat the State at http://EatTheState.org , and http://www.chumba.com/, a site dedicated to the British anarchist rave-culture band Chumbawumba. Another group of "virtual anarchists" which has received a good deal of press recently is the very sizable community of Internet users who exchange free digital copies of copyrighted songs using services such as Napster and Gnutella. Siva Vaidhyanathan has rightly characterized these MP3 music trading systems as "free, open, decentralized, uncommercializable, ungovernable and uncensorable" (*The Nation,* July 24/31 2000, 34). They are also excellent examples of fully functional gift-exchange economies.

40. Kropotkin's model works equally well as a challenge to the attempts made by social evolutionary thinkers like Herbert Spencer to naturalize economic competition in the capitalist world. See Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* 23.

41. Bakunin, "All-Round Education" in *The Basic Bakunin,* 111.

42. For example, anarchists participated in the Mexican Revolution and fought against Franco's Fascists during the Spanish civil war. See Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931,* especially 104 ff., and Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists.*

43. Bakunin, *God and the State,* 21.

44. Bookchin, *The Modern Crisis,* 124.

45. Ibid., 121.

46. Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism" in *Evolution and Environment,* 54.

47. Ibid., 51.

48. Indeed, Chomsky describes the "manufacture of consent" as crucial to the functioning of such "democratic" states, which typically do not have recourse to the kind of political violence inherent in totalitarian systems (Chomsky, *Language and Politics,* 599-600). Chomsky has even gone so far as to claim that in the United States, "the entire spectrum of thinkable thoughts is now caught within the propaganda system," (Ibid., 622), an assertion which bears remarkable similarities to Foucault's discussion of the functioning of the episteme in *The Order of Things.*

49. See, for example, Chomsky, "Language and Freedom" in *Reasons of State.*

50. Chomsky, *Language and Politics*, 773; Chomsky, "Notes on Anarchism" in *Reasons of State,* 375.

51. Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism,* 11. The denial of scarcity in anarchist literature has a venerable pedigree; arguably Kropotkin began the process by arguing in *The Conquest of Bread* that nineteenth-century industrial societies could potentially satisfy all the material needs (and even many wants) of their entire populations. In *Stone Age Economics,* Marshall Sahlins provocatively pointed out that such a culture of abundance was possible even in ancient hunting-gathering societies. And Bookchin goes so far as to argue in *Toward an Ecological Society* that, given recent revolutions in the means of production, the motives for maintaining the concept of scarcity in the contemporary West are almost entirely ideological: "under capitalism, 'planning' is basically the conscious organization of scarcity amidst abundance, the attempt to impose a social nexus of want, denial, and toil on a technological system that, potentially at least, could remove all of these dehumanizing conditions from social life" (136; see also Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom,* 71). An anarchist or libertarian-socialist political culture based upon the denial of scarcity has also become quite prevalent among those who interpret and analyze the political economy of the Internet. For example, John Perry Barlow, cofounder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, has recently argued that in the virtual economy, "abundance breeds abundance . . . when you're selling nouns, there is an undeniable relationship between scarcity and value. But in an economy of verbs, the inverse applies" (*Wired*, October 2000, 242).

52. Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism,* 34-35.

53. Ibid., 167 (emphasis added).

54. Witheford, "Cycles and Circuits," 226.

55. Ibid., 232.

56. Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom,* 272.

57. Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society,* 222.

58. Michael Ryan nicely summarizes what is at stake in this debate: "Jürgen Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* marks a right turn in the tradition of German Critical Theory. Habermas rejects marxism and the radical materialist perspective in favour of an amalgam of liberal rationalism, conservative sociological

theory, and mainstream language philosophy, and he puts aside the revolutionary goal of earlier Frankfurt School thinkers like Marcuse in favour of a social democratic accommodation with the 'rational' realities of capitalism" (Ryan, *Politics and Culture*, 27).

59. Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 302.

60. See, for example, Joel Kovel, "Negating Bookchin," 33-34.

61. See John Clark, "Municipal Dreams," 140.

62. Watson, "Social Ecology and the Problem of Technology," 215.

63. Clark, "Municipal Dreams," 142.

64. See Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," 193.

65. Duplantier, "The Social Ecology of Communication," 193.

66. Moore, "All Nietzscheans Now?" 82.

67. Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 29.

68. Bataille, *Erotism*, chapter 5; Foucault, "Preface to Transgression" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*.

69. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 34.

70. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1-2.

71. Günter Grass and Pierre Bourdieu, "A Literature from Below," *The Nation* (July 3, 2000) 26.

72. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 262.

Chapter One

Toward an Anarchy of Becoming: Nietzsche

Thus, to speak frankly: it is necessary for us to get really angry for once in order that things shall get better.
—Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator*

Let us begin by conceding what will at first appear to be a great deal. In his published works and in his notes, Friedrich Nietzsche made it quite clear that he opposed any and all forms of radical politics, including socialism and anarchism. He often confused the two. He dismissed mass-based radical movements as manifestations of "herd politics." He denounced contemporary anarchists as representatives of a destructive nihilism, of bad conscience, of resentment. Nietzsche famously referred to himself as "the last anti-political German"; to the extent that he did advocate a political philosophy, that philosophy is one which appears to be quite conservative in its implications. If Nietzsche endorsed any radicalism at all, it is what Georg Brandes referred to as "aristocratic radicalism," an elitist ideology which asserted that the meaning and value of any society could be assessed by judging the extent to which that society paved the way for the development of superior individuals. "Mankind in the mass sacrificed to the prosperity of a single *stronger* species of man—that *would* be an advance," Nietzsche proclaimed in *On the Genealogy of Morals*; he went on to assure his readers that anything which opposed such a development should be dismissed as a "democratic idiosyncracy" or "modern *misarchism* (to coin an ugly word for an ugly thing)."[1] Nietzsche was no friend, it seems, of the "misarchists" who hated strong rulers, for such misarchists might interfere with Nietzsche's first and foremost concern: the production of spiritually strong beings known as

Übermenschen (Overmen). He intended for these beings to inherit the earth, and what would happen to the herds of ordinary humans when they did so was of depressingly little consequence to him. Nietzsche's most significant political legacy lies not on the Left but on the Right; Hitler's Nazi Party used Nietzsche's ideas (albeit at the cost of an extreme interpretive violence which ignored, among other things, Nietzsche's virulent hatred of anti-Semitism) to grant their own reprehensible political projects an air of philosophical legitimacy.

But there is another Nietzsche as well. A careful examination of Nietzsche's writings reveals a profound and fascinating critique of capitalism, bourgeois culture, and the state.[2] This is especially true in Nietzsche's earlier works, particularly *Schopenhauer as Educator, Daybreak,* and *Human, All Too Human.* Lest the skeptic dismiss these themes as mere intellectual aberrations of an "immature" Nietzsche, however, let me emphasize that these critiques are also to be found in later works such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Ironically, then, the same Nietzsche who eagerly and enthusiastically denounced all manifestations of nineteenth-century anarchist politics was simultaneously developing his own radical critique of bourgeois economies and state-centered politics. Should this astonish us? Not really. Nietzsche is famous (or infamous) for developing philosophical positions which are incredibly diverse and varied (or as his detractors would have it, inconsistent and contradictory). This is, of course, deliberate. Articulating a diversity of seemingly incompatible positions is simply part of Nietzsche's dispersed, aphoristic style. And this stylistic choice is one with profound philosophical implications. A century before Jean-François Lyotard denounced metanarratives, Nietzsche was already tearing the foundations out from under all universal "truths." Nor should Nietzsche's refusal to adopt a petty consistency be taken as a license to ignore his work. As the well-known twentieth-century Nietzschean Michel Foucault once remarked, "do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order."[3]

So despite Nietzsche's hostility toward anarchism, his writing contains all the elements of a nineteenth-century anarchist politics. But Nietzsche's work is actually far more radical than that of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and the rest. First, Nietzsche's critiques tend to be cultural rather than strictly political or economic. This permits him to suggest that capitalism and the state are dangerous not only to the workers but to the culture as a whole. If political economy and statist politics represent, as Nietzsche argues, decadence and decline *in general*, then this is bad news not only for the proletariat but for the bourgeoisie as well. Second (and in the long run, far more significantly), Nietzsche's philosophy broadens the traditional anarchist critique by expanding

it into new realms. Conventional anarchism retains concepts of human subjectivity and human rationality which are implicitly bourgeois and statist; it is therefore extremely difficult, if not theoretically impossible, for such anarchism to transcend the sociopolitical order which it purports to challenge. Nietzsche's philosophy, on the other hand, points to a new kind of anarchist politics. The basic characteristics of this extremely unorthodox variety of anarchism are as follows. First, Nietzsche's philosophy creates an *anarchy of the subject*, violently destabilizing the post-Enlightenment concept of subjectivity which is the underlying basis of all modern political philosophies, including liberalism, Marxism, and conventional anarchism. Subject-centered reason is a collateral casualty of this critique. In the space created by this radical critique of modern subjectivity, Nietzsche unleashes another kind of anarchy, an *anarchy of becoming*. By teaching us that we must pursue a perpetual project of self-overcoming and self-creation, constantly losing and finding ourselves in the river of becoming, Nietzsche ensures that our subjectivity will be fluid and dispersed, multiple and pluralistic rather than fixed and centered, singular and totalitarian. These twin anarchies, the critical anarchy of the subject and the affirmative anarchy of becoming, form the basis for a postmodern Nietzschean anarchism. Nietzsche's philosophy thus creates not only the *idea* of postmodern anarchism but also the postmodern anarchists themselves; his work is therefore performative rather than prescriptive.

Nor should these twin Nietzschean anarchies be understood as isolated, irrelevant political eccentricities. Rather, I would argue that the anarchistic strands within Nietzsche's writing can be understood as an intrinsic part of the vast web of political theory which encompasses the rise and fall of rationalist political humanism. An egregiously oversimplified schematic of this web might look something like this: at one end stands the political and intellectual order of the European Enlightenment, the great liberal revolutions of the late eighteenth century, the liberal states which grew out of those revolutions, and all the assumptions about epistemology and representation which underwrite such states. At the other end of this web stand the postmodern politics of the millennium. These politics are characterized by the commodification of political candidacy and the simultaneous decline of voter participation in most liberal states, the increasing irrelevance of nation-states in the face of the globalized "free trade" agendas of major multinational corporations, and the constant mystification of political issues by an ever more "spectacular" mass media system.[4] Other strands on this side of the web might include the increasing fragmentation of what was once known as a "radical" or "revolutionary" movement into various micropolitical entities: feminist, gay, green, subaltern, and so on. We should also consider in this context the recent explosion of electronic communications

technologies, which has allowed many of these movements to constitute themselves as vibrant cybernetic microcommunities.

It is perhaps difficult to imagine how we might have moved from one side of this web to the other in less than three centuries, yet clearly we have done so. The problem, of course, is that our political theories and institutions have not been able to reflect these incredible cultural transformations. Our politics remain stubbornly modern, trapped within the intellectual horizons of the Enlightenment. They refuse to recognize that our world is no longer the world of Voltaire, Locke, and Rousseau. The space which we occupy—described variously as the postmodern condition, the wired world, the postindustrial age, or the end of history—is a different space. It must be understood and analyzed in different terms. As we strive to articulate those terms and to develop an appropriate analytic apparatus, what we need above all else is a way to conceptualize the history of a transformation which is as invisible in the realm of politics as it is profound in the world of culture, theory, and epistemology.

I believe that Nietzsche's thought is a crucial conceptual tool for understanding these dramatic changes. Chronologically, Nietzsche's work stands at the approximate center of the web which stretches from the Enlightenment to the millennium. Thematically, his work represents a major nodal point in this web—what Jürgen Habermas has correctly identified as the "turning point" or "entry" into postmodernity.[5] Indeed, Nietzsche's work constitutes what a computer scientist might call a "high bandwidth node" in this theoretical web. Deeply aware of and influenced by the Enlightenment tradition, Nietzsche accepts as inputs empirical science, human rationality, individual consciousness, and all affiliated political and semiotic systems. But within the black box of his thought a remarkable change occurs. The outputs of Nietzschean philosophy are a transrational epistemology, a dispersed and radically pluralistic subjectivity, a metaphorical rhetoric which is profoundly at odds with the *logos*—and perhaps a politics of postmodern anarchism. As we move from the "Nietzsche node" toward the overwhelming cultural fact of the millennium, we see how Nietzsche's thinking becomes intertwined with a great many other intellectual strands. There is Freudian psychoanalysis, with its radical detonation of the Enlightenment's imaginary id-less cogitators. There is the Frankfurt School, which teaches us that the terrain of the unconscious can be a most fertile ground for the radical imagination. From a different direction comes the strand of structuralist linguistics, attacking not the metaphysics of subjectivity but rather the falsely representational language of these speaking subjects. Beyond all this lies a certain antianthropology, articulated by Bataille, Baudrillard, and Foucault, which turns the assault upon man and his sciences into a full-fledged attack on the semiotics of political economy and all disciplinary institutions which grow out of that

semiotic order. The strands of postmodern consciousness which emerge from the Nietzsche node are as numerous and diverse as the strands of Enlightened thinking which flow into that node. And the genie does not go back into the bottle: once we reach the event horizon of this Nietzschean explosion of meaning, there can be no comfortable return to the simpler days of the Enlightenment, despite the most strenuous liberal arguments to the contrary.

For these reasons I must insist that what is at issue here are not the political opinions of an obscure nineteenth-century German philologist. What concerns us, rather, is what might be called the Nietzsche effect. Keith Ansell-Pearson points out that "the consensus which seems to be emerging at the present moment in time is that the most fertile aspect of [Nietzsche's] writings for the formulation of a radical philosophy lies, not in their overt pronouncements . . . but rather in their 'style'(s), in their attempt to communicate a philosophy of the body, in their disclosure of the metaphoricity of philosophical discourse, and in the exemplary way in which they are seen to deconstruct the logocentric bias of western thought and reason."[6] I wish to subscribe to this consensus and, hopefully, contribute to it. My argument is simply this: postmodern anarchism is a very possible manifestation of the Nietzsche effect which has been conspicuously ignored in the mainstream Nietzsche literature. This literature has been dominated in recent years by the arguments of certain "postmodern bourgeois liberals" who attempt—outrageously, in my view—to reconcile Nietzsche's thinking with a defense of late twentieth-century political liberalism. In place of this approach I wish to emphasize those elements of Nietzsche's thinking which undermine the theoretical foundations of capitalist economics, statist politics, and the varieties of subjectivity and rationality which underwrite such systems.

The Usual Suspects: A Critique of Nietzschean Liberalism

"The Revolution's been shot; round up the usual suspects!" Bryan Singer's interesting postmodern film noir *The Usual Suspects* raises the order of cinematic simulation to a level that is rather unusual for Hollywood cinema. The entire narrative of the film is a tale told by a self-proclaimed idiot, a fiction spontaneously generated by a "short con operator," the appropriately nicknamed Roger "Verbal" Kint. Verbal's story revolves around a mysterious and possibly mythological criminal mastermind known as Keyser Soze. Soze is a nomadic figure, as Gilles Deleuze might say: possibly Turkish, definitely Eastern, a creature of the steppes who is certainly a threat to the very structure of the state apparatus represented by Chazz Palminteri's Agent Kujan. What is interesting

about Keyser Soze is his unreality. "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist," as Verbal points out. To maintain the illusion (or the truth) of his nonexistence, Soze operates through unwitting dupes—the "usual suspects" of the film's title. The usual suspects are ordinary criminals, definitely outclassed by the world-shaking transgressions of Keyser Soze. The usual suspects thus act as a kind of safety valve, separating the order of the real from the dangerous, nomadic, mythological underworld of Soze. They serve the narrative function of shielding and insulating the "real world" (i.e., the statist order of Agent Kujan) from the nomadic anarchy of Keyser Soze—which is ironic, since in the film the usual suspects are themselves criminals.[7] Why are the police so obsessed with finding Keyser Soze? Perhaps because he represents a terrifying truth: that power is ephemeral, and has no basis in reality. Jean Baudrillard has argued provocatively that the secret shared by all great politicians is their knowledge that power does not actually exist.[8] Perhaps the cops should be grateful that they never do find Keyser Soze—instead they find only the usual suspects, common criminals who can easily be controlled, intimidated, and disciplined, and who therefore allow the state to reinscribe its tenuous, hyperreal power.

The debate about Nietzschean politics has its own usual suspects who, like their cinematic counterparts, perform the important function of defending the real world of the state from nomadic anarchy. These suspects include, most famously, Richard Rorty and Jürgen Habermas. These authors, and others like them, approach Nietzsche's writing with a pretheoretical commitment to the modern liberal state (and, implicitly, to the capitalist economic systems associated with such states). Nietzsche's work puts these authors in a difficult theoretical position, because although the usual suspects typically admit that Nietzsche's work is philosophically important, they also recognize that his philosophy contains the foundations for a politics which is radically at odds with all existing modern political systems (including, most importantly from the perspective of the usual suspects, modern liberal systems). They therefore face the daunting task of reconciling Nietzsche's philosophy with a political ideology to which they were irretrievably committed prior to reading Nietzsche.

Richard Rorty attempts to accomplish this by bisecting Nietzsche into a "public" and "private" Nietzsche. Rorty asserts that thinkers like Nietzsche (as well as Hegel, Derrida, and Foucault) are "invaluable in our attempts to form a private self-image, but pretty much useless when it comes to politics."[9] The attempt to bracket the private off from the public is, of course, a standard bit of liberal phenomenological legerdemain, despite the fact that even the most talented liberal philosophers find it almost impossible to identify what, exactly, distinguishes these two realms. Rorty would have us engage in Nietzschean pro-

jects of self-creation only in the comfort and safety of our own private lives; when we wake up the next morning, we are meant to shake off the hangover of the previous evening's Dionysian festival, put on our John Stuart Mill masks and enter the public world. It's hard to see how we might accomplish this feat without descending into schizophrenia[10] (so if we follow Gilles Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche, maybe there *is* something revolutionary about Rorty's ideas after all).

According to Rorty, Nietzsche insinuates that "the end of religion and metaphysics should mean the end of our attempts not to be cruel."[11] The concept of cruelty is central to Rorty's "postmodern bourgeois liberalism"; he asserts (without providing much philosophical warrant for this assertion) that nothing is more important than the avoidance of cruelty. The problem with this claim—an almost completely intact version of nineteenth-century liberalism's classical dictum that one person's right to swing her fist ends where the next person's nose begins—is that it functions to defend existing institutions and to prevent radical change. Suppose that revolutionary social transformation *requires* us to be cruel—not necessarily to people, but at least to ideals and institutions? Of course, this is precisely the kind of change which Rorty seeks to avoid, and his rejection of cruelty is quite convenient for that purpose. But in fact the a priori rejection of cruelty is indicative of postmodern liberalism's totalizing nature.[12] By insisting that we should not be cruel, Rorty removes entire regions of discourse from the intellectual agenda.

Like most liberal critics of Nietzsche, Rorty focuses only on the literal meaning of Nietzsche's pronouncements, and fails to understand that these are performative, rather than prescriptive, statements. Nietzsche's thinking does not imply that we should run through the streets engaging in unthinking cruelty. But it does imply that we should use the *idea* of cruelty to redesign ourselves and our institutions from the ground up. This radical redesign, which is performed through an infinitely spiraling critique and a permanent linguistic revolution, stands in stark opposition to the status quo politics of liberals like Rorty. Indeed, one suspects that no system of liberal politics would be likely to survive a full engagement with the profound cruelty and critique which characterize Nietzschean thought. This is, of course, why the typical strategy of someone like Rorty is to refuse the uncomfortable implications of such thinking a priori. But such a strategy requires troubling exclusions.[13] For Rorty to employ Nietzsche in the service of postmodern liberalism, he must ignore or overlook those extensive elements of Nietzsche's thought which render the liberal concept of human subjectivity deeply problematic. These include the irrational or antirational elements of Nietzschean philosophy, his attack on representational and referential thinking, his attempt to develop a sustained and self-perpetuating

critique of the language of modern subjectivity, and so on. Rorty's Nietzsche is at best a partial Nietzsche, and he is a Nietzsche who has forgotten some of his most interesting ideas.

In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Jürgen Habermas attempts to rescue certain key elements of the Enlightenment's intellectual project from what is now regarded in many circles as the overwhelming force of postmodern and poststructuralist critiques. Habermas is especially interested in preserving a kind of stripped-down, noncoercive form of human rationality. Given the epistemological situation in which we find ourselves in the late twentieth century, when traditional forms of reason and subjectivity are continuously undermined by cybernetics, simulation, and so on, Habermas's project is ambitious, to say the least.[14] Habermas criticizes Nietzsche's work on the grounds that "with Nietzsche, the criticism of modernity dispenses for the first time with its retention of an emancipatory content. Subject-centered reason is confronted with reason's absolute other."[15] What Habermas overlooks here is that the struggle for emancipation or liberation does not necessarily require a commitment to the philosophy of the subject or to human rationality. Gilles Deleuze recognizes this important fact when he argues that "contrary to a fully established discourse, there is no need to uphold man in order to resist. What resistance extracts from this revered old man, as Nietzsche put it, is the forces of a life that is larger, more active, more affirmative and richer in possibilities. The superman has never meant anything but that: it is in man himself that we must liberate life, since man himself is a form of imprisonment for man."[16] Ironically, then, the postmodern antihumanism whose origins Deleuze rightly locates in Nietzsche's thinking *does* constitute an emancipatory project. Following Deleuze, I would go so far as to argue that Nietzsche's writing leads us toward an emancipation that is *far more radical* in its implications than anything which might emerge from the traditional Enlightenment. By subjecting not only the conventional *infames*—church, state, dominant social classes—but also subject-centered reason itself to a profound and immanent critique, Nietzsche dramatically raises the stakes of the Enlightenment's critical project. Habermas does not recognize this as a move in favor of emancipation, simply because it does not fit into his preconceived, subject-centered, and implicitly liberal idea of what human liberation must look like. But given the fact that the thinking of the Enlightenment has not managed, in the last two hundred years, to complete its emancipatory project, it certainly does not seem unreasonable to suggest that we might want to move toward a more radical emancipatory agenda.

Habermas also identifies a performative contradiction in Nietzsche's writing, suggesting that Nietzsche cannot really place his critique of reason "outside the horizon of reason" itself, at least not if Nietzsche wishes to retain

the capacity for "providing argumentative grounds."[17] But this is precisely Nietzsche's stylistic gift. In fact, Nietzsche *can* speak outside the horizon of reason. He does so when he speaks through a series of loosely connected aphorisms, and he certainly does so when he employs the incandescent, metaphorical language of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* This kind of language is probably frustrating to philosophers like Rorty and Habermas, and perhaps it does not count as formal philosophical argument. But again, we cannot afford to dismiss or ignore the philosophical implications of Nietzsche's thought simply because it does not conform to the rational linguistic style characteristic of most academic philosophy. We can still read Nietzsche's spiraling critique, but we must read it as poetry, not as conventional philosophy.

Nor is it fair to say that Nietzsche rejects rationality out of hand. "A *little* reason, to be sure," Zarathustra says, "a seed of wisdom scattered from star to star—this leaven is mixed in with all things."[18] Nietzsche's thinking does seem to permit a kind of tactical, local reason, a "microreason." And perhaps Habermas recognizes this option as a possible way out of the crisis of subject-centered rationality. Following Nietzsche, Habermas attempts to draw distinctions within the category of reason. Acknowledging that it is difficult to sustain subject-centered reason as an epistemological category under the postmodern condition, Habermas argues in favor of a "communicative rationality." This "procedural" form of rationality, Habermas contends, will act as a "noncoercively unifying, consensus-building force of a discourse in which the participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favor of a rationally motivated agreement."[19] Obviously, this is the form of rationality characteristic of liberal democracies, at least in their mythological ideal form. There are, of course, several problems with this form of reason. First, it doesn't exist. Advertising and mass-media institutions ensure that a "rationally motivated agreement" cannot be attained in any late twentieth-century liberal democracy. Second, even if such a consensus were possible, it would be extremely dangerous. I do believe that small-scale consensuses can be reached, within the framework of limited communities whose members actually do share certain values, beliefs, and intellectual commitments (see, for example, my discussion of the "postmodern commons" in the Introduction). I do not believe, however, that such consensuses can be attained at the level of the nation-state. The cultural and political values of such a national community will inevitably be far too diverse to permit the kind of agreement which Habermas seeks. Such a large-scale consensus could only come into being through the exclusion and suppression of dissenting voices.[20] This exclusion always represents a theoretical violence; sometimes it involves a physical violence as well. In any case, a healthy polity

requires not consensus but rather the endless interplay of radically dissenting voices.

Nietzsche and Anarchism

Contra "postmodern bourgeois liberalism," then, I wish to advocate a very different reading of Nietzsche, one which authorizes not the complacent status quo politics of institutional democracy but rather a unique new form of radical politics. I call this politics anarchistic because of its intense opposition to capital and the state; I call it postmodern because of the ways in which it explodes conventional forms of subjectivity and concepts of rationality. As is often the case with Nietzsche's writings, we can find the point of departure for this new reading in some interesting notes from *The Will to Power*. In these notes, Nietzsche denounces anarchism as a political and economic theory with "nihilistic consequences."[21] He views anarchism as a "consequence of decadence" and associates it with "instincts of decline."[22] These comments are quite significant—not because they reveal Nietzsche's well-known opposition to nineteenth-century anarchism, but rather because they hint at the motivations which lay behind his critique. Anarchism is problematic for Nietzsche to the extent that it is a destructive form of cultural nihilism—and indeed, the terms "anarchist" and "nihilist" were often used interchangeably in late nineteenth-century European political culture. For Nietzsche, then, it seems that anarchism is a *cultural* problem, rather than a specifically political one. The problem Nietzsche had with the anarchists who were his contemporaries—and also with the socialists, the feminists, the nationalists, and representatives of most other "-isms"—is that they seemed, to him, to represent symptoms of a deeply fragmented and dangerously decadent political culture.

Nietzsche abhorred such nihilistic cultural decadence because it might prevent the creation of a vibrant new European culture. The articulation of such a culture was the project which came to dominate much of Nietzsche's later work. One could argue that he first undertook this project in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* a work which can be read on one level as a kind of instruction manual for the establishment of a spiritually profound, transnational political culture. But although one can certainly gain glimpses of such a culture in Zarathustra's impassioned calls for the legislation of new values, it is in Nietzsche's subsequent works that this new cultural ethos is most clearly articulated. Its mature expression is to be found particularly in Part Eight of *Beyond Good and Evil,* which concerns "Peoples and Fatherlands":

> Call that in which the distinction of the European is sought "civilization" or "humanization" or "progress," or call it simply—without praise or blame—using a political formula, Europe's *democratic* movement: behind all the moral and political foregrounds to which such formulas point, a tremendous *physiological* process is taking place and gaining momentum. The Europeans are becoming more similar to each other; they become more and more detached from the conditions under which races originate that are tied to some climate or class; they become increasingly independent of any *determinate* milieu that would like to inscribe itself for centuries in body and soul with the same demands. Thus an essentially supra-national and nomadic type of man is gradually coming up, a type that possesses, physiologically speaking, a maximum of the art and power of adaptation as its typical distinction.[23]

This remarkable passage reveals a great deal about the political trajectory of Nietzsche's thinking. First, like the Darwinians and other nineteenth-century evolutionary thinkers whose ideas he simultaneously attacked and utilized, Nietzsche believed that political culture was conditioned by the same kinds of evolutionary forces which drove development in the natural world. Second, this evolutionary perspective encouraged Nietzsche to take the long view where politics and culture were concerned. For Nietzsche, the problem with particular political forms such as anarchism, liberalism, or nationalism was precisely that they *were* particular. Such forms obscured the larger historical processes which Nietzsche believed were at work. He believed that those processes were producing a very distinctive new kind of political milieu, one which was supranational in character. The nineteenth-century anarchist, ironically, could not participate in this type of milieu, because for all its antinationalist rhetoric, classical anarchism continually constructed itself as a particularistic sect—a Nietzschean could argue that the anarchists ended up promoting a political theory which would replace the nations of Germany and France with a "nation" of Bakuninites. The dominant figure in Nietzsche's utopian political imaginary is much more profoundly nonsectarian. She is indeed *nomadic* in character.[24]

The future-oriented description of a vast pan-European culture which Nietzsche provides in *Beyond Good and Evil* sounds occasionally like a manifesto for the twentieth-century European Union:

> Owing to the pathological estrangement which the insanity of nationality has induced, and still induces, among the peoples of Europe; owing also to the shortsightedness and quick-handed politicians who are at the top today with the help of this insanity, without any inkling that their separatist

> policies can of necessity only be *entr'acte* policies; owing to all this and much else that today simply cannot be said, the most unequivocal portents are now being overlooked, or arbitrarily and mendaciously reinterpreted—that *Europe wants to become one.*[25]

Nietzsche's prescience here is remarkable, although Europe had to suffer through two world wars and a cold war before it realized that it did indeed want to become one. To read this passage as a straightforward call for political unification would be dangerous, however. It is difficult to imagine that Nietzsche was envisioning the petty squabblings of Europe's financial ministers as they struggle to fix the value of their respective national currencies relative to the unpopular Euro. Rather, Nietzsche's primary concern, here and always, is cultural: he rejects nationalism because it eclipses and interferes with the establishment of a genuine, authentic pan-European culture. Classical anarchism, to the extent that it represents a particularistic viewpoint which is culturally disruptive rather than unifying, can be rejected on the same grounds.

This is important for three reasons: first, it suggests that Nietzsche does not actually object to anarchist thinking per se, but specifically to that form of anarchism which contributes to a fragmented, decadent culture. Second, it suggests that Nietzsche, or people who could reasonably call themselves Nietzscheans, might well be able to endorse a variety of anarchist thought, if such a thinking were to be articulated within a different cultural context. A postmodern anarchism—articulated within a late twentieth-century political framework, for the express purposes of undermining languages of statism and nationalism and enabling creative new political discourses—could fit quite easily into the Nietzschean project. Such an anarchism endeavors to detonate conventional forms of political agency and subjectivity in order to promote the creation of a radically new kind of political terrain. This terrain might be understood as the kind of postmodern commons which I described briefly above, for while postmodern anarchism certainly affirms the importance of difference, it also understands the need to draw together different strands of radical thinking—anarchist, feminist, postcolonial, and so on—into provisional tactical alliances. Deeply suspicious of the enforced liberal cultural consensus of the usual suspects, postmodern anarchism is nonetheless quite distinct from the sectarian anarchism of the nineteenth century, which frequently exhausted itself in bureaucratic disputes over control of the workers' movement. The postmodern alternative offers a possible resolution to Nietzsche's concerns regarding classical anarchism: namely that such anarchism is part and parcel of the fractured, fragmented political culture which it purports to oppose. Postmodern anarchism is not, by any means, a universal or totalizing political theory. But it does

constitute a kind of common theoretical space in which might grow a profound new kind of radical political culture, one which might employ (as no previous political culture could) the Nietzschean concepts of value creation and self-overcoming.

Postmodern anarchism is thus distinct from both the bankrupt institutions of the modern liberal state, and from the culturally decadent modernist critique of those institutions which classical anarchism developed, as Nietzsche might say, "at the expense of the future." And this is the third crucial point about radical Nietzschean politics. It does not attempt to legitimize itself with reference to the past. It does not try to ground itself in any kind of quasi-historical foundation story, as classical liberalism does with its social contract mythology, as German nationalism does with its Teutonic-Wagnerian mythology, as classical anarchism does with its vision of a return to an authentic human condition which supposedly existed prior to alienation. Nietzschean politics, and the postmodern anarchist politics which grows out of Nietzsche's philosophy, looks not to the past but to the future. Postmodern anarchism is thus a unique kind of millenarian politics which coincides quite closely with the kind of utopian thinking which, as I have argued elsewhere, is to be found in abundance in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.[26]

Let us now take a closer look at some of the passages where Nietzsche seems to develop a variety of anarchist thinking. The younger Nietzsche, in particular, tends to make some rather radical denunciations of the state. "One of the duties that seems, at least to me, to be higher than serving the state," Nietzsche writes in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, "demands that one destroy stupidity in every form, and therefore in this form too."[27] Of course, Nietzsche is more concerned with the cultural, intellectual and (anti)moral development of the individual than with those questions which we usually describe as political. But Nietzsche's critiques of culture and morality have deep political implications, and in his early books he often recognizes this. In *Daybreak*, he laments the fact that "conscience, reputation, Hell, sometimes even the police have permitted and continue to permit no impartiality; in the presence of morality, as in the face of any authority, one is not *allowed* to think, far less to express an opinion: here one has to—*obey!*"[28] By associating moral thinking with blind obedience to authority in general, Nietzsche grants the critique of morals a specifically political character.

Nor are these themes present only in Nietzsche's earlier works. The pseudo-anarchistic critique of morality continues in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Here morality is defined as the child of Zarathustra's "old devil and arch-enemy, the spirit of gravity," who created "constraint, statute, necessity and consequence and purpose and will and good and evil."[29] One of Zarathustra's main goals,

then, is to overcome the statutes imposed upon society by the spirit of gravity: "whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values."[30] The form of this statement is strikingly similar to Bakunin's famous pronouncement that the urge to destroy is also a creative urge. And Zarathustra tells us that the creator does not only break values, but also breaks the tablets upon which those values are inscribed: "He breaks tablets and old values. He is a breaker, they call him lawbreaker."[31] He who creates new values, then, is necessarily a criminal—or, if we recognize the strong political implications of value creation, an anarchist.

Nietzsche's pseudoanarchistic critique of law and custom reaches its zenith in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. This piece is absolutely crucial to the anarchist reading of Nietzsche, a fact which has been recognized by some of the most important postmodern and poststructuralist anarchists of the twentieth century.[32] In this essay, Nietzsche suggests that "a legal order thought of as sovereign and universal, not as a means in the struggle between power-complexes but as a means of *preventing* all struggle in general . . . would be a principle hostile to life."[33] Such a legal order is, of course, characteristic of all modern, post-Enlightenment liberal democracies. And the epithet "hostile to life" is perhaps the harshest denunciation in Nietzsche's extensive vocabulary. The tendency toward the universal expansion of the legal order (and the implicit growth of the state system which must accompany such an expansion) thus stands in precise opposition to Nietzsche's model for a healthy culture. Nietzsche also emphasizes the arbitrary nature of the state's penal schemes. Against a liberal orthodoxy which would have us believe that the state's punishments refer in some clear, distinct, and rational way to actual crimes, Nietzsche characterizes punishment as a "continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another."[34] Like morality, then, punishment is exposed via genealogical critique as a purely contingent and historical operation. Also like morality, punishment does not lead to the improvement of culture: "punishment *tames* men, but it does not make them 'better'—one might with more justice assert the opposite."[35] As always, Nietzsche is the master of reversal, taking the dominant interpretation of the legal-judicial-penal complex and subjecting it to relentless critique until it implodes.

Few people have recognized the full implications of Nietzsche's genealogy of punishment, but Gilles Deleuze has. "It could be that, spiritual or temporal, tyrannical or democratic, capitalist or socialist, *there has never been but a single State*, the State-as-dog that 'speaks with flaming roars.' And Nietzsche suggests how this new socius proceeds: a terror without precedent, in comparison with which the ancient system of cruelty, the forms of primitive regimentation and

punishment, are nothing."[36] Contra Rorty, Deleuze suggests that the liberal "cure" of punishment is in fact far more terrifying than the "disease" of cruelty. Deleuze also builds upon another crucial theme from the *Genealogy*'s second essay, the theme of indebtedness. Nietzsche suggests that we feel an enormous debt toward our ancestors, our tribe, our gods; for Nietzsche, "the advent of the Christian God, as the maximum god attained so far, was therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth."[37] It is not difficult for Deleuze to transform this critical analysis of cultural debt into a political and economic critique. Deleuze describes the development of feelings of indebtedness as the growth of "reactive forces": "the association of reactive forces is thus accompanied by a transformation of the debt; this becomes a debt toward 'divinity', toward 'society', toward 'the State', toward reactive instances."[38] Deleuze radicalizes the discussion of the debt by adding a discussion of money: "money—the circulation of money—*is the means for rendering the debt infinite*. . . . the abolition of debts or their accountable transformation initiates the duty of an interminable service to the State that subordinates all the primitive alliances to itself."[39] In Deleuze's capable hands, the category of the debt becomes the instrument of an extremely radical, and indeed anarchistic, critique of the state system and the economies associated with that system.

"Postmodern bourgeois liberals" would presumably like to dismiss Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche as an outrageous left-wing polemic which has no textual basis in Nietzsche's writings. But they can do so only by ignoring the extensive critique of bourgeois culture and capitalist values which *is* present in Nietzsche's work, particularly in his earlier books.[40] We find the young Nietzsche making remarks which would have fit quite easily into the nineteenth-century radical tradition. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche criticizes the privileging of exchange value over use value: "the man engaged in commerce understands how to appraise everything without having made it, and to appraise it *according to the needs of the consumer*, not according to his own needs."[41] This remarkable work even contains a critique of alienated labor which would find itself quite at home on the pages of the *Communist Manifesto*. "To the devil with setting a price on oneself in exchange for which one ceases to be a person and becomes part of a machine!"[42]

Of course, Nietzsche's primary objection to capitalism is not social or economic, but cultural. "There exists a species of *misemployed and appropriated culture*," he tells us in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. "You have only to look around you! And precisely those forces at present most actively engaged in promoting culture do so for reasons they reserve to themselves and not out of pure disinterestedness. Among these forces is, first of all, *the greed of the money-makers*, which requires the assistance of culture and by way of thanks assists

culture in return, but at the same time, of course, would like to dictate its standards and objectives."[43] Marx and Bakunin have already warned of the social injustices which capitalism engenders. Nietzsche adds a cultural dimension to this critique, pointing out that the unrelenting emphasis on profit tends to eclipse more authentic cultural concerns. (Today we measure the quality of films in terms of their box office receipts and the quality of political candidates in terms of their campaign war chests; Nietzsche's critique is probably more relevant than ever.) The young Nietzsche also denounces the state as the accomplice of these culturally decadent "money-makers." "Nowadays the crudest and most evil forces, the egoism of the money-makers and the military despots, hold sway over almost everything on earth. In the hands of these despots and money-makers, the state certainly makes an attempt to organize everything anew out of itself and to bind and constrain all those mutually hostile forces: that is to say, it wants men to render it the same idolatry they formerly rendered the church."[44] Here the state sounds a bit like Marx's "executive committee of the bourgeoisie," but in Nietzsche's view the state is actually even more dangerous than that. By describing the state as an idol, Nietzsche makes it hard to imagine that *any* state, even a utopian "worker's state," could possibly provide any meaningful human liberation. And if the state *is* an idol, then the Nietzschean philosopher's job is to approach it as she approaches all idols: with a hammer. Nietzsche returns to this theme in a famous section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* entitled "On the New Idol." Here Zarathustra characterizes the state as an instrument of the herd. "All-too-many are born: for the superfluous the state was invented."[45] The state is described as life-denying; as always, this is one of Nietzsche's most powerful critiques. "State I call it where all drink poison, the good and the wicked; state, where all lose themselves, the good and the wicked; state, where the slow suicide of all is called 'life.'"[46]

Nietzsche's critique of the state in general certainly includes a critique of the liberal state, and this is something which should worry the usual suspects. In *Human, All Too Human,* Nietzsche points out a basic contradiction in the philosophy of the liberal state. While such a state claims to endorse and enforce the rights of the individual, it cannot avoid creating a homogenizing political culture which will in fact undermine the possibility of any meaningful individuality. "The state is a prudent institution for the protection of individuals against one another: if it is completed and perfected too far it will in the end enfeeble the individual and, indeed, dissolve him—that is to say, thwart the original purpose of the state in the most thorough way possible."[47] Of course, the state must attempt at all costs to conceal this fatal flaw. This is the origin of parliamentary politics, which gives the citizens of a liberal state the illusion that they possess meaningful political choices. "Parliamentarianism—that is, public permission to

choose between five basic political opinions—flatters and wins the favor of all those who would like to *seem* independent and individual, as if they fought for their opinions. Ultimately, however, it is indifferent whether the herd is commanded to have one opinion or permitted to have five."[48] This is a telling and quite relevant attack on electoral politics. Nietzsche's argument implies that the distinctions between fascism (one permitted opinion), European-style parliamentary democracy (five opinions), and American federal politics (two largely indistinguishable opinions) are not nearly as meaningful as the liberals would have us believe. Nietzsche also suggests a very interesting interpretation of voter apathy. "If whenever the occasion for using the vote arises hardly two-thirds of those entitled to vote, perhaps indeed not even a majority of them, come to the ballot-box, this is a vote *against* the entire voting-system as such."[49] Liberals insist that widespread voter apathy (fewer than *one*-third of eligible American voters turn out in many elections) requires us to mobilize the electorate through voter registration drives and so on. Nietzsche's refreshing suggestion is that perhaps a vote *is* being cast here, namely a vote to abolish the entire system of false choices and meaningless decisions. Against the party politics of the bourgeois state, Nietzsche always advocates independent thought: "perhaps there will one day be laughter at that which nowadays counts as moral among the younger generation brought up under parliamentary institutions: namely, to set the policy of the party above one's own wisdom."[50] Free, creative thought is for Nietzsche the only possible source of authentic culture. But such thinking stands in stark opposition to the restrictive cultural and political consensuses enforced by modern liberal states.

Anarchy of the Subject, Anarchy of Becoming

It would seem, then, that there *is* an anarchist politics in Nietzsche's work. It is not the only politics to be found in his writings, by any means, and it is a politics to which he himself often expressed explicit opposition. Nonetheless, this politics is present in his notes and published texts, and we cannot afford to ignore it. As we have seen, Nietzsche is frequently critical of states in general and liberal states in particular; he also attacks the social and cultural values of the "money-makers" who support such states. "Postmodern bourgeois liberalism" can make functional use of Nietzsche's thinking only at the price of excluding these critiques. The usual suspects are happy to perform such an exclusion, often by dismissing Nietzsche's criticisms as the unfortunate rantings of a self-proclaimed "antipolitical German."

But the usual suspects have another, much more serious problem. Even if postmodern liberals can reject Nietzsche's assaults on capitalism and the liberal state—and it is easy enough to locate passages in Nietzsche's books where he seems to contradict these assaults—those who would use Nietzsche to shore up the eroding foundations of liberal democracy must contend with the even more powerful and radical forms of anarchy which are to be found in Nietzsche's thought. They must contend, for example, with Nietzsche's well-known anarchy of the subject. A number of commentators have pointed out that one of Nietzsche's main contributions to political thought is his destruction of the conventional concepts of human subjectivity which lie at the basis of most modern political theories. Keith Ansell-Pearson suggests, for example, that the *Genealogy* aims "to show that one of the central ideas of moral and political theory, that of a human subject in possession of conscience and a free will, is not a natural given."[51] William Connolly points out that after Nietzsche, "the subject is not simply or unambiguously the self which establishes its unity, freedom, independence and self-transparency."[52] And the assault on conventional (i.e., post-Enlightenment) ideas of subjectivity is not simply a metaphysical or epistemological issue. It is also a deeply political issue which has profound implications for the construction of political theories and institutions. Those implications do not bode well for liberalism. Mark Warren summarizes the problem nicely: "Because liberals put a metaphysical placeholder in the space of the individual, they failed to theorize this space. As a result, they justified liberal forms of the state in terms of a historically conditioned effect mistaken for a universal essence. This is why Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism in Western culture as the collapse of the individual *as agent* also implicates the individualistic metaphysics of liberalism."[53] Nietzsche's assault on modern subjectivity, then, undermines the philosophical foundations of the liberal state. After Nietzsche, liberals find themselves thrown into a confusing postmodern world of multiple subject positions and decentered identities. They are forced to try to develop a new kind of liberal politics, one which will not rely upon epistemologically suspect categories of individuality. This is, as we have seen, a difficult task, and one which liberals rarely complete in a satisfying way.

Let us now look in more detail at Nietzsche's anarchy of the subject. Nietzsche famously regarded the free will which is central to most conventional notions of subjectivity as an egregious error. For example, he notes in *Human, All Too Human* that "we do not accuse nature of immorality when it sends thunderstorms and makes us wet: why do we call the harmful man immoral? Because in the latter case we assume a voluntary commanding free will, in the former necessity. But this distinction is an error."[54] Here Nietzsche seems to be advocating a kind of radical determinism: he views individual actions not as the

product of some chimerical free will, but rather as the indirect product of the social and cultural forces which have constituted the individual who performs those actions. Of course, this has radical implications for political theory. If we understand individual actions as the product of the society and culture which produced the individual, then society is quite literally to blame for what its members do. This naturally renders conventional ideas of punishment radically incoherent. "How is it that every execution offends us more than a murder?" Nietzsche demands. "It is the coldness of the judges, the scrupulous preparation, the insight that here a human being is being used as a means of deterring others. For it is not the guilt that is being punished, even when it exists: this lies in educators, parents, environment, in us, not in the murderer—I mean the circumstances that caused him to become one."[55] This is a key point for the postmodern anarchist. If we accept that humans possess no metaphysical, pre-social essence, if we accept that they are little more than nodal points where various social, economic, and cultural forces converge to produce the *illusion* of subjectivity, then the punishment schemes of the liberal state make no sense. Indeed, on this reading it would make more sense to execute *the system itself,* since it is the system that is guilty of manufacturing criminals. Revolutionaries who follow this kind of interpretation would also, perhaps, be less likely to allow their uprisings to descend into the kind of mindless terror which was, unfortunately, to be found in abundance in France during the 1790s, in Russia during the 1920s and 1930s, or in China during the 1950s. I say this because the radical denial of free will applies to the rulers as well as the ruled. This point was made, remarkably enough, by Bakunin, who observed in 1869 that "the kings, the oppressors, exploiters of all kinds, are as guilty as the criminals who have emerged from the masses; like them, they are evildoers who are not guilty, since they, too, are involuntary products of the present social order."[56] Let the guillotine be deployed, then, not against aristocratic or bourgeois tyrants, but against the philosophy of subjectivity which gives such tyrants their power in the first place.

Nietzsche continues his assault on traditional forms of subjectivity and consciousness in *Beyond Good and Evil,* questioning whether "there must necessarily be something that thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an 'ego,' and, finally, that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking—that I *know* what thinking is."[57] An obvious assault on the old Cartesian concept of subjectivity ("I think, therefore I am"), Nietzsche's critique of consciousness also has dramatic political meaning. These "thinking egos"—the rational, autonomous subjects who have dominated political discourse since the Enlightenment—are supposedly the beings who vote in liberal elections, who serve on the liberal ju-

ries which decide the fate of the supposedly autonomous criminals who stand before them, who use the media to inform themselves about issues so that they may form rational opinions, and so on. In short, a whole host of liberal theories and institutions depend upon a certain idea of subjectivity which is, after Nietzsche, extremely difficult to sustain.

This anarchy of the subject makes possible another, possibly even more radical form of anarchy, an anarchy of becoming. If Nietzsche is right about the status of the subject in the late modern period—and an entire tradition of twentieth-century Continental philosophy suggests that his analysis is at least presciently persuasive with regards to the *postmodern* period—then we must radically rethink what it means to be human. Previous concepts of subjectivity (and thus previous political theories) focused on being: I am this autonomous person, I am this rational citizen of a liberal democracy. Nietzsche shifts our attention to becoming. If, as he argues, the subject has no firm metaphysical ground and no center, if indeed our subjectivity is in a constant state of flux, then the meaning of our lives must be constantly changing. It is, of course, somewhat alarming to think that we might have no fixed being, that our essence (if we have one) must reside in a constant stream of transformations. However, the thought of becoming can also be a very liberating thought. All radical thinking demands change, and Nietzsche's demands more than most. To the conventional radical's demand for social and political change, Nietzsche adds the demand for a change in our very consciousness, in the way we view our relationship to time and history. In this sense Nietzsche's thought stands as one of the most radical ever conceived, for it asserts nothing less than this: change is the very heart of who and what we are. And this is true, says Nietzsche, not only of ourselves but of our world. "If the world had a goal, it must have been reached. If there were for it some unintended final state, this also must have been reached. If it were in any way capable of a pausing and becoming fixed, of 'being,' if in the whole course of its becoming it possessed even for a moment this capability of 'being,' then all becoming would long since have come to an end, along with all thinking, all 'spirit.' The fact of 'spirit' as a form of becoming proves that the world has no goal, no final state, and is incapable of being."[58] For Nietzsche the world has no teleology, no destination. The forces of history do not direct us toward a Zeitgeist named Hegel. Indeed, if Hegel was the preeminent philosopher of the state, Nietzsche's philosophy of perpetual becoming can only herald the state's demise.

Conventional radicals who find themselves dismayed at the seeming invincibility of ossified states and entrenched economic structures might find Nietzsche's thought invigorating in this respect, for the philosophy of becoming assures us that nothing is permanent. Oppressive institutions and reactionary

ideas will not endure; these institutions and these ideas are, like the people who created them, nothing more than streams of becoming. The philosophy of becoming thus suggests that we are in a state of permanent and total revolution, a revolution against being.[59] Becoming also implies the kind of radical personal responsibility which is so crucial to anarchist theory. "We, however, *want to become those we are*—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves."[60] Nietzsche views humans not as finished beings but as works of art, and specifically works in progress. The philosophy of becoming implies a single ethical imperative: become who you are, create yourself as a masterpiece. And as Nietzsche argues, this involves creating one's own law. Needless to say, this kind of radical individual legislation is hardly compatible with the legislative system of any statist order.

It is thus misleading to suggest, as Bruce Detweiler does, that the philosophy of becoming "means that the Left's cry for social justice is based upon an error."[61] Detweiler should say that the *orthodox* Left suffers from this error. The postmodern Left embraces becoming, and refuses to formulate its emancipatory policies in terms of epistemologically suspect categories of subjectivity. This may seem strange—whom are we liberating?—but it is the only way for radical thinking to avoid the traps of modernist political theory. And while this postmodern revolutionary thinking may be odd, it is not impossible. The revolutionary possibilities of becoming have been conceived most clearly by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. "All becoming is becoming-minoritarian," they tell us; "becoming-minoritarian is a political affair and necessitates a labor of power, an active micropolitics. This is the opposite of macropolitics, and even of History, in which it is a question of knowing how to win or obtain a majority."[62] This micropolitics is crucial to any postmodern political agenda. The Left must learn once and for all the lessons of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao: macropolitical action, however well-intentioned, does not produce meaningful liberation. The attempt to seize control of the state, to direct the flow of history in the name of some ill-defined class of supposedly rational proletarian subjects, is doomed to failure. But this by no means heralds the end of radical thought. It simply means that we must refocus our attention on the possibilities of postmodern anarchism. "Common sense, the unity of all the faculties at the center constituted by the Cogito," writes Deleuze, "is the State consensus raised to the absolute."[63] But this consensus is confronted by "counterthoughts, which are violent in their acts and discontinuous in their appearances, and whose existence is mobile in history."[64] Nietzsche's thought of becoming is certainly such a counterthought. Its effect is not to encourage the reform of the state or the seizure of state power but rather to abolish the conditions of thinking which make the state possible in the first place.

The micropolitics implied by the philosophy of becoming suggests that our primary duty is to reprogram or redesign ourselves, creating ourselves anew as the kind of beings who can legislate new values and inscribe new laws. Interestingly, then, the anarchy of the subject proclaimed by Nietzsche does not by any means imply the end of our responsibility to constitute ourselves *as* subjects.[65] Out of the critical anarchy of the subject, there emerges an equally powerful but affirmative anarchy of becoming, one which understands humans not as beings with fixed essences but rather as selves-in-process. Of course, the implication of this for state institutions is quite dire: such institutions run the risk of becoming entirely irrelevant once these processes of becoming and self-transformation proceed past a certain point. As Rolando Perez astutely observes, "the overman or over(wo)man is she who no longer needs the State, or any other institution, for that matter. She is her own creator of values and as such the first true an(archist)."[66]

There is, of course, a danger here. The move toward an anarchy of becoming is an extraordinarily radical one, both politically and epistemologically. Like all such moves, it carries with it this risk: if all essence, all fixed being, all laws of states and subjects are to be swept away in the torrent of becoming, can we be sure that this torrent will not carry us into some dark quagmire? Can we avoid, for example, the danger of becoming-fascist? This is a genuine danger, especially if (following Deleuze) we begin to suspect that what lends fascism its terrifying seductive power is its ability to operate at an almost cellular level: "what makes fascism dangerous is its molecular or micropolitical power, for it is a mass movement: a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism."[67] The real horror of fascism grows not, perhaps, out of the fact that it can seize power at the macropolitical level; any state can do that. What is peculiarly horrific about fascism is the way that it penetrates the smallest nooks and crannies of the social organism. "Rural fascism and city or neighborhood fascism, fascism of the Left and fascism of the Right, fascism of the couple, family, school and office: every fascism is defined by a micro-black hole that stands on its own and communicates with the others, before resonating in a great, generalized central black hole."[68] At the microscopic level, fascism is able to divert many of the supposedly liberating streams of personal becoming, sucking them down into the seemingly irresistible gravity-well of an ethical-political black hole.

Is this the limit of becoming? Must we conclude that becoming is bordered by a law after all—a visceral, pretheoretical law which says simply, "I will not give myself over to the fascist inside me"? Perhaps. But I do not believe that this constitutes a fatal flaw of anarcho-becoming. The possibility of fascism does not strip becoming of its anarchistic implications. Rather, microfascism should be understood as the limit which defines becoming, grants it a definite

(albeit fluid and flexible) shape, and prevents it from dissipating into a politically meaningless gasp of chaos. Foucault reminds us that "the limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusion and shadows."[69] I would say of anarcho-becoming and microfascism what Foucault has said of transgression and the limit. They have a definite relationship—not dialectical, to be sure, but spiraling. The threat of microfascism is what motivates anarcho-becoming, what makes it possible, and indeed what completes it. Anarcho-becoming is thus locked in a permanent duel with microfascism, but ironically this duel is actually crucial to the anarchy of becoming, for it is what channels and focuses that anarchy into a coherent program of political self-creation. By granting the anarchy of becoming something to define itself *against*, microfascism takes a strange force—which might otherwise exhaust itself in futile, formless rage—and transforms that force into a powerful postmodern political agenda. *Kill your inner fascist*—this single, minimal limit opens up incomprehensibly vast vistas of becoming, for there are surely a billion ways to fulfill this prescription. And it is a prescription which comes not from the mind but from the viscera—as Nietzsche would surely be delighted to observe.

Anarchy of the subject, anarchy of becoming—Nietzsche lays the foundations for some of the most unique and innovative varieties of anarchist thinking which are to be found in modern political theory. And yet the usual suspects would be quick to point out that there are powerful elements of Nietzsche's thinking which seem to undermine those foundations. Is not *der Übermensch* some kind of acting agent who hopes to impress his will upon human history? And (even more troubling for the postmodern anarchist) doesn't Nietzsche's thought, despite all the rhetorical force of its drive towards becoming, return eternally to a deep concern for being? Nowhere are these twin problems made more manifest than in the works of Martin Heidegger. "*We must grasp Nietzsche's philosophy as the metaphysics of subjectivity,*" Heidegger provocatively declares.[70] "Nietzsche's thought has to plunge into metaphysics because Being radiates its own essence as will to power; that is, as the sort of thing that in the history of truth of beings must be grasped through the projection as will to power. The fundamental occurrence of that history is ultimately the transformation of beingness into subjectivity."[71] Heidegger's deeply disturbing political commitment to the Nazi party makes it tempting, of course, to dismiss his reading of Nietzsche as reactionary. A subject-centered Nietzscheanism which dams up the river of becoming in a futile attempt to isolate the elusive essence of Being—surely, says the postmodern anarchist, this is nothing more than a

limit case which shows the extreme ethical and epistemological dangers inherent in the totalitarian "liberal" consensus of the usual suspects.

Yet such a dismissal is too easy. Jean-François Lyotard, one of the foremost French postmodern radicals, has persuasively insisted that "one must maintain both assertions—that of the greatness of [Heidegger's] thought and that of the objectionable nature of [his] 'politics'—without concluding that if one is true then the other is false."[72] For Heidegger's thought *is* great: it provides useful answers to many interpretive questions regarding Nietzsche's philosophy, and it helps to tease out some very interesting answers to some of the most stubborn riddles in Nietzsche's writing.[73] Controversial and problematic though it is in some ways, there is much to recommend Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as "the last metaphysician in the West."

For the postmodern anarchist, what is most valuable in Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche is precisely this point: Nietzsche stands at a crucial transition point in the intellectual history of the Western world. He is simultaneously the last metaphysician and the entry into postmodernity. This limits the radical potential of Nietzsche's thinking in one sense, for it means that Nietzsche's philosophy must contain elements of a very traditional metaphysics. Yet the unique dual identity of Nietzsche's thought also provides that thinking with a multifaceted theoretical versatility which makes it *more* radical, in another sense, than any previous philosophy. Yes, the metaphysics of subjectivity lingers in Nietzsche's writings, and yes, those writings are haunted by the specter of Being. No one knew this better than Nietzsche. Perhaps this is why he chose to title his second book *Die Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen.* Typically translated as *Untimely Meditations,* this title has also been rendered somewhat less accurately (but perhaps more interestingly, for our present purposes) as *Thoughts Out of Season.* This is the essence of Nietzsche's thought, to the extent that it can be said to have one. He simultaneously concludes the project of Western metaphysics, and begins to think thoughts *whose time has not yet come.* "I know my fate," Nietzsche declares in a section of *Ecce Homo* which the humorless commentator might overlook simply because it is entitled "Why I Am a Destiny." "One day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous—a crisis without equal on earth."[74] And Nietzsche is quite careful to emphasize that this is a specifically *political* crisis: "it is only beginning with me that the earth knows *great politics.*"[75]

We should not let Nietzsche's playful bombast obscure the fact that he is, to a certain extent, right about this. Nietzsche's thought does indeed mark the beginning of great politics. Particularly in France, some of the best and brightest minds of the twentieth century have dedicated substantial portions of their intellectual careers to the project of articulating this new radical politics.

Deleuze and Derrida, Baudrillard and Bataille, Lyotard and Foucault have gone to great lengths to turn the sketch for a postmodern anarchism which is to be found in Nietzsche's writings into a full-fledged political philosophy. For Nietzsche himself, however, postmodern anarchism must remain an agenda for the future. His thought continues to be captive to the metaphysical tradition which it completes. He must leave it to others to articulate the full meaning of the political and philosophical position toward which the twin anarchies of subjectivity and becoming clearly point. Like all the great radical thinking of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche's thought is utopian. It develops a devastating critique of the world as it is, and dreams of a better future. But the construction of that future is for those who follow.

So: Nietzsche's thought, which explodes all manifestations of the conventional political subject—its rationality, its language, its thoughts, its theories, its states, its economics—stands at the origin of the subversive counteridea which I call postmodern anarchism. Such an anarchism represents a tactical use of Nietzsche's thinking, not (as the usual suspects propose) to shore up the rapidly eroding theoretical foundations of liberal democracy but rather to finish off that withered remnant of subject-centered post-Enlightenment politics, in order to open up a space for something more interesting. Postmodern anarchism asserts that the problems which face us today are not the result of flaws in our political structures which can be alleviated through reform or through the seizure of state power. Rather, the problem lies in the structures themselves, and in the epistemologies which sustain those structures. Nietzsche's anarchy of the subject makes it quite clear that our culture is to blame for the sorry state of affairs in which we find ourselves. Following this guilty verdict, modern political culture in general and liberal political culture in particular may expect to receive a death sentence. The liberals warn that this way lies madness. We say: we cannot know what may lie further down this river of becoming. But at least we know that it will be radically different from the disastrous political situation in which we find ourselves presently.

Perhaps the greatest appeal of postmodern Nietzschean anarchism lies in the fact that it runs little risk of falling into the theoretical and political traps faced by all merely modern revolutions. Marxism and nineteenth-century anarchism criticized capital, bourgeois values, and the liberal state—but they did so using the language, the terms, and the theoretical tools of the very bourgeois order they sought to undermine. Lenin and Mao sought to reshape the state into something which could sanction genuine political and economic freedom, but they retained so many of the old forms that they ended up reproducing the old varieties of repression and exploitation. "The problem for revolutionaries today," as Deleuze argues,

> is to unite within the purpose of a particular struggle without falling into the despotic and bureaucratic organization of the party or state apparatus. We seek a kind of war machine that will not re-create a state apparatus, a nomadic unit related to the outside that will not revive an internal despotic unity. Perhaps this is what is most profound in Nietzsche's thought and marks the extent of his break with philosophy, at least so far as it is manifested in the aphorism: he made thought into a machine of war—a battering ram—into a nomadic force.[76]

As always, it is the performative effect of Nietzsche's thought, rather than its explicit content, which concerns us. And one crucial effect of his thinking is that it removes philosophy from the horizons of the state. This is an event which is unprecedented in the history of Western thought. And it is an event whose ramifications will continue to be felt for some time. Just as news of the death of God takes a long time to reach us, so too does news of the death of the state. But word of these deaths draws inexorably nearer. For no God and no state can hope to survive a full engagement with that thinking which detonates all fixed human identities and reveals as mere phantasms of consciousness all fixed politics, economics, and culture.

Notes

Because there are a great many different editions and translations of Nietzsche's writings, I refer to those writings by section number (or in the case of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* by section name) rather than by page number whenever possible. I do, however, refer to *Schopenhauer as Educator* (published in *Untimely Meditations*) by page number, as the length of the sections in this work makes it impractical to refer to the work by section number.

1. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* essay 2, section 12.

2. Although this aspect of Nietzsche's thinking has been widely disregarded, a few commentators have noted it. See, for example, Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible,* 155 ff.

3. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge,* 17.

4. I mean "spectacular," of course, in the sense that Guy Debord uses the term. See Debord, *Society of the Spectacle.*

5. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 83 ff.

6. Ansell-Pearson, "Nietzsche, woman, and political theory," in *Nietzsche, Feminism, and Political Theory,* ed. Paul Patton, 29.

7. As Michel Foucault points out in *Discipline and Punish*, however, habitual criminals or "delinquents" such as the usual suspects actually *do* perform a number of very important functions for the state. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 272 ff.

8. Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault,* 58-59.

9. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* 83.

10. David Owen is being kind to Rorty when he suggests mildly that "it is not immediately apparent that the commitment to a culture of individual ironists . . . can easily be reconciled with an interest in developing human solidarity." (Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics, and Modernity,* 148).

11. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 196.

12. David Owen points out that it is very difficult for Rorty to justify this rejection of cruelty without descending into precisely the kind of epistemologically suspect essentialism which Rorty strives to avoid. See Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics and Modernity*, 149.

13. Gerald Mara and Suzanne Dovi astutely point out, for example, that Rorty must exclude the figure of the madman, a crucial figure in Nietzschean philosophy. See Mara and Dovi, "Mill, Nietzsche, and the Identity of Postmodern Liberalism," 3.

14. The cultural implications of simulation and virtuality have been theorized most extensively by Jean Baudrillard. See for example *The Perfect Crime,* especially 25 ff. Cybernetics has been presented as a radical alternative to conventional subjectivity, most famously by postmodern feminists such as Donna Haraway. See Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs."

15. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 94.

16. Deleuze, *Foucault,* 92.

17. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 96.

18. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* "Before Sunrise."

19. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 315.

20. This is also a problem for Lawrence Hatab, who attempts in *A Nietzschean Defense of Democracy* to use philosophy as a model for an ostensibly new kind of political pluralism which in fact ends up looking very much like old-fashioned liberal consensus politics. Unfortunately, the measures which Hatab proposes to ensure that radical dissenting voices will not be silenced by this consensus (equal funding for all public schools, media access for third parties) seem neither particularly innovative nor particularly likely to be realized—at least, not within the context of contemporary American political culture. See Hatab, *A Nietzschean Defense of Democracy,* 223 and 226.

21. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* section 1.

22. Ibid., sections 42 and 864.

23. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* section 242.

24. It is their recognition of this important fact which prompted Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to devote some of the most interesting sections of *A Thousand Plateaus* to a detailed analysis of the figure of the nomad. See for example Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 368 ff.

25. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* section 256.

26. See Call, "Aspects of Enlightened Utopianism in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra.*"

27. Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator,* in *Untimely Meditations*, page 148.

28. Nietzsche, *Daybreak,* section 3.

29. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* "On the Old and New Tablets," section 2.

30. Ibid., "On Self Overcoming."

31. Ibid., "On the Old and New Tablets," section 26.

32. For example, the second essay of the *Genealogy* provides the theoretical underpinnings for Foucault's *Discipline and Punish,* and also for some very important sections of Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia.*

33. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* essay 2, section 11.

34. Ibid., essay 2, section 12.

35. Ibid., essay 2, section 15.

36. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* 192.

37. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* essay 2, sections 19-20.

38. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* 141.

39. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* 197.

40. On the basis of this critique, Mark Warren has astutely placed Nietzsche within the tradition of "romantic anticapitalism." See Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought,* 224.

41. Nietzsche, *Daybreak,* section 175.

42. Ibid., section 206.

43. Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator* in *Untimely Meditations,* page 164.

44. Ibid., page 150.

45. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* "On the New Idol."

46. Ibid.

47. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human,* section 235.

48. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* section 174.

49. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human,* section 276.

50. Nietzsche, *Daybreak,* section 183.

51. Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche,* 128.

52. Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity,* 156.

53. Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought,* 215.

54. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human,* section 102.

55. Ibid., section 70.

56. Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy,* 150.

57. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* section 16.

58. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* section 1062.

59. One could argue, perhaps, that the philosophy of the eternal return expressed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* opposes this radical concept of becoming. After all, the idea of eternal return suggests the possibility that, although nothing is permanent, everything returns—including smashed states, overturned economic structures, and so on. It is generally accepted, however, that the eternal return is not meant to be taken as a metaphysical doctrine but rather as a psychologically performative idea. In other words, the eternal return is not meant to describe the literal nature of time and history but rather to condition a certain human attitude *toward* time and history—and this attitude is, I would argue, an attitude of becoming. For a brief summary of this debate on the meaning of the eternal return, see Call, "Aspects of Enlightened Utopianism in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra,*" 89-90.

60. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* section 335.

61. Detweiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism,* 77.

62. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 291-92.

63. Ibid., 376.

64. Ibid.

65. I therefore think that Daniel Conway is right to suggest that the primary goal of Nietzschean critique is not social reform but self-transformation. See Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political,* 63. In this context, I would also agree with Richard White's intriguing suggestion that "after proclaiming the 'death of man,' recent Continental philosophy has tended to avoid this issue as anathema; but through its account of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the eternal recurrence, the will to power, and how one becomes what one is, Nietzsche's philosophy still offers a very powerful and compelling discussion of individual sovereignty and the self-in-process, which is aware of the pitfalls and excesses that have plagued traditional accounts of autonomy and the individual life." (White, *Nietzsche and the Problem of Sovereignty,* 185).

66. Perez, *On An(archy) and Schizoanalysis,* 20. I disagree with Perez's claim that this is a "non-political an(archy)," however (Ibid., 17). Perez seems to make the common mistake here of assuming that personal self-transformation is not a political act. But as people pursue their own personal becomings, these becomings are bound to have macropolitical effects. Such transformations as becoming-environmentalist, becoming-feminist, or even becoming-vegetarian begin as personal changes, but they have macropolitical implications.

67. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 215.

68. Ibid., 214.

69. Foucault, "Preface to Transgression" in *Language, Countermemory, Practice,* 34.

70. Heidegger, *Nietzsche,* volume 4, 147 (Heidegger's emphasis).

71. Ibid., 181.

72. Lyotard, "Heidegger and 'the jews,'" 138.

73. Among the most interesting of these is Heidegger's fascinating attempt to read the principle of eternal recurrence in a way which will still permit action and decision. See, for example, Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, volume 2, 57.

74. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* "Why I Am a Destiny," section 1.

75. Ibid.

76. Deleuze, "Nomad Thought" in *The New Nietzsche,* ed. David B. Allison, 149.

Chapter Two

A Thought Outside the State: Foucault

The recent translation of the first two volumes of Foucault's *Essential Works* has given the English-speaking world important new insight into the political implications of Foucaultian thought. These volumes include, for example, an interview conducted shortly before Foucault's death, in which he remarked that he had "been situated in most of the squares of the political checkerboard, one after another and sometimes simultaneously: as anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, nihilist, explicit or secret anti-Marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, new liberal, and so on. . . . None of these descriptions is important by itself; taken together, on the other hand, they mean something. And I must admit that I rather like what they mean."[1] What, then, is the meaning of this puzzling confusion as to the political consequences of Foucault's philosophy? Is it possible to articulate a viable and coherent political position on the basis of Foucault's thought? And if so, what might such a position look like?

As with Nietzsche, a number of liberal critics have endeavored to dismiss or curtail the political importance of Foucault's work. Again, Richard Rorty is typical in this regard. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* Rorty admits that Foucault's work is valuable to the extent that it reveals the constraints which liberal societies impose upon their members; Rorty develops a "disagreement with Foucault," however, by asserting that the "decrease in pain" which liberal societies enjoy is enough to compensate for these constraints.[2] Rather provocatively, Rorty claims that Western social and political thought may not really need the kind of conceptual revolution toward which, I shall argue below, Foucault's thinking seems to point. Here I wish to develop a disagreement with Rorty. Though I do agree with him that nineteenth-century liberalism represents an impressive and historically important body of work, I do not agree with his assertion that the political philosophy of John Stuart Mill represents essentially

the last word of Western political thinking.[3] There is a certain arrogance behind the claim that liberalism is such an epistemologically complete body of theory that no new theory shall ever be required once the liberal viewpoint has been fully articulated. Ironically (and this is perhaps one element of Rorty's liberal "ironism") such a claim is similar in scope and structure to Marxist claims about the "end of history," though Rorty would presumably not wish to grant dialectical materialism the same sort of teleological priority which he reserves for liberalism. Rorty's claim that our civil society should be strictly structured around political ideas which are now well over a century old also seems to me a dangerously ahistorical position. Rorty's privileging of nineteenth-century liberalism excludes and silences the vast body of political thought which has, in fact, developed after (and frequently against) the liberal position. In particular, of course, the extreme priority which Rorty grants to liberalism imposes a disturbing silence upon radical thinking.

Rorty's reading of Foucault is troubled by two related, pretheoretical liberal commitments. The first is a commitment to the idea of consensus. Rorty insists that a consensus among liberals is a good enough basis for a society.[4] Many postmodern feminists, however, would find this to be an extremely dangerous claim. Judith Butler argues that "the power relations that condition and limit dialogic possibilities need first to be interrogated. Otherwise, the model of dialogue risks relapsing into a liberal model that assumes that speaking agents occupy equal positions of power and speak with the same presuppositions about what constitutes 'agreement' and 'unity' and, indeed, that those are the goals to be sought."[5] In short, Butler suggests that the liberal model of discourse which Rorty advocates is one which grants an implicit, invisible priority to those who occupy the position of the masculine speaking subject. In a similar vein, Rosi Braidotti has argued that "there cannot be social change without the construction of new kinds of desiring subjects as molecular, nomadic, and multiple. One must start by leaving open spaces of experimentation, of search, of transition: becoming-nomads. This is no call for easy pluralism, either—but rather a passionate plea for the recognition of the need to respect the multiplicity and to find forms of action that reflect the complexity—without drowning in it."[6] Postmodern multiplicity is a social and epistemological principle which is quite different from Rorty's liberal pluralism. For postmodern feminists like Butler and Braidotti, a liberal consensus framework is most certainly not the basis for an adequate epistemology; the problem of consensus is, rather, precisely the site where dispute and contestation occur. And Foucault expresses similar concerns. For Foucault (and Rorty quotes him in this context) "the problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a 'we' in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather,

necessary to make the future formation of a 'we' possible by elaborating the question."[7] It seems to me that this gets right to the heart of the debate about postmodern politics. The postmodern liberal (Rorty) privileges agreement, community, and shared values over diversity and difference. A Foucaultian, on the other hand, believes that it is much more important to maintain a space for nonconformity, transgression, dissent, and difference: in short, he or she wants to protect and defend an Other which could easily be eclipsed by totalizing liberal discourses. To be sure, the Foucaultian's emphasis on diversity does not preclude the possibility that she might place herself within a "we"—but she must be careful to do so only in a tactical and provisional way. It is, in short, perfectly possible for a Foucaultian to occupy what I described above as the postmodern commons. The danger emerges when people like Rorty try to imagine a commons which will include each and every member of liberal society. Such a move is extremely problematic, because Rorty's universal liberal commons is necessarily built upon a commitment to certain conceptual categories of liberalism, such as the public sphere. These categories do not necessarily resonate with every member of the community which Rorty wishes to construct; in particular, of course, radicals often view such categories with extreme skepticism. Ironically, then, it seems that the very act of attempting to generate a universal consensus may be exclusionary by its very nature. By insisting that he has identified the proper "we" to which *everyone* should belong, Rorty forecloses the possibility of future debate; for Foucault, this is too great a price to pay.

The second commitment under which postmodern liberals labor is, of course, to the institutions of liberal society itself. Richard Bernstein develops a rather telling critique of this aspect of Rorty's thinking: "there are forces and tendencies at work (e.g., class conflict, social division, patriarchy, racism) that are compatible with liberal political practices but nevertheless foster *real* inequality and limit effective political freedom. At the very least, Rorty's 'defense' of liberal democracy requires him to show the falsity or speciousness of the claims of the radical critics of liberalism. But Rorty does not argue his case, he simply asserts it."[8] Rorty's pretheoretical commitment to the political institutions of liberalism also causes him to distort the meaning of Foucault's thinking in some unfortunate ways. For example, Rorty recognizes the philosophical validity of Foucault's anti-Platonism, but refuses to admit that this philosophy could imply that there is something wrong with liberal societies, or with the "networks of power" which characterize such societies.[9] Following Jacques Derrida, however, I would argue that the *logos* which begins with Plato represents the theoretical and semiotic underpinnings of all formally rational systems, including the liberal ones. As Derrida notes, "the possibility

of capitalization and of politico-administrative organization had always passed through the hands of scribes who laid down the terms of many wars and whose function was always irreducible, whoever the contending parties might be."[10] The economic, political, and bureaucratic institutions upon which modern liberal societies rely so heavily depend upon a certain kind of writing and a certain kind of reason which, as Derrida persuasively argues, originates in Platonic thought. If Rorty accepts the critique of Platonism, he must therefore be prepared for the possibility that this critique may undermine the linguistic and epistemological preconditions of liberal society itself.

One final element that is missing from Rorty's liberal reading of Foucault is an adequate account of Foucault's genealogical method. Rorty attempts to hold on to what he sees as valuable in Foucault's work (he likes Foucault's critique of Cartesian epistemology), while rejecting the political implications of the Foucaultian genealogy. The problem here is that these strands of Foucaultian thought cannot be so easily separated. A heavily politicized Nietzschean genealogy is the very core of Foucault's method. It is this method which motivates his empirical work and his epistemological critiques; indeed, it is his genealogical method which makes these things *possible*. It is therefore difficult for Rorty to accept as valuable the results of Foucaultian genealogy while simultaneously rejecting the political consequences of the genealogical method itself. The "for-the-sake-of-which" of genealogy is resistance, as Todd May has correctly noted.[11] Foucault can therefore reasonably be read as a "Left-Nietzschean," whose genealogies challenge the domination of a particular kind of political theory.[12] I hardly need to add that the kind of political theory whose domination they challenge is that of liberals such as Rorty.

By engaging in an unquestioning celebration of our present, Rorty is producing precisely the kind of discourse which Foucaultian (and also Nietzschean) genealogy is meant to combat. Rorty begins by assuming that our modern liberal societies are in some sense better than earlier ones. Of course, this immediately raises a troubling question: to what universal standards or criteria can Rorty possibly hope to appeal as he attempts to substantiate such claims? The point of genealogy, in Foucault as in Nietzsche, is precisely to show how *different* our culture is from those that came before, and to show that our world is not theirs. To claim that our world is better than theirs is as outrageous as claiming that capitalist political economy is better than mercantilism, or that oxidation is better than phlogiston. These things come from different epistemological worlds, and they do not permit such easy comparisons. The motivation which underlies Foucault's genealogical work is precisely the historian's desire to subvert a naive and presentist faith in our own superiority.

Against Rorty, I wish to argue for the legitimacy and importance of a postmodern anarchist trajectory which is, I believe, to be found within Foucault's work. Of course, to call Foucault a postmodernist *or* an anarchist would be to meet with the same Nietzschean laughter as one would receive for calling him a Marxist or a Gaullist technocrat; to label (libel?) him postmodern *and* an anarchist is surely a theoretical obscenity. I believe, however, that there are sufficient grounds for referring to his *thinking* as a variety of postmodern anarchism. Let me begin with the term postmodern. Certainly Foucault rejects this as a label for his work; he has even been known to claim that he does not understand what kinds of problems are shared by the people we call postmodern.[13] And yet we must recognize, despite the author's claims to the contrary, that Foucault shares some fundamental philosophical positions with a group of thinkers who are referred to with increasing frequency as postmodern. The thinkers in question include Barthes, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Derrida, and Deleuze; the positions in question include an incredulity toward metanarratives, a hostility toward the colonizing tendencies of the Enlightenment's autonomous subject-position, a powerful critique of rationalist semiotics, and (most importantly for our purposes here) a strong interest in articulating a new kind of radical politics, one which will not remain trapped within the dialectical dead ends of Marxism.

I call Foucault's thinking postmodern in this sense, leaving aside as theoretically uninteresting any questions about where the late Michel might have positioned himself with respect to modernity and postmodernity. Let us now turn to the question of anarchism. Again, I am not interested in whether Michel Foucault was an anarchist; I am interested in the political trajectories along which his thought may guide us. Also, we must recognize that although his thinking contains significant and profound anarchist implications, that thinking could never permit itself to be *explicitly* anarchist. This is because (as I shall argue below) the kind of anarchism implied by Foucault's thought—*postmodern* anarchism—adamantly refuses to make itself into a totalizing theory. For Foucault's thinking to announce "I am anarchistic" would be impossible, for such a totalizing formulation would immediately foreclose the possibilities of an ongoing, open-ended, fluid anarchist discourse. Ironically, the thinking that points to postmodern anarchism can do so only indirectly and with great caution.

Foucault's postmodern anarchism is thus very different from the merely modern anarchism of Bakunin or Kropotkin. This is a new anarchism, and one which operates at a much higher theoretical level. Foucault's critique includes, but does not begin with, the state. Instead, following Nietzsche, Foucault begins with the humanist subject which has dominated all post-Enlightenment

discourse in the West. Foucault shows us that although this subject has constantly claimed to be the authorizing agent of a profound liberation, its discourse has instead created disciplinary techniques which are an affront to freedom. And Foucault goes further, criticizing the rationalism inherent in this discourse, showing us that the language of reason employed by the humanist subject is also disturbingly statist.

Against this humanist discursive order, Foucault offers us two powerful weapons: micropolitics and genealogy. Foucault's micropolitics is based on his observation that power does not operate, as many people believe, from the top down. Rather, power is capillary: it is everywhere, and it flows through every social relation. Most importantly for the postmodern anarchist, this means that everyone has power: not only the oppressors, but those who suffer under oppression as well. Where there is power there is always already resistance; this is because, as Gilles Deleuze aptly puts it, power for Foucault "passes through the hands of the mastered no less than through the hands of the masters (since it passes through every related force). A profound Nietzscheanism."[14] Foucault's use of Nietzsche is to be found, then, in the micropolitical theory of power, but the influence of Nietzsche is also evident in Foucault's genealogical method. Foucault uses the Nietzschean genealogy to disturb and fragment some "truths" which are, if anything, even more deeply embedded in our modern intellectual culture than the Christian values toward which Nietzsche was so hostile. Foucault develops a genealogy of the modern self, examining (particularly in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*) the practices and techniques by which we are constructed as individuals. Like Nietzsche, Foucault applies genealogy to show that *things could be otherwise*. Indeed, one might suspect that genealogy has a certain performative aspect: perhaps when we demonstrate the possibility of a different order, we have already effected some type of change in the present order of things. Genealogy subverts the Enlightenment's autonomous subject and its linguistic practices; it thus opens up a discursive space in which a new thinking is possible. Foucault calls this *the thought of the outside*. Because of its antistatism, its critique of "governmentality," its antihumanism, and its assault on rationalism, I call it postmodern anarchism.

Logos and *Nomos*

Before turning to a more detailed exploration of Foucault's postmodern anarchism, I would like to examine some of the theoretical origins of that anarchism, and consider some of the ways in which Foucaultian anarchism differs

from previous varieties of anarchist thinking. I take as paradigmatic of the nineteenth-century anarchist position the philosophy of the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin, particularly as developed in *Statism and Anarchy*. This work encapsulates most of the major precepts and problems of what I call classical or orthodox anarchism. Like nineteenth-century Marxism, Bakunin's anarchism attempts to bring about a dramatic social and political revolution in order to realize a utopian vision of total human emancipation. Also like the Marxism with which it was contemporary, Bakunin's anarchism relies heavily upon an analysis of class power. Bakunin's main critical target is the nineteenth-century state, which he understands to be the political organ of the dominant classes. Here one may be reminded of Marx's famous dictum that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."[15] However, Bakunin's class analysis differs from that of the Marxist in at least one crucial respect. Bakunin does not privilege the bourgeoisie as a modernizing class, nor the proletariat as a revolutionary one. For Bakunin, the most powerful and most dangerous state is not a well-established bourgeois parliamentary state such as that of England. It is the German state, where the conservative Junker aristocracy has allied itself with the emerging German bourgeoisie to produce a state which, under Bismarck, attains new heights of reaction.

> Germany in its present form, unified by the brilliant and patriotic duplicity of Prince Bismarck, relies . . . on the patriotism of its loyal subjects; a boundless national ambition that goes back into ancient history; and the equally boundless worship of authority, and obedience to it, for which the German nobility, the German bourgeoisie, the German bureaucracy, the German Church, the entire guild of German scholars, and often, alas, under their combined influence, the German people, too, are all distinguished to this day. Germany, I say, proud of the despotic-constitutional power of its autocrat and sovereign, represents and embodies one of the two poles of contemporary social and political development: the pole of statism, the state, reaction.[16]

In Bakunin's view, conservative German scholars dupe German peasants and workers into accepting an equally conservative alliance between "iron and rye," and false consciousness is thereby institutionalized.

An anarchist like Bakunin finds the Marxist class analysis to be inapplicable to the less industrially developed parts of the nineteenth-century world, including Eastern Europe in particular. Bakunin identifies both the peasants and the industrial workers as possible revolutionary classes, and accuses the

Marxists of abandoning the former to the potential rule of the latter. "If the proletariat is to be the ruling class, it may be asked, then whom will it rule? There must be yet another proletariat which will be subject to this new rule, this new state. It might be the peasant rabble, for example, which, as we know, does not enjoy the favor of the Marxists."[17] With rather uncanny precision, Bakunin thus anticipates the social and political problems of the future Soviet Union. And Bakunin's critique of Marxism is based not only upon a recognition of problems with the Marxist class analysis; Bakunin understands that Marxism suffers from methodological problems as well. In particular, Bakunin contrasts an anarchist social revolution with the abstract revolution of Hegelian metaphysicians, positivists, "and in general all the present-day worshippers of the goddess science."[18]

It is here that Bakunin provides us, perhaps quite inadvertently, with a point of departure for postmodern anarchism. Already in the nineteenth century, Bakunin was articulating something which would become increasingly commonplace in twentieth-century thought: namely, a radically skeptical interpretation of modern scientific thinking. Science, for Bakunin, was marred by a dangerous and disturbing statism. "What is now the basis of all the influence exerted by the States?" Bakunin demands. "It is science. Yes, science. The science of government, the science of administration, and financial science; the science of fleecing the people without making them complain too much and, when they begin to complain, the science of imposing silence, forbearance, and obedience on them by scientifically organizing violence."[19] Foucault would later generalize Bakunin's critique by speaking out against the "sciences of man" in their entirety. And so it would seem that postmodern anarchism is a political and philosophical trajectory which *does* begin in the nineteenth century—though of course, a Foucaultian would be quick to point out that the classical anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin must always remain caught within a fundamentally rationalist nineteenth-century episteme. The nineteenth-century anarchist critique of science, then, has a status similar to that of the anarchism which (as I argued in chapter 1) can be derived from Nietzsche's thinking. In each case we are dealing with a thought which represents a radical beginning or origin, but which cannot possibly be aware of its full implications or eventual consequences. Bakunin's assault on scientific thinking is therefore necessarily limited in its scope. Bakunin does not reject science in its entirety; rather he rejects certain *kinds* of scientific thinking, especially those which seem to retain a complicity with statist thought. Thus he calls for "the *revolt of life against science*, or rather against the *government of science*, not to destroy science—that would be high treason to humanity—but to remand it to its place so that it can never leave it again."[20] Science, then, might be acceptable to Bakunin—but only if it

renounces its political claims, and refuses to see itself as a system of thought which might rule over society.

Postmodern anarchism considerably broadens the classical anarchist critique of scientific thinking, particularly by expanding that critique (as Baudrillard does) to include the rationalist semiotics which form the foundation of modern science. Like its classical predecessor, however, postmodern anarchism does not necessarily abandon the category of scientific thought altogether, but rather seeks to isolate and oppose those forms of scientific thinking which contribute in some way to political oppression. Here we can turn to the work of Gilles Deleuze to identify an important distinction between "royal science" and "nomad science." For Deleuze, royal science involves the search for laws and the extraction of constants, whereas for nomad science, "it is not exactly a question of extracting constants from variables but of placing the variables themselves in a state of continuous variation."[21] Deleuze's fluid, flexible nomad science thus has a great deal in common with the postmodern concept of writing developed by Roland Barthes. For Barthes, writing "liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law."[22] Nomad science, then, is a kind of thinking which can (hopefully) resist the temptation to become a colonizing, totalitarian discourse. Royal science, on the other hand, is the type of thinking which permits and authorizes state power. It does so by authorizing the search for invariable scientific laws; this closely parallels the quest for absolute laws in the realm of human affairs. Similarly, the attempt to "extract constants" parallels the attempt to create a constant, and therefore static, social and political order. Royal science is the kind of scientific thinking which aroused the ire of Bakunin in the nineteenth century, and which inspires the twentieth-century critiques of the postmodernists. It is a kind of science which, unfortunately, counts Marx and his followers among its adherents, since no one pursues the quest for universal historical law more ardently than the Marxists, and nothing is more static than the socialist utopia which supposedly awaits us at the end of history.

Jean-François Lyotard has argued persuasively that the postmodern should be viewed as a part of the modern.[23] Similarly, postmodern anarchism is, in a sense, the continuation of Bakunin's project. But there are vital distinctions between these two projects as well. First of all, Bakunin's work does not entirely elude the rationalist metaphysics which he so strongly and rightly criticizes; in this sense Bakunin's thought remains, unfortunately, a variety of royal science. Bakunin's thinking relies too heavily on binary opposition. "Either the bourgeois educated world must subdue and enslave the elemental force of the rebellious people so as to compel the laboring masses to work as before by force

of bayonet, knout, or rod . . . or the workers will at last throw off their hated, centuries-old yoke and eradicate bourgeois exploitation and the bourgeois civilization that is based upon it."[24] There are several problems with this kind of either-or logic. First and most obviously, the actual political and social situation is almost always more complex than an analysis based on simple binary opposition will allow. Even as Bakunin was denouncing Germany as the most reactionary state in Europe, Bismarck had begun to develop the social programs which would eventually come to serve as the model for twentieth-century welfare states. Whatever we may think of such states, we must recognize that the laboring masses in these states are not precisely enslaved by force of bayonet, nor have they eradicated bourgeois civilization.

On a more theoretical level, we must acknowledge the possibility that binary logic itself may be deeply implicated in statism. Deleuze speaks of a "state apparatus that proceeds by a One-Two, distributes binary distinctions, and forms a milieu of interiority. It is a double articulation that makes the State apparatus into a *stratum*."[25] If anarchism is to avoid the deadly danger of reinscribing the very state power it seeks to overturn, it cannot continue to develop its critiques in terms of such binary oppositions. This is especially crucial because, as Deleuze points out, such a statist binary logic implies a particular kind of political and theoretical space, a "striated" space. The question of the state is, in an important sense, a spatial question. It is literally a question of physical boundaries and territories and the movement of troops, to be sure, but beyond that, it is also a question of what Foucault would call an epistemological space. The state remains one of the dominant political figures of the modern world, in large part because statist thought is able to chart a political space in which all thinking points back to the state itself. This is the trap into which orthodox anarchists like Bakunin fall. Bakunin's critique relies upon conceptions of both physical and theoretical space which are, in the Deleuzian model, implicitly statist. *Statism and Anarchy* is dominated by a very conventional political geography: Bakunin discusses the German state, and the French state, and the Russian state, treating each national example as a unique case to be analyzed separately. And Bakunin occupies a fairly traditional theoretical space as well. His analysis is dominated by a standard nineteenth-century class analysis; his vision of praxis calls for the organization of the lower classes into an increasingly self-conscious political movement, and so on. Bakunin fights all of his battles on the theoretical terrain of the state itself; he therefore cannot hope to win.

Against a statist "striated" space, Deleuze theorizes a "smooth" space, a nomad space or *nomos*. "There is an opposition between the *logos* and the *nomos*, the law and the *nomos*."[26] *Logos*, which refers to both Reason and the

Word, embodies the ambitious and terrifying attempt to combine these two principles into an almost unstoppable rationalist discourse. Deleuze understands the *logos* as the point of conjunction between a certain kind of thinking (royal science), a certain kind of politics (The Law, the political order of all modern states), and also a certain kind of space (striated). Deleuze's project is thus quite close, in some ways, to that of Jacques Derrida, who ambitiously theorizes the history of Western philosophy from Plato to Hegel as the domination of the *logos* over writing: "in an original and non-'relativist' sense, logocentrism is an ethnocentric metaphysics. It is related to the history of the West."[27] For Deleuze as for Derrida, the history of the *logos* is the history of a vast oppression. This does not mean, of course, that either Deleuze or Derrida endorses the complete abandonment of logic or reason, for to do so would be tantamount to giving up on critical thinking and philosophy itself. Rather, the critique of the *logos* should be understood as an attack on that particular kind of rationalism which presents itself as eternal and unchanging, as universally valid and objectively true. This critique must and does retain a space for a kind of critical reason—Derrida's deconstruction, or Deleuze's nomad thinking. A reconfigured postmodern rationality of this sort attempts to avoid the totalizing aspect of logocentric reason by refusing to claim for itself the mantle of absolute truth. Such a nomadic, postmodern reason insists upon its right to remain perpetually fluid, malleable, and provisional. It uses guerrilla tactics against the "total war" strategy of the *logos*.

The *nomos,* then, stands outside the *logos* in a profound way. The *nomos* is, perhaps, a version of what Derrida imagines when he conducts a brief genealogy of linear writing and the spatial conceptions that go along with it: "the enigmatic model of the *line* is thus the very thing that philosophy could not see when it had its eyes open on the interior of its own history. This night begins to lighten a little at the moment when linearity—which is not loss or absence but the repression of pluri-dimensional symbolic thought—relaxes its oppression."[28] To envision the return of a thought and a space which can be multidimensional rather than oppressively linear is also to imagine a profoundly radical political space. This point has been emphasized, for example, by French feminists such as Luce Irigaray. Irigaray argues that "we need to proceed in such a way that linear reading is no longer possible: that is, the retroactive impact of the end of each word, utterance, or sentence upon its beginning must be taken into consideration in order to undo the power of its teleological effect, including its deferred action."[29] Irigaray's argument suggests that the critique of linear narrative is a vital oppositional tactic which can and should be deployed in the ongoing struggle against phallocentrism. If the linearity of the *logos* is always already a masculine principle, then the benefits of this tactical antilinearity for

feminist theory and practice are clear. But the advantages of this unique anti-linear thinking extend beyond the horizons of the feminist project. Irigaray's feminism (along with Derrida's deconstruction) can be seen as occupying the postmodern commons I outlined above. And the challenge to linearity is a gesture which should be of great interest to all occupants of that commons. Most importantly for our purposes here, such an assault upon linear thinking is a vital part of the project of postmodern anarchism. As a principle of linear thinking, the *logos* partakes of the problematic territoriality which always underwrites state power. A postmodern anarchist would therefore want to counter the linearity of the *logos* with the fluid flexibility of an anarchistic *nomos*. As Rolando Perez notes in his interesting study of Deleuze, "the an(archist) . . . is someone who does *not* lead his or her life according to some universal Referent: according to a rigidly segmented set of boundaries and territorialities."[30] Ideas of territoriality which are so crucial to the articulation of a statist striated space evaporate within the smooth, nonlinear, multi-dimensional chaos of the *nomos*.

The relationship between *logos* and *nomos* is a complex and agonistic one. In a sense, the *nomos* is quite vulnerable to attacks from the *logos*. Deleuze argues that "as a general rule, a smooth space, a vectorial field, a nonmetric multiplicity are always translatable . . . this is the triumph of the *logos* or the law over the *nomos*. But the complexity of the operation testifies to the existence of resistances it must overcome."[31] The *nomos* thus simultaneously represents a field of perpetual resistance, from which may be launched (and indeed *must* be launched) a kind of permanent revolution against the *logos*. Perhaps it is impossible for *nomos* to overcome *logos;* hopefully the reverse is equally impossible, since as Deleuze argues, "the State itself has always been in a relation with an outside and is inconceivable independent of that relationship."[32] (In any case, final victory for either of the terms in the *logos-nomos* equation would represent a return to Bakunin's suspect either-or logic; in this sense a total victory for the *nomos* would ironically play into the hands of the *logos* itself.) The task of the postmodern anarchist, then, is simply to reverse the *logos*' greatest victory, the victory by which it rendered the *nomos* invisible and banished nomad thought from the field of permitted discourse. As Derrida aptly puts it, "a war was declared, and a suppression of all that resisted linearization was installed."[33] The postmodern anarchist simply seeks to lift that suppression, to restore a lost balance between *logos* and *nomos,* to point out that there are varieties of space other than striated statist space, and thus to "think the thought outside the state."

This is where Foucault comes in. Foucault extends the Deleuzian-Derridean analysis of the *logos* into the realm of power, and thus overcomes one of the

major obstacles of orthodox anarchism. Bakunin's nineteenth-century anarchism relies much too heavily upon a strictly top-down conception of power. This is hardly surprising, of course, given that Bakunin's vision of the political world is one in which power emanates from a state which towers above its subjects: "no state, not even the most republican and democratic, not even the pseudo-popular state contemplated by Marx, in essence represents anything but government of the masses from above downward."[34] The problem with this approach is that it certainly does not provide an adequate account of power in the late twentieth century, or even in the nineteenth century. Against this top-down vision of power, the work of Foucault describes a world in which power is omnipresent and permeates every conceivable social relation. This is quite important for the formulation of a theory of resistance. Bakunin describes himself as an "enemy of all power." Following Foucault, the postmodern anarchist must dispute this position, for as Foucault argues, it is power that makes resistance possible in the first place. Indeed, one suspects that there may be a certain correlation between power and resistance: the more power there is, the more resistance there must also be.

Antihumanism and Micropolitics

Let us now look at the specifics of Foucaultian anarchism. Like Marxism, Foucault's thinking offers an ethic of resistance which may be deployed against bourgeois/liberal states. However, Foucault's thought offers several important advantages over Marxism. First, this thinking does not become trapped, as Marxism typically does, within the conceptual categories of bourgeois political economy. Like Baudrillard and many other twentieth-century French intellectuals, Foucault seriously questions Marxism's radical credentials. Foucault argues in *The Order of Things* that

> Marxism exists in nineteenth-century thought like a fish in water: that is, unable to breathe anywhere else. Though it is in opposition to the "bourgeois" theories of economics, and though this opposition leads it to use the project of a radical reversal of History as a weapon against them, that conflict and that project nevertheless have as their condition of possibility, not the reworking of all History, but an event that any archeology can situate with precision, and that prescribed simultaneously, and according to the same mode, both nineteenth-century bourgeois economics and nineteenth-century revolutionary economics.[35]

Marxism, in short, occupies the same epistemological space as bourgeois economic theory. Although the content of Marxist thought might differ profoundly from that of classical liberal economics, the form is the same. As Marshall McLuhan might say, the medium of Marxism is its message; since its critique employs the tools of a rational economic science, Marxism can never really be more radical than that science. Foucault's thinking, which eventually abandons such a royal science in favor of genealogy, avoids this problem. As Mark Poster aptly notes, "Foucault has accomplished a task similar to that of Marx, but without much of the accompanying metaphysical baggage."[36] Foucault is thus able to articulate a thinking which escapes Marxism's epistemological trap.

Deleuze points out the second major advantage which Foucaultian thought holds over Marxism, noting that with Foucault "it is as if, finally, something new were emerging in the wake of Marx. It is as if a complicity about the State were finally broken."[37] For all its assertions that the state would mysteriously wither away, Marxism has, at least since Lenin, been profoundly statist. The state remains the great failure of all radical politics so far. Neither radical thinking nor revolutionary praxis has ever succeeded in dismantling the state, and one cannot help but wonder why. Foucault gives us an intriguing and plausible answer: the state remains in place because no revolutionary theory has ever accounted for underlying power relationships which exist prior to the state and which make the state possible in the first place. "Maybe, after all," Foucault speculates, "the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think. Maybe what is really important for our modernity—that is, for our present—is not so much the *étatisation* of society, as the 'governmentalization' of the state."[38] For Foucault, "governmentality"—the network of power relationships which make possible the modern state—is at least as important as the state itself. By emphasizing the complex relationship between governmentality and the state, Foucault moves the anarchist critique to a new level. This move implies a critique not only of Marxism but of conventional anarchism as well: in the Foucaultian interpretation, a simple attack on state institutions does no good, and is perhaps even harmful, to the extent that it masks or conceals the power relations which are the crucial problem. Foucault's work suggests that conventional anarchist thinking implicitly serves the *logos;* Foucault's concept of governmentality, on the other hand, offers a more thorough understanding of the structure and functioning of political power. Such an understanding—a mapping of the terrain on which political power actually operates—is crucial to the articulation of the *nomos,* the space outside the state.

We must also emphasize that the *nomos* is not a humanist space. For the modern anarchist, e.g., Bakunin, capitalism and the state must be destroyed be-

cause they interfere with the liberation of an authentic human essence. For Foucault, however, "the individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom . . . the individual, that is, is not the *vis-à-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects."[39] This type of claim has perhaps caused more outrage than any other element of Foucault's thought. How can liberation possibly be brought about if there is no one to liberate? What meaning can political action have if it is not to be carried out under the banner of some sort of humanist subject? Who will undertake this critique of the power relations which authorize the state—and just as importantly, on whose behalf will this critique be undertaken—following the death of man?

In fact, however, the revolt against humanism does constitute a kind of emancipatory project.[40] "Contrary to a fully established discourse," Deleuze remarks dryly, "there is no need to uphold man in order to resist."[41] We must be very careful not to confuse the destruction of humanism with the end of political agency. It seems clear that radical politics might benefit from a centerless, multiple, postmodern concept of identity, in which provisional revolutionary subject-positions could be brought into being through simple acts of resistance.[42] To understand how such antihumanist resistance might be possible, we need to take a closer look at Foucault's conception of power. Central to this conception is his claim that power is omnipresent and capillary: "it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere."[43] But if power is truly omnipresent as Foucault suggests, then how is this fight even possible? The task of resisting a universal, capillary power would seem to be quite overwhelming. Foucault's crucial insight here is that if power is everywhere, so too is resistance. "As soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance. We can never be ensnared by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy."[44] Some Foucaultians have pushed Foucault's strategy of resistance beyond a mere possibility, asserting that the capillary view of power makes resistance not only possible but *necessary*.[45] More conventional radical theories understand power as the exclusive domain of rulers or dominant social classes; such theories define successful resistance as those actions which topple these rulers and classes. Foucault points out that this type of resistance is always already doomed to failure, because even if it "succeeds," it will simply reinscribe previously existing power relations. This, of course, is the tragic fate of Soviet-style communism.

What Foucault offers in place of this suspect understanding of resistance is a new approach which is highly pluralistic, tactical, and mobile.[46] Against the suspiciously Stalinist revolution of a universal white male proletariat, Foucault

offers us a much more compelling account of resistance as a tactical collection of microrevolts. "There is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial."[47] This multiplicity of resistances is always to be deployed according to context and in response to particular situations.

Foucault's postmodern anarchism thus contains an antihumanism and a micropolitical resistance to capillary power relations. There is one further element which distinguishes this Foucaultian politics from conventional modern anarchism, and that is Foucault's critique of rationalism. Like Deleuze, Foucault suggests that rationality, at least of a certain kind, is necessarily statist: "the state, like nature, has its own proper form of rationality, albeit of a different sort. Conversely, the art of government . . . must find the principles of its rationality in that which constitutes the specific reality of the state."[48] If this is true, then a meaningful anarchist critique cannot proceed from the standpoint of a universal rationality, as those of the nineteenth century typically did. The problems of criticizing power relations from such a standpoint are, for Foucault, quite serious. For one thing, "the relationship between rationalization and the excesses of political power is evident. And we should not need to wait for bureaucracy or concentration camps to recognize the existence of such relations."[49] Totalizing rationality, like the modern humanist subject, is deeply implicated in the political catastrophes of our century. And this is a problem for the Left just as much as it is for the Right. Thus Foucault questions "the very history of a 'revolution' for which the hope had been borne, since the end of the eighteenth century, by a whole rationalism of which we are entitled to ask what part it may have played in the effects of despotism where that hope got lost."[50] Its many "revolutionary" claims to the contrary, universal rationality does not seem to lead to any kind of historical liberation; rather, it seems to be disturbingly well suited to the perpetuation of increasingly subtle and totalizing forms of domination. A good example of this would be the way that psychiatrists violently impose a Cartesian model of reason upon the insane. In *Madness and Civilization,* Foucault argues that "the physician, in relation to the madman, reproduces the moment of the Cogito in relation to the time of the dream, of illusion, and of madness. A completely exterior Cogito, alien to cogitation itself, and which can be imposed upon it only in the form of an invasion."[51] Psychiatry—which is in Foucault's view a medical counterpart to the Cartesian philosophical project—forces madness to extinguish itself through the "return" to sovereign reason.

There is, of course, a possible methodological problem here. Jürgen Habermas wonders "how a history of the constellations of reason and madness

can be written at all, if the labor of the historian must in turn move about within the horizon of reason."[52] What Habermas perceives is a performative contradiction: Foucault's own discourse, for all its energetic denunciation of rationalism, does seem to be an example of calm, organized, and even rational academic prose. But we need to be very careful here, for Foucault certainly does not reject rationality in its entirety. Rather he seems to be trying to separate out different forms of rationality, in much the same way as Deleuze distinguishes nomad science from royal science. This is precisely why Foucault is so interested in authors such as Nietzsche, Bataille, and Sade. These authors provide Foucault with examples of perpetually fluid, constantly reversible writing which cannot easily be co-opted into totalitarian discourses. Such writing can certainly be rational when it wants to be—but only as a tactic. This tactical rationality, which refuses to claim for itself any position of universal validity, is one of the key elements of postmodern anarchism.

A Politicized Genealogy

Foucault's postmodern anarchism has a method, and that method is based upon Nietzsche's genealogy. Nietzsche developed the genealogy as a way to answer certain questions about modern European morality: "under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? *and what value do they themselves possess?*"[53] Nietzsche's genealogy, of course, was not innocent. Genealogy served in his writing as a strategy; it was meant to subvert and undermine our faith in accepted truths. This was accomplished through a tactic of reversal:

> one has hitherto never doubted or hesitated in the slightest degree in supposing "the good man" to be of greater value than "the evil man," of greater value in the sense of furthering the advancement and prosperity of man in general (the future of man included). But what if the reverse were true? What if a symptom of regression were inherent in the "good," likewise a danger, a seduction, a poison, a narcotic, through which the present was possibly living *at the expense of the future?*[54]

This Nietzschean reversal provides us with a profoundly different way to read morality. The strategy of Nietzsche's genealogy is thus to emphasize the extreme fluidity and historical contingency of moral "truths" which present themselves as absolute, universal, and eternal.

Foucault recognized in Nietzsche's genealogy the possibility of a radical politics which had never before been attempted. As I argued in chapter 1, Nietzsche categorically rejected all radical politics and perhaps did not recognize the anarchistic implications of his own work; he therefore restricted his use of the genealogy to a critique of morals. Foucault's insight is that the fundamental point of genealogical critique—that "things could be otherwise"—could have very interesting and immensely useful implications for politics.[55] Like its Nietzschean predecessor, Foucaultian genealogy makes no pretense toward an "apocalyptic objectivity." In his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault points out that the conventional historian's claims to such objectivity rely upon an unsustainable metaphysical faith in eternal truth.[56] In opposition to this faith, Foucault offers a kind of history which "fragments what was thought unified."[57] Nietzsche told the history of morals from a radically new perspective; Foucault does the same for the modern subject. "I have tried," Foucault explains, "to get out from the philosophy of the subject, through a genealogy of the modern subject as a historical and cultural reality—which means as something that can eventually change. That, of course, is politically important."[58] Indeed, it is politically essential. As long as the Enlightenment's version of subjectivity is permitted to present itself as an unassailable, universally valid truth, we must remain within the political order which that subjectivity implicitly sanctions. To render the Enlightenment's subject-position historically contingent, to call its truth-claims into question through a genealogy, is to engage in a new kind of radical politics. This politics operates on the terrain of the *nomos*—a terrain which remains largely unexplored, but which would appear, from initial surveys, to hold great promise. The first step toward a truly radical politics—perhaps the first such politics in history—is the genealogical questioning of a universal subject-position whose constant failure to deliver on its promises of liberation has elicited disturbingly little outrage.

The genealogical critique of modern subjectivity is what motivates Foucault's monumental study, *The History of Sexuality*. Nietzsche's *Genealogy* is an account of how the ancient distinction between "good and bad" became eclipsed by the Judeo-Christian distinction between "good and evil"; Foucault's inquiry into sexuality is meant to show how the command to "know thyself" has obscured the ancient prescription to "take care of yourself."[59] Like Nietzsche, Foucault describes changes which constitute, at least in part, a transformation of morality. But changing concepts of subjectivity are equally important in Foucault's account. Thus, to take one of the most well-known examples, "Descartes wrote 'meditations'—and meditations are a practice of the self. But the extraordinary thing in Descartes's texts is that he succeeded in substituting a subject as founder of practices of knowledge for a subject constituted through

practices of the self."[60] This is a fundamental change. There is a dramatic difference between the ancient world, in which men followed strict regimens of "self-care" in an attempt to construct themselves as ethical beings, and our modern world. Indeed, these two worlds have difficulty speaking to each other across the vast epistemological chasm which separates them. But the point of Foucault's genealogy is precisely to reveal that chasm, and to show that the modern sexual subject which we take for granted is, like all subject-positions, a contingent one with a history.

What does all of this mean for postmodern anarchism? As always, Foucault's thinking shows that such an anarchism must go beyond the critique of capital and the state as its modern predecessor could not. Thus "the analysis, made in terms of power, must not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of the law, or the over-all unity of a domination are given at the outset; rather, these are only the terminal forms power takes."[61] Foucault's interpretation of the power relations inherent in modern sexuality suggests that the state and the law are merely the visible aspects of subterranean and capillary power processes which are far more extensive than any state system. The anarchist critique therefore cannot afford to exhaust itself in a challenge which is limited to the statist endpoints of power networks. Foucault suggests that we must instead raise a challenge to the imperialism of all modern discourses surrounding sexuality. This challenge will help to undermine the power relationships which underwrite (among many other things) the state. Foucault recognizes that sexuality is the perfect terrain on which to wage this linguistic war, because it is "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power."[62] Sexuality is, in short, what computer operators call a "high bandwidth node": it facilitates the transfer of enormous and highly compacted quantities of power. If we recall Foucault's theses about power and resistance, we realize that this is also tremendously good news for the activist, the transgressor, the resister: if sexuality is indeed such an efficient transfer point for power, then it must be an equally efficient transfer point for resistance. The discourse surrounding sexuality is thus the perfect location from which to launch a campaign against the modern sexual subject and its discursive practices. This campaign will in turn make possible an antihumanist anarchism far more powerful than any previous anarchist theory.

Foucault's other great genealogy is *Discipline and Punish*. This book begins with a vivid description of premodern torture and execution techniques; Foucault then contrasts these with the "gentler" penal techniques which developed in the wake of the Enlightenment's penal reforms. Again, the effect of Foucault's method is to historicize a discourse and an institution which too often appear to be universal and omnipresent—in this case, the prison. As with Foucault's analysis of sexuality, the genealogy of the prison can be read as anar-

chistic in two ways: simply, as a challenge to the authority of a state which claims for itself the right to incarcerate people, or much more radically, as a challenge to a penal *discourse* which uses the rational, scientific language of the Enlightenment to present itself as irrefutably valid.

From the perspective of postmodern anarchism, of course, the latter reading is far more interesting. Indeed, the most radical analysis in *Discipline and Punish* has little to do with incarceration at all. Foucault's investigation into the origins of the prison permits him to extend his genealogical analysis to a much broader social phenomenon, which he calls discipline. Foucault understands discipline as a uniquely modern form of power which involves the precise regulation of bodies and their activities through the systematic control of the time and space in which those bodies operate. The orthodox history of the Enlightenment is well known: it eradicated tyranny and superstition, giving us a discourse of rights which has produced a perpetual increase in freedom from the seventeenth century to the present day. This is the favorite history of liberals, who like to tell the story of "the establishment of an explicit, coded and formally egalitarian juridical framework, made possible by the organization of a parliamentary, representative régime."[63] They forget (and Foucault's genealogy reminds us) that "the development and generalization of disciplinary mechanisms constituted the other, dark side of these processes."[64] The Enlightenment promised to free us from Voltaire's "infamous thing," the tyranny of priests and aristocrats. And perhaps in some sense it did so. But at precisely the same time, it was also installing disciplinary regimes in all major social institutions: in the army barracks, in the schools, in the hospitals, and in the prisons. These disciplinary systems, revealed for the first time by Foucault's genealogy, make a mockery of the Enlightenment's claims to have created a utopia based upon formal political rights.

As with sexual power, the creation of a certain kind of subjectivity is essential to the development of disciplinary power: "the individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power than I have called 'discipline.'"[65] Foucault refers to the particular kind of subjectivity created by prison discipline as "delinquency." In Foucault's interpretation, the delinquent is quite necessary to the maintenance of a political system which must constantly distract attention from the vast social and economic inequities that it authorizes. The delinquent permits politicians to speak of the need to enhance law and order, to hire more cops, to build more prisons, to crack down on gangs; what is never said (prior to genealogy) is that *delinquency was produced by this system in the first place,* as a tactic by which the system might justify itself.

Obviously, Foucault's critique gives anarchists a good (if somewhat conventional) argument which can be deployed against the discourse of law and order. In this sense, Foucault's work expands and builds upon Kropotkin's argument that prisons and hangmen only multiply and worsen the "anti-social deeds" of certain individuals.[66] But again, what is especially interesting and important about Foucault's critique is the way in which it goes beyond conventional anarchist themes to challenge the political consequences of a certain variety of subjectivity. We can see this, for example, in Foucault's discussion of Panopticism. Initially developed by Jeremy Bentham in the nineteenth century, Panopticism is a strategy of perpetual, automatic, and omnipresent surveillance: an "all-seeing eye." Deployed first against prison populations, Panopticism has now found its way into every corner of our society. When Foucault speaks of a surveillance based on a system of permanent registration,[67] we think of passports, driver's licenses, and (at least in the United States) social security numbers. When he speaks of the "permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power,"[68] we are reminded of the unmanned radar guns which sit by the side of American roads, notifying us of our speed and comparing it to the posted speed limit. When Foucault points out that Panopticism is used not only in the prison but throughout our carceral society, we see a flood of bumper stickers which insist that we must "D.A.R.E to resist drugs, gangs and violence." Panopticism, then, does not only create prisoners or delinquents. It creates all of us. The subject of a modern disciplinary society, who slows down automatically when the radar machine tells her to do so, is very far from being an autonomous Cartesian self. Rather, she is constantly being constituted as a subject by a seemingly endless variety of disciplinary practices.

So what, precisely, does this genealogy of modern discipline mean for postmodern anarchism? It means a great deal. First, it reveals the ethical bankruptcy of the liberal state. Genealogy shows that, behind their humanistic façades, the prisons of liberal societies are in fact laboratories for the perfection of disciplinary techniques which dramatically impact not only prisoners but every member of those societies. A genealogical critique of this type is of tremendous use to postmodern anarchists, for it permits a reply to those who (like John Rawls or Robert Nozick) claim that it is ethically acceptable to have a state, as long as that state is of the minimally interventionist sort.[69] Foucault's account clearly shows that all modern states, including liberal ones, tend toward *maximum* intervention, through the development and use of discipline. And indeed, it is not simply a question of intervention. The Rawlsian emphasis on intervention implies that there is a sovereign individual who exists, somehow, prior to society and the state. But for Foucault, discipline is one of the major strategies by which liberal societies construct their subjects in the first place.

Second, Foucault's genealogical critique gives the postmodern anarchist a number of clear targets. This is crucial, because as Foucault points out, "to produce names, to point the finger of accusation, to find targets, is the first step in the reversal of power and the initiation of new struggles against existing forms of power."[70] The targets which Foucault's critique identifies include conventional ones such as the state (prisons, police, etc.), and the bourgeoisie (since delinquency "is an agent for the illegality of the dominant groups"[71]). But of course, Foucault's targets go well beyond those of the traditional anarchist position. Foucault also "points the finger of accusation" at areas of discipline not directly related to capital or the state, e.g., those which exist within schools and hospitals. Foucault's critique is motivated by his recognition that "we can't defeat the system through isolated actions; we must engage it on all fronts—the university, the prisons, and the domain of psychiatry."[72] It is a critique which understands that power can no longer be identified exclusively or even primarily in state practices or in the alienation of labor.

If Foucault's critique goes so far beyond the conventional anarchist's targets of capital and the state, we must ask whether it makes any sense to keep speaking of Foucault's thinking as anarchistic. The answer is yes, if by "anarchistic" we understand the kind of postmodern anarchism whose main theoretical project (following Deleuze) is the recovery of the *nomos* as a space of political and theoretical resistance. Foucault's critique contributes to this recovery in two major ways. First, Foucault relentlessly assaults a concept of subjectivity which is used to conceal the presence and effects of discipline. And he simultaneously critiques the rationalist discursive practices which sanction that subjectivity. Against the rationalist language of the police, the courts, and the prisons, Foucault offers a "lyricism of marginality" inspired by "the image of the 'outlaw,' the great social nomad, who prowls on the confines of a docile, frightened order."[73] It seems clear that Foucault offers the figure of the outlaw not as the model of a new social order; rather, the outlaw simply shows that the dominant discourse of our culture—that of rationality, science, and Enlightenment—is not the only available discourse. There is another, subterranean discourse which plagues and torments the comfortable world of scientific discourse like a not-quite-repressed memory. This is the world of "the departure from the norm, the anomaly; it was this that haunted the school, the court, the asylum or the prison."[74] The outlaw and the anomaly help to sketch out the space of the *nomos*. The lesson here is that we challenge power when we think the thought of the outside, when we design our lives in ways which radically violate standards and norms. This is an enormously uplifting thought for those who have long since given up on the pathetic possibilities of liberal reform or the unfulfilled promises of the dialectic.

Foucault's genealogies point to the importance of the marginal, the nomadic, the anomalous: in short, they insist upon the political significance of transgression. Transgression thus provides the specific form of Foucaultian anarchism. Foucault's interest in transgression stems in large part from his fascination with the thought of Georges Bataille,[75] but Foucault goes beyond even Bataille in his exploration of the transgressive possibilities of madness, sexuality, and difference. Transgression stands in Foucault's thinking as an extremely powerful Other to the Enlightenment's rational subject and the discursive practices of that subject.

In *Madness and Civilization,* Foucault describes madness as one of the most dramatic—but also one of the most thoroughly silenced—transgressions of rational language, politics, and economics. Madness stands outside the law of work,[76] and thus represents a transgression of the labor principle which is so fundamental to the bourgeois social order. But the transgressions of the madman go well beyond this simple economic challenge, for madness also raises the possibility of the insane philosopher. This philosopher finds "the transgression of his philosophical being; and thus, the non-dialectical language of the limit which only arises in transgressing the one who speaks."[77] As an antidote to rationalism, then, Foucault again proposes a nondialectical language which partakes of the ultimate transgression, the transgression of the speaking subject itself. This is, in a sense, the last possible transgression, since it implies a leap into a postlinguistic abyss from which no further speech is possible. But this need not be disastrous, since the transgression of the one who speaks is also the last *necessary* transgression: after this, no further transgression can take place, but none is needed.

The paramount example of the mad philosopher's terminal transgression is, of course, Nietzsche. "Nietzsche's madness—that is, the dissolution of his thought—is that by which his thought opens out onto the modern world. What made it impossible makes it immediate for us; what took it from Nietzsche offers it to us."[78] In Foucault's reading, Nietzsche's madness is a kind of sacrifice or gift.[79] Though it is tragic from the point of view of the speaking subject called Friedrich Nietzsche, for the rest of the world it represents Nietzsche's last great affirmation. Nietzsche's madness gives us a weapon which is greatly needed in the modern world. This weapon is a violent, dangerously transgressive language, a language which knows no limit, a language before which all rational subjects, states, and economies must crumble.

This kind of extreme transgression clearly implies the opening of a space for radical difference. "The freeing of difference requires thought without contradiction, without dialectics, without negation; thought that accepts divergence; affirmative thought whose instrument is disjunction; thought of the multiple—

of the nomadic and dispersed multiplicity that is not limited or confined by the constraints of similarity."[80] Foucault's postmodern anarchism has no truck with dialectics, whether in the conservative mode of Hegel or the more seductive (though no more liberatory) mode of Marx. Foucault's thought recognizes that Western philosophy since Descartes has formulated itself as unified and singular—the thought of the One. Difference transgresses this, affirming the multiple, the nonidentical, that which crosses lines and blurs boundaries—the thought of the Other. Against the rational self-assurance of Kantian categories, Foucault offers the temporary insanity of the acid trip.[81] And perhaps it is Kantian thought more than any other to which Foucault's transgressions stand opposed.[82] This is because "categories organize the play of affirmations and negation, establish the legitimacy of resemblances within representations, and guarantee the objectivity and operation of concepts. They suppress the anarchy of difference."[83] It is this anarchy above all else which Foucault's thinking struggles to defend.

Foucault's thought is perhaps more unsettling and more disturbing than any other thought since Nietzsche. And we should be immensely grateful that it is. In his transgressions—of the philosophy of the subject, of rationalism, and thus of capital and the state—he shows us a possible way out of the discursive trap in which we have lived since the Enlightenment. We should be careful to recognize, however, that although Foucault's thinking contributes enormously to the theoretical project of postmodern anarchism, it does not complete that project. Foucault's genealogical assault upon modern discursive practices is immensely powerful, but it does raise a few troubling questions. First, it is important to note the extraordinarily *physical* nature of the discourses which Foucault analyzes. When he speaks about the disciplinary discourse of modern schools, prisons, and hospitals, Foucault constantly makes reference to the physical practices and technologies which produce docile, disciplined bodies. Similarly, when he discusses the discourse of modern sexuality, Foucault is compelled, by the nature of his own genealogical method, to challenge that discourse by referring to "bodies and their pleasures." The underlying physicality of Foucault's approach is dangerous, because it means that his own critical discourse may well remain trapped within the realm of the real, which is also the realm of the modern. Although Foucault's work does contain a dramatic and profound critique of modern rationalism, his thinking therefore cannot fully escape the confines of modern semiotics. As long as Foucault analyzes discourses which are attached in some way to an underlying reality, there is the danger that his work will end up implicitly sanctioning the modern semiotic order and its "reality principle." Since this is the very same semiotic order which is charged with inscribing the power effects of all modern states and economies, this could be a very serious danger indeed.

This problem is exaggerated by Foucault's deliberate refusal to propose any significant alternatives to the systems of power which he so strongly criticizes. This refusal grows out of Foucault's understandable frustrations with the pretenses of those "universal intellectuals" who *do* postulate alternative systems, only to end up reproducing the very power relationships which they thought to subvert. However, the lack of an alternative in Foucault's work is frustrating. As an antidote to modern rationalism, Foucault can offer only a kind of semiotic suicide: the temporary madness of the acid trip, or the permanent madness of the insane philosopher. As seductive as these possibilities might sometimes be, they do not seem to represent serious options for those interested in building viable postmodern communities. What is missing in Foucault's thought, then, is a serious alternative to the semiotic order of modern subjects, sciences, and states. Without the kind of theoretical vocabulary which such an alternative system of thought might provide, the project of postmodern anarchism is left in the same unfortunate position which characterizes so much of twentieth-century radical thinking. This project is left, in short, with questions but no answers, with critique but no options.

Another strategy is needed, then, to prevent Foucault's postmodern anarchism from becoming perpetually trapped in nihilistic critique. This strategy may be found in the work of Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard offers us a strategy of the symbolic, which is designed to articulate an epistemology that is entirely outside all modern semiotics. Baudrillard's theory of the symbolic—and the theory of simulation which grows out of his symbolic thinking—provides postmodern anarchism with its radical alternative to the system of modern semiotics. Let us therefore examine Baudrillard's crucial contribution to postmodern anarchism.

Notes

1. Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth,* 115.
2. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* 63.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 64.
5. Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 20.
6. Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects,* 171.
7. Foucault, quoted by Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* 64.
8. Bernstein, *The New Constellation,* 246.
9. Rorty, "Foucault/Dewey/Nietzsche," 7.
10. Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* 92-93.

11. May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology,* 114.

12. See Dumm, *Foucault and the Politics of Freedom,* 9 and Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity,* 189.

13. Foucault, quoted in Raulet, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism," 205.

14. Deleuze, *Foucault,* 71.

15. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," 475.

16. Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy,* 9.

17. Ibid., 177.

18. Ibid., 133.

19. Bakunin, "All-Round Education" in *The Basic Bakunin,* 114.

20. Bakunin, *God and the State,* 59.

21. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 369.

22. Barthes, *Image, Music, Text,* 147.

23. Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition,* 79.

24. Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy,* 20.

25. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 352.

26. Ibid., 369. Here and throughout the remainder of this chapter, I use *nomos* in the Deleuzian sense. I should note briefly, however, that Deleuze's use of this term represents a radical inversion of its original meaning: the law.

27. Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* 79. For Derrida's periodization and chronology of the *logos,* see Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* 97 ff. There are also some interesting parallels between Derrida's critique of the *logos* and that of Marcuse; see for example Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization,* 111 ff.

28. Ibid., 86.

29. Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One,* 80.

30. Perez, *An(archy) and Schizoanalysis,* 65.

31. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 373.

32. Ibid., 360.

33. Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* 85.

34. Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy,* 24.

35. Foucault, *The Order of Things,* 262.

36. Poster, *Foucault, Marxism, and History,* 159.

37. Deleuze, *Foucault,* 30.

38. Foucault, quoted in Burchell, *Foucault Effect,* 103.

39. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge,* 98.

40. See Haber, *Beyond Postmodern Politics,* 85.

41. Deleuze, *Foucault,* 92.

42. Jessica Kulynych, for example, advocates a reading of Foucaultian subjectivity which views "the acting citizen as brought into being by her resistance." (Kulynych, "Performing Politics," 331.)

43. Foucault, *History of Sexuality,* volume 1, 93.

44. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture,* 123.

45. See, for example, Seitz, "Constituting the Political Subject," 446-47 or Dumm, *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom,* 114.

46. Brent Pickett is thus quite correct to note that for Foucault, one "feature of a better society appears to be a radical pluralism bordering on anarchy" (Pickett, "Foucault and the Politics of Resistance," 456).

47. Foucault, *History of Sexuality,* volume 1, 96.

48. Foucault, quoted in Burchell, *Foucault Effect,* 97.

49. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture,* 59.

50. Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology,* 469.

51. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization,* 184-85.

52. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 247.

53. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* preface, section 3.

54. Ibid., 20.

55. As J. Daniel Schubert notes, this politicized genealogy also has important implications for intellectuals and for academic practice. See Schubert, "From a Politics of Transgression," 1006.

56. Foucault, *Language, Countermemory, Practice,* 152.

57. Ibid., 147.

58. Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth,* 177.

59. Ibid., 228.

60. Ibid., 278.

61. Foucault, *History of Sexuality,* volume 1, 92.

62. Ibid., 103.

63. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 222.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., 194.

66. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles" in *Fugitive Writings,* 91-92.

67. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 196.

68. Ibid., 201.

69. See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* and Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia.*

70. Foucault, *Language, Countermemory, Practice,* 214.

71. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 279.

72. Foucault, *Language, Countermemory, Practice,* 230.

73. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 301. Foucault is very close, in this passage, to the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus.*

74. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 299.

75. Foucault makes this clear, for example, in "A Preface to Transgression" (Foucault, *Language, Countermemory, Practice,* 29-52). See also Bataille, *Erotism,* especially chapter 5.

76. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization,* 57.

77. Foucault, *Language, Countermemory, Practice,* 44.

78. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization,* 288.

79. The idea that Nietzsche's madness might be read as an offering, a sacrifice, or a gift again makes clear Foucault's debt to Bataille (and thus indirectly to Marcel Mauss). See Bataille, *Accursed Share,* especially 63 ff; see also Mauss, *The Gift.*

80. Foucault, *Language, Countermemory, Practice,* 185.

81. Ibid., 190.

82. The notable exception to this, of course, is the interesting discussion of Kant in Foucault's essay "What is Enlightenment?" Here Foucault avoids the facile rejection of Enlightenment values by positioning himself as an heir to the Enlightenment's spirit of critique; he even goes so far as to suggest that we are "beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment" (Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" 43).

83. Foucault, *Language, Countermemory, Practice,* 186.

Chapter Three

The Gift of Postmodern Anarchism: Baudrillard

I've been swimming in a sea of anarchy
I've been living on coffee and nicotine
I've been wondering if all the things I've seen
Were ever real
Were ever really happening
—Sheryl Crow, "Everyday is a Winding Road"

Jean Baudrillard's work is often enigmatic and frequently cryptic. He sometimes offers what appear to be astoundingly radical political pronouncements. At other times he seems to renounce even the possibility of meaningful politics. Many critics find Baudrillard's political ambiguity frustrating; the tendency among commentators is to assume that the political effect of Baudrillard's thought is conservative. Christopher Norris, for example, concludes his analysis of Baudrillard by asserting that the main lesson to be learned from Baudrillard's texts is that "any politics which goes along with the current postmodern drift will end up by effectively endorsing and promoting the work of ideological mystification."[1] This is perhaps typical of the kinds of criticisms which Baudrillard frequently draws from the Marxist Left: that his work does not contribute to (and indeed, is explicitly formulated against) the project of dialectical liberation, and is therefore part of bourgeois ideology.

To read Baudrillard in this way is, however, seriously misleading. Norris and others would have us believe that Baudrillard's postmodernism cannot sustain a viable radical politics. In fact, Baudrillard's philosophy stands in opposition to all *Marxist* politics, but this does not imply by any means that his work

lacks a radical political vision. Baudrillard's thought points not to the end of politics but to a radical, and specifically anarchist, political agenda. Informed by the insights of postmodernism, this vision is not only more radical than Marxism; it is also more radical than most traditional forms of anarchism.

Naturally, this immediately raises a question, since Baudrillard has explicitly placed his work outside the context of postmodernism. I believe, however, that there are sufficient grounds to place Baudrillard's texts within the postmodern commons which I outlined above. Baudrillard's work contains a fierce antihumanism; in that sense his thinking builds upon the anarchy of the subject initiated by Nietzsche and developed by Foucault. Ironically (since Baudrillard is the author of a polemic entitled *Forget Foucault*) Baudrillard's political philosophy also has strong affinities with Foucault's micropolitics. To be sure, the specific valence of Baudrillard's micropolitics is substantially different from that of Foucault; whereas Foucault's strategies are meant to engage with networks of sexual or disciplinary power, Baudrillard offers a more generalized strategy of resistance which is based, to a large extent, upon the gestural politics of the Situationist International. Nonetheless, the affinities between Nietzsche and Foucault on the one hand and Baudrillard on the other are quite striking. Like the German and French genealogists, Baudrillard is deeply skeptical of the apocalyptic reliance upon rationality which has characterized Western intellectual activity since the Enlightenment. Nietzsche, Foucault, and Baudrillard all articulate deep and abiding critiques of bourgeois society, focusing in particular on the cultural aspects of that society. Given these clear parallels, it is certainly unfortunate that Baudrillard has chosen to distance his own work from that of Foucault. The result of this choice is an impoverishment of radical theory which is quite reminiscent of the situation which followed in the wake of the Marx-Bakunin feud of the nineteenth century.

Despite Baudrillard's possible claims to the contrary, then, I would argue that his work can reasonably be placed under the rubric of postmodernism. I would further suggest that Baudrillard can be understood as a postmodern anarchist. As with Foucault, I am interested here more in the political *effect* of Baudrillard's thought than in his own personal politics (though Baudrillard does, ironically, have an anarchist pedigree which perhaps surpasses even that of Foucault). The postmodern philosophy developed by Baudrillard contains significant antistatist and anticapitalist implications. But more importantly, Baudrillard's thought undermines the very foundations of state-centered politics and bourgeois political economy. It does so by developing a profound critique of the dominant order's very semiotic structure. The semiotic system of the modern world is, on Baudrillard's reading, a universal and implicitly totalitarian system which uses the languages of reason, science, and humanism to justify

both the free markets of the West and the centralized state planning of the East. To transcend these twin systems of political and economic repression, we must find a way to step outside of the semiotics which authorize such systems. It is in the pursuit of this monumental (and perhaps utopian) goal that Baudrillard introduces the category of the symbolic as a challenge to what he calls "contemporary semiocracy." Baudrillard's decision to invoke the symbolic in this way places his work in close proximity to that of the postmodern psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who declared that "Freud's discovery was that of the domain of the incidence in the nature of man of his relations to the Symbolic order and the tracing of their sense right back to the most radical instances of symbolization in being."[2] For Lacan, the domain of the Symbolic was epistemologically radical, because the symbol precedes language and makes language possible. But Baudrillard recognized that the symbolic order could be *politically* radical as well, to the extent that the symbol might be the only epistemological object which could successfully place itself outside (and prior to) the semiotic structures which serve as the very foundation for all modern systems of political economy.

The decision to invoke the symbol against modern semiocracy is perhaps what motivates some of Baudrillard's skepticism with respect to Foucault, for here Baudrillard is charting analytic terrain which Foucault left largely unexplored. Foucault, as I argued in chapter 2, certainly spoke out against the semiotics of modern rationalism. But Foucault never really elaborated a theoretical system which might stand as an alternative to modern semiotics. Foucault's reluctance to propose alternatives is, of course, largely deliberate; it grows out of the suspicion and skepticism which he feels when "universal intellectuals" such as Sartre arrogantly assume that they have the ability or the right to prescribe new social, cultural, or economic systems. But while this Foucaultian reluctance is certainly understandable, it is also frustrating. Many who might otherwise find Foucault's critique of rationalism compelling find it difficult to embrace that critique fully unless they can simultaneously envision a radically different kind of communicative system which might replace the seemingly omnipresent semiotics of modern reason.

Such an alternative can be located in the work of Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard certainly could have been kinder to Foucault, whose radicalization of the Nietzschean genealogy surely stands as one of the great intellectual projects of our century. Nonetheless, Baudrillard makes an interesting point in *Forget Foucault,* and it is a point which suggests that postmodern anarchism might well remain incomplete as long as it relies solely upon Foucault's critiques of disciplinary or sexual discourse. For these critiques still entreat the reader to envision power in terms of practices and technologies of the body which make ref-

erence to some sort of underlying physical "reality." Despite the enormous advances which Foucault has made in the analysis of power, Baudrillard recognizes that for Foucault, power "is still turned toward a reality principle and a very strong truth principle; it is still oriented toward a possible coherence of politics and discourse."[3] Baudrillard addresses the problem of modern power in a very different way. By articulating a symbolic theory which is radically at odds with both semiotic discourse and the reality principle which inevitably sanctions such discourse, Baudrillard advances the postmodern analysis of power which Foucault initiated. This is especially true in Baudrillard's later works, where he develops the categories of simulation and the hyperreal—categories which make no reference to any kind of reality principle whatsoever.

Baudrillard's decision to develop a theory of the symbolic therefore (and quite ironically) makes it absolutely crucial that his work should be read alongside that of Nietzsche and Foucault. Baudrillard's attempt to resurrect the symbolic as a radical alternative to contemporary semiotic systems is a crucial component of the political philosophy of postmodern anarchism. Anarchy of the subject, anarchy of becoming, transrational anarchy, and micropolitical anarchy: these are the terms which define the project of the postmodern anarchist. Yet without a strategy for replacing the linguistic structures which precede and inscribe all forms of modern political, economic, and cultural power, such a project must necessarily remain incomplete. Baudrillard's symbolic assault upon the semiotic fortresses of modern political economy thus provides postmodern anarchism with a crucial missing term. By coming at the problem of modern power from a completely different direction—not through the genealogies of Nietzsche and Foucault, but through the radical sociology of Emile Durkheim and his followers—Baudrillard contributes significantly to the postmodern reading of the anarchist worldview. He takes the postmodern anarchist critique in unique new directions, and he offers that critique a possible "exit strategy" or resolution. Without Baudrillard, postmodern anarchism might well have remained little more than an isolated chapter in the history of genealogical thinking. With Baudrillard, it becomes instead a major variant of postmodern political thought.

This chapter will explore the historical origin and development of Baudrillard's postmodern anarchism. I will argue that Baudrillard's political thought developed initially as a variant of the radical Durkheimian sociology articulated by Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille. In particular, this sociology gave Baudrillard the theory of the gift, which serves as a theoretical pillar of his postmodern anarchism. For Baudrillard, the gift is a symbolic category which stands entirely outside the semiotic structure of bourgeois political economy (including its Marxist variant). The gift also enables a model of symbolic ex-

change which is entirely at odds with modern forms of economic exchange. The theory of the gift thus allows Baudrillard to develop a critique not only of the content of bourgeois political economy, but of its semiotic form as well—something which neither Marxism nor classical anarchism could ever achieve. Gift theory also gives Baudrillard the opportunity to articulate an intriguing interpretation of the revolution of May 1968. During the "events of May," Baudrillard tells us, French revolutionaries attacked the dominant semiotic code at the structural level, frequently through the exchange of symbolic gifts. Refusing to participate in a modernist system of political rationality, the students and workers freely gave slogans, gestures and images in an attempt to subvert the ruling culture.

In the years after May 1968, Baudrillard's symbolic critique of rationalist semiotics would gradually blossom into his theory of simulation. If Nietzsche was the philosopher of the death of God, Baudrillard is the philosopher of the death of the real. The modern era, the era of industrial production and class conflict, was perhaps the era of reality. In such an era "the real" may have meant something. Today, however, computer networks and orbital satellites blanket our world with television signals, e-mail messages, and cellular phone transmissions. Baudrillard's controversial claim is that these simulations do not imitate or reflect some underlying reality; rather, simulation today *is* our reality, insofar as we may even be said to *have* a reality. Surely this is a symbolic critique carried to its radical extreme. Baudrillard suggests that we now live in a world of dead signs, a world where signifiers no longer bear any relation to real signifieds, a world that is truly beyond the semiotic. "The era of simulation," Baudrillard declares, "is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials."[4]

The political value of simulation has been a matter of some dispute. Douglas Kellner suggests that Baudrillard's obsession with signs "marks Baudrillard as a semiological dandy, as an avatar of the sign as the mark of the real. Such a position increasingly divorces him from contemporary politics, and inscribes him within an apolitical aestheticism."[5] There are two major problems with this interpretation. First, Kellner does not recognize Baudrillard's strongly *anti*semiotic position; if Baudrillard is any kind of dandy, he is surely a "symbolic dandy." Second, Kellner ignores the radical possibilities of simulation. Certainly the theory of simulation is bad news for Marxism, since it declares not merely the end of history but the *nonexistence* of history. However, this is not at all the same as saying that simulation negates radical politics. In fact, the denial of the real can be read as an extremely radical, and specifically anarchist, political position. The early twentieth-century feminist anarchist Emma Goldman anticipated this when she observed that "anarchism is the only philosophy which brings to man the consciousness of himself; which maintains

that God, the State, and society are *non-existent*, that their promises are null and void . . . anarchism is the great liberator of man from the phantoms that have held him captive."[6] Of course, Goldman's political philosophy was still a modern one, to the extent that she envisioned the liberation of some allegedly authentic human essence. To understand the full significance of the antirealist position, we must turn to the postmodern critics of humanism. Postmodern feminists, for example, have led the charge against the real, arguing that a truly radical theory of gender cannot afford to invoke the real. Judith Butler suggests that

> when such categories come into question, the *reality* of gender is also put into crisis: it becomes unclear how to distinguish the real from the unreal. And this is the occasion in which we come to understand that what we take to be "real," what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality. Call it subversive or call it something else. Although this insight does not in itself constitute a political revolution, no political revolution is possible without a radical shift in one's notion of the possible and the real.[7]

The denial of the real, then, is a crucial aspect of postmodern feminism's anti-essentialist strategy.[8] Here as in so many other cases, postmodern feminists point out subversive strategies which could be useful for a wide variety of political projects in the postmodern era. Antirealist feminism shows a strong affinity with the anarchist assault on reality which Baudrillard's philosophy promotes. Baudrillard's antirealist theory of simulation undermines the "real" subject of modern political discourse, the "real" rationality of that subject, and all "real" political or economic systems founded upon such rational subjectivity. This theory is thus a key element of postmodern anarchism.

Anarchy of the Gift: Mauss, Bataille, Bookchin, and Symbolic Exchange

Baudrillard's political thought owes a great deal to radical Durkheimian sociology, and especially to the work of Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille.[9] The origins of this tradition may be traced back to Mauss's extremely influential essay, *The Gift,* which appeared in 1925. Mauss's topic is gift exchange, especially as such exchange functions in so-called primitive societies. He argues that in these societies, the exchange of gifts represents an elaborate symbolic system, the function of which is profoundly different from that of modern economic

exchange: "this economy of gift-exchange fails to conform to the principles of so-called natural economy or utilitarianism."[10] We must recall here that modern political economy maintains its hegemony largely by insisting that because its principles supposedly derive from nature (particularly "human nature"), they are therefore universally applicable. Against this claim, Mauss offers us the gift of the gift: he presents the gift as something *entirely outside* modern political economy. For Mauss, the gift is a powerful, self-sustaining system of exchange which is completely different from the capitalist model. The gift is also, as Marshall Sahlins correctly noted in 1972, a category with strongly anarchistic implications: "the primitive analogue of social contract is not the State, but the gift. The gift is the primitive way of achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the State."[11]

The Gift initiates several interesting and important critiques of capitalist economic theory. Most crucial for our purposes is Mauss's observation that in some systems of gift exchange, "consumption and destruction are virtually unlimited. In some potlatch systems one is constrained to expend everything one possesses and to keep nothing."[12] It would not be much of an exaggeration to suggest that this seemingly innocent observation contains the means for *overturning the entire theoretical basis of bourgeois political economy.* Capitalism derives much of its theoretical foundation, after all, from the concept of scarcity: the political economists assure us that there are finite economic resources in the world, and that we must therefore use market forces and competition to arrive at the most efficient distribution of those resources. Some of the most important twentieth-century anarchist theorists, such as the "green red" Murray Bookchin, have recognized that the myth of scarcity may indeed represent the Achilles' heel of capitalism. "Western society," Bookchin writes, "may accept the reality of economic crises, inflation, and unemployment, and popular credulity has not rejected the myth of a 'stingy' nature that is running out of raw materials and energy resources. Abundance, all the more because it is being denied for structural economic reasons rather than natural ones, still orchestrates the popular culture of present-day society."[13] Bookchin devotes much of his work to the project of piercing the ideological veil which conceals our society's enormous economic potential. His plan is to reveal that the material preconditions for a nonhierarchical, postcapitalist society *already exist* in the West. Bookchin's project anticipates some trends which have emerged recently in the analysis of postindustrial information economies. Tessa Morris-Suzuki has argued, for example, that "the economy of information production is an open system, into which non-commodities enter as inputs and whose outputs may eventually 'escape' from the cycle of commercial exchange."[14] If this is correct, then the mode of production which Marx described so brilliantly in *Capital*—that is, the mode

associated mainly with the production and distribution of commodities—is clearly at an end. And if *that* is true, then the rules of political economy which our culture continues to accept dogmatically no longer obtain. Indeed, as soon as we begin to map out rules appropriate to the emerging information economy, it becomes apparent that these rules frequently involve profound *inversions* of classical economic thought. This strange but promising phenomenon becomes particularly apparent when we consider the issue of scarcity. John Perry Barlow has argued, for example, that whereas scarcity might increase the value of physical goods, it will often have the precise opposite effect on information.[15] The most successful piece of data will typically be that which is duplicated and distributed most widely. Barlow, who has written songs for the Grateful Dead for many years, clearly understands the form and function of gift exchange. His band, which has always encouraged its fans to record performances and trade concert tapes amongst themselves, has acquired a great deal of its prestige and popularity precisely by giving its music away.

The critique of scarcity and the idea that the gift might represent a serious alternative to bourgeois political economy were further developed by Georges Bataille in *The Accursed Share,* which appeared in 1967. Bataille's assault on scarcity is surely one of the most ambitious projects in the history of radical economic theory. One could argue that Bataille's radical vision surpasses even Bookchin's anarchist agenda, for while Bookchin envisions economic abundance as an outgrowth of modern technology, Bataille characterizes life on earth *in general* as a situation of vast abundance. For Bataille, organisms are confronted not with a lack of resources but with an *excess*. This excess comes initially from the sun, which gives its gift of energy without return.[16] This "solar gift," the gift which cannot be returned, has a special status in Bataille's thought, for it forms the basis of his understanding of consumption. The problem which societies confront, according to Bataille, is not that of how to create or produce wealth, as the bourgeois political economists would have it. Rather, it is the problem of how to eliminate excess energy and give wealth away. Bataille's economic theory is thus also more radical than that of Mauss. In Mauss's analysis, the gift must always be returned, often with interest; for Bataille, things are quite different: "if a part of wealth (subject to a rough estimate) is doomed to destruction or at least to unproductive use without any possible profit, it is logical, even *inescapable*, to surrender commodities without return."[17] The gift—and especially the gift without return—thus represents a unilateral principle of exchange which short-circuits the logic of capital in a profound way.

In many ways Bataille's thought makes possible what I call postmodern anarchism. Bataille's theory contains radically antistatist implications. He understands consumption as a major social force which stands outside the modern

state and which exists in explicit opposition to that State: "the State (at least the modern, fully developed State) cannot give free reign to a movement of destructive *consumption*."[18] Economic accumulation (what Bataille calls "the production of the means of production") dominates the agendas of all modern states. But with his theory of consumption, Bataille has described a whole realm of human action which exists beyond this accumulative principle. Frequently the State is able to dominate this other realm; thus, for example, lovers "submit themselves—and along with them, the universe they are—to those sets of judgments that subordinate being to useful ends, in terms of which only the State has any coherence."[19] And yet the reader of *The Accursed Share* is left with the strong suspicion that the very existence of this outside realm—the erotic, transgressive world, the world in which energy and resources are not saved or accumulated but rather consumed and expended in an orgy of frivolous excess—represents a serious symbolic challenge to state power. After all, state power derives in large part from the immensely successful way in which modern states colonize all semiotics. One need only glance at any major Western newspaper to understand that rationalism, economic accumulation, and state power combine at the deepest level to form a seemingly seamless semiotic order. The accomplishment of *The Accursed Share* is to locate and explore the not-quite-invisible rifts in that order.

Radical gift theory would also form the basis for some of Baudrillard's most important critiques. Baudrillard's debt to Mauss and Bataille is made most clear in *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* which first appeared in 1976.[20] Baudrillard prefaces this book by arguing that Mauss's gift-exchange is a hypothesis "more radical than Marx's or Freud's,"[21] a controversial claim which Baudrillard is nonetheless able to sustain, in large measure, in the body of this work. For Baudrillard, the radicality of gift-exchange lies in the fact that it is "equally dismissive of political and libidinal economy, outlining instead a beyond of value, a beyond of the law, a beyond of repression and a beyond of the unconscious."[22] Here we can clearly see the implications which radical gift-exchange theory might hold for postmodern anarchism. If gift-exchange does indeed represent a dismissal of political economy (as Bataille's account would seem to suggest), and if symbolic exchange represents a "beyond of the law" (as Baudrillard argues in *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* and again in many of his later works), then it seems clear that contemporary anarchist theory cannot afford to ignore these radical forms of exchange. For Baudrillard, the symbolic violence of the gift without return is the only violence which has any chance against the omnipresent semiotic codes of political economy. "*To defy the system with a gift to which it cannot respond save by its own collapse and death*"[23]—this is the anarchistic possibility which Baudrillard offers.

Baudrillard boldly asserts that a specter is haunting political economy, but not the specter which the Marxists describe. He is speaking instead of the specter of the gift. "In the immense polymorphous machine of contemporary capital, the symbolic (gift and counter-gift, reciprocity and reversal, expenditure and sacrifice) no longer counts for anything, nature (the great referential of the origin and substance, the subject/object dialectic, and so on) no longer counts, political economy itself only survives in a brain-dead state, but all these phantoms continue to plague the operational field of value."[24] Under the influence of Mauss (gift and counter-gift) and Bataille (expenditure and sacrifice), Baudrillard gives us his vision of a semiotic system which obsessively tries to repress its memories of the gift and yet which (like the neurotic) cannot quite get away from the phantasmal effects of those memories. Baudrillard's analysis is also quite close here to that of Bookchin, who argues that "the transition from gift to commodity, in effect, could yield the disintegration of the community into a market place, the consanguinal or ethical union between people into rivalry and aggressive egotism. . . . The gift itself virtually disappeared as the objectification of association. It lingered on merely as a byproduct of ceremonial functions."[25] For Bookchin, as for Bataille and Baudrillard, the repression of the gift as an economic and epistemological category is an absolutely crucial precursor to the establishment of the modern, commodity-based principles of capitalist exchange. And yet the commodity can never really fill the cultural void created by the disappearance of the gift. The gift, then, is what some postmodernists might call an "absent presence": if the gift is understood as a basic and fundamental principle of exchange, then the fact that the gift does *not* appear anywhere on the semiotic terrain of modern political economy can, in fact, be taken as provisional evidence of a serious theoretical flaw within the capitalist logic itself.

Baudrillard's strategy is thus to reinvoke the symbolism of the gift as a challenge to modern semiocracy. Baudrillard understands quite clearly that "the code" (by which we may understand the totality of semiotic operations that enforce political economy and the state, whether in a capitalist or communist mode) cannot possibly be opposed on the field of rational, subject-centered language. The logic of the sign is always the logic of capital, and it is for this reason that Baudrillard proceeds to a total critique of the sign and all rational semiotics: "symbolic violence is deduced from a logic of the symbolic (which has nothing to do with the sign or with energy): reversal, the incessant reversibility of the counter-gift and, conversely, the seizing of power by the unilateral exercise of the gift."[26] As we know from Mauss and Bataille, the gift is entirely outside the bourgeois system of exchange, and this is especially true of the unilateral gift without return. But Baudrillard goes further than his intel-

lectual forebears by suggesting that the radical symbolic logic of the gift may therefore function as a serious challenge to the semiotic order which sustains all modern economies and states.

The problem, of course, is that in all contemporary societies, it is the *system itself* which maintains and enforces a strategic monopoly on the power of gift giving. "It is the capitalist who gives, who has the initiative of the gift, which secures him, as in every social order, a pre-eminence and a power far beyond the economic."[27] Indeed, the fact that the capitalist monopolizes the gift of work is merely part of the problem. We must also grapple with the "gift of media and messages to which, due to the monopoly of the code, nothing is allowed to retort."[28] From the point of view of postmodern anarchism, this would seem to be disastrous. The gift without return, if we recall Bataille, is the most revolutionary gift of all; if the system can use the institutions of mass media to appropriate even *this* kind of gift for its own purposes, then the radical possibilities of gift giving would seem to be quite limited.

But this is not the end of the story. The system may indeed be quite adept at colonizing gift-exchange for its own purposes. But as Baudrillard points out, "to refuse labour, to dispute wages is thus to put the process of the gift, expiation and economic compensation back into question, and therefore to expose the fundamental symbolic process."[29] The reappropriation of the gift from the engines of capital *is* possible, and not merely as a theoretical option. This is also a practical strategy with a history, and its history is the history of May 1968. It was through the anarchy of the gift that the revolution of May "shook the system down to the depths of its symbolic organization."[30] It was in the streets of Paris that the praxis of symbolic exchange was born as a revolutionary strategy.

May 1968: Birth of a Postmodern Anarchist Praxis

Popularly known as the "events of May," the revolutionary uprising of May 1968 was a crucial, defining political moment for many French intellectuals, including Baudrillard. The revolution began as a student protest at the Nantarre campus of the University of Paris; Baudrillard was teaching there at the time.[31] Realizing, perhaps, that the orthodox Left no longer bore its interests, the French working class supported the protesting students by declaring a wildcat strike; this was the largest general strike in European history.[32] In a later interview, Baudrillard would remark that during this period he "was much closer to a kind of anarchism" than to Marxism.[33] The events of May would only

strengthen Baudrillard's anti-Marxist anarchism, as he watched the French Communist Party and the trade union leaders cooperate with the Gaullist government to put down the revolution.

The revolutionary theory and practice of May 1968 were dominated, in large part, by Guy Debord and the Situationist International, a radical movement with which Baudrillard was closely associated. Formulated in the crucible of the war for Algerian independence, Situationist theory included a strong antistatist message. The "Address to the Revolutionaries of Algeria and of All Countries," published in *Internationale Situationniste* 10 (March 1966), asserted that "all existing governments, even those issuing out of the most liberatory movements, are based on lies inside and out."[34] It is important to note, however, that Situationist anarchism was not limited to a critique of the state. The state was, for the Situationists, only part of a much broader cultural problem. Their ultimate goal was a radical transformation of ordinary life by means of a total critique of society. This included, of course, a critique of the state and of bureaucracy, but it included as well attacks on advertising and consumerism, the university, art, and in general what Debord referred to as "the poverty of everyday life." For Debord, "everything effectively depends on the level at which the problem is posed: How is our life? How are we satisfied with it? Dissatisfied? Without for a moment letting ourselves be intimidated by the various advertisements designed to persuade us that we can be happy because of the existence of God or Colgate toothpaste or the CNRS [National Center for Scientific Research]."[35] On this point, Debord and the Situationists were in complete agreement with other major anarchist theorists of the time, such as Murray Bookchin. "It is plain that the goal of revolution today must be the liberation of daily life," Bookchin declared in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. "Any revolution that fails to achieve that goal is counterrevolution. Above all, it is *we* who have to be liberated, *our* daily lives, with all their moments, hours and days, and not universals like 'History' and 'Society.'"[36]

This, then, was the basic nondialectical agenda pursued by the postmodern anarchists of May 1968. Capital and the state were certainly still to be smashed. But people like Bookchin, Debord, and Baudrillard clearly recognized that the revolution must not be content to pursue these goals alone. Far more important than these merely modern radical objectives were such goals as the emancipation of temporal consciousness from what the Situationists called "dead time," or the elaboration of new spatial concepts to replace those which remained hopelessly mired in the discourse of urban modernism. The January 1963 number of *Internationale Situationniste* had declared that "a revolutionary movement is one that radically changes the organization of . . . space-time and the very manner of deciding its ongoing reorganization henceforward (and not a

movement that merely changes the legal form of property or the social origin of the rulers)."[37] Five years later, this "proto-postmodern" critique of spatio-temporal modernism would blossom into the antiurbanism of May 1968. During the revolution of May, according to the Situationist René Viénet, "the critique of everyday life successfully began to modify the landscape of alienation . . . everyone, in his own way, made his own critique of urbanism."[38] This critique would later be developed and expanded by Bookchin, who articulated in *Toward an Ecological Society* a fascinating variety of posturban utopianism. "To restore urbanity as a humanized terrain for sociation," Bookchin declares, "the megalopolis must be ruthlessly dissolved and its place taken by new decentralized ecocommunities, each carefully tailored to the carrying capacity of the natural ecosystem in which it is located."[39]

Although Bookchin and the Situationists were in basic agreement with respect to the problems of modern space-time, Situationism did not include the kind of humanism which is sometimes to be find in Bookchin's green anarchism. "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," published in *Internationale Situationniste* 10 (March 1966), asserted that "the barbarian is no longer at the ends of the earth, he is *here*, made into a barbarian by his forced participation in the common hierarchical consumption. The humanism that cloaks all this is the contrary of man, the negation of his activity and his desires; it is the humanism of the commodity, the benevolence of the parasitical commodity toward the people off whom it feeds."[40] The strangely compelling claim here is that humanism, which purports to liberate, is in fact the secret ally of the commodity and hence of a repressive consumer society. This Situationist antihumanism is related to Bataille's argument that modern "consumption" in fact has nothing to do with the sovereign consumption of the aristocratic order; for the Situationists, as for Bataille, the modern worker-consumer is not a sovereign subject at all.

Not surprisingly, the Situationist rejection of humanism entailed a rejection of subject-centered reason as well, and this rejection had ominous implications for Marxism. Guy Debord attacked dialectical materialism in *Society of the Spectacle,* arguing that "if it is to master the science of society and bring it under its governance, the project of transcending the economy and taking possession of history cannot itself be scientific in character."[41] In his work of the early seventies, Baudrillard followed Debord on this point almost exactly: "Radical in its *logical* analysis of capital, Marxist theory nonetheless maintains an *anthropological* consensus with the options of Western rationalism in its definitive form acquired in eighteenth century bourgeois thought."[42] For Baudrillard, bourgeois rationality—including the rationalist rhetoric of the Marxists—was the soil in which capital flourished. It was impossible, according to this

interpretation, to make an effective rationalist critique of capital, because any such critique must remain trapped within the ethos of capital itself. Since the orthodox Left always carried out its critiques under the sign of bourgeois rationality, Baudrillard and Debord found it unsurprising that the Left ended up reproducing the power relations inherent in capitalism. Yet Baudrillard and the Situationists would continue to hold out the hope that a radical movement which did *not* rely upon suspect categories of subjectivity, science, and semiotics might actually enable a unique and effective new form of revolutionary politics.

This politics was meant to draw revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice together, for perhaps the first time in history. Debord went so far as to insist that "the very constitution and communication of a theory of this kind cannot be conceived independently of a *rigorous practice*."[43] The theoretically informed practice envisioned by the Situationists revolved around a politics of the gesture. Indeed, the concept of the gesture was part of the definition of Situationism itself (though of course the Situationists rejected the idea that there could ever be a doctrine called Situationism). "The situation is . . . a unitary ensemble of behavior in time. It is composed of gestures contained in a transitory decor."[44] These gestures might be artistic or overtly political, satirical, or subversive. Above all, they were meant to be playful: "proletarian revolutions will be *festivals* or nothing, for festivity is the very keynote of the life they announce. *Play* is the ultimate principle of the festival, and the only rules it can recognize are to live without dead time and to enjoy without restraints."[45] The Situationist "play ethic" was meant as an antidote for the quasi-Puritan work ethic endemic to both capitalism and institutional communism. And the gestural praxis of the Situationists was meant to take the revolution into the strange and unexplored terrain of the symbol.

What would such a symbolic or gestural politics look like? "The critique of the dominant language, the *détournement* of it, is going to become a permanent practice of the new revolutionary theory," proclaimed the "Preface to a Situationist Dictionary."[46] The concept of *détournement* would emerge as a cornerstone of Situationist theory and practice. The term, which is somewhat difficult to render into English, refers to the practice of symbolically altering a text or image so that its original meaning is radically subverted, or possibly even reversed. As the events of May unfolded, for example, Situationist slogans began to appear in comic strip "bubbles" which were inscribed upon the artistic masterpieces which lined the halls of the Sorbonne. This was certainly a way for the revolutionaries to challenge the cultural authority of a mainstream artistic discourse. But on a deeper level, Situationist *détournement* was also a basic refusal of the terms and concepts of modern political economy. With its defiant

insistence that the symbolic—a category which capitalism rendered invisible a very long time ago—was to be placed back on the cultural agenda at long last, this unique practice served as a fascinating challenge to modern semiocracy.

The gestural politics of Situationist *détournement* was part of a larger anti-semiotic strategy which was deployed with remarkable effect during the days of May. This strategy involved the creation of graffiti, which was often composed or at least inspired by the Situationists. During the events of May, the walls of Paris experienced a veritable eruption of symbolic discourse. These vibrant revolutionary declarations boldly asserted the return of the symbol. Worse still (as far as capital and the Gaullist state were concerned), they declared the return of the gift. It took almost no time at all for the specter of the gift to break through the surface of what Debord had called the spectacular-commodity economy. Looking back on May 1968 during the early seventies, Baudrillard would conclude that "the real revolutionary media during May were the walls and their speech, the silk-screen posters and the hand-painted notices, the street where speech began and was exchanged—everything that was an *immediate* inscription, given and returned, spoken and answered, mobile in the same space and time, reciprocal and antagonistic."[47] Here we have graffiti as a reciprocal gift, given and returned, but the graffiti of May also opened up the even more radical specter of the gift without return. This specter would allow Baudrillard to conclude even as late as 1976 that "the catastrophic situation opened up by May '68 is not over."[48] The walls of May 1968 enabled an "insurrection of signs" which would continue to haunt the system for many years to come. This ghostly insurrection would gain increasing importance as the West gradually moved into its postindustrial phase, because in this new social and economic configuration, "the system can do without the industrial, productive city . . . it cannot, however, do without the urban as the space-time of the code of reproduction, for the centrality of the code is the definition of power itself. Whatever attacks contemporary semiocracy . . . is therefore politically essential: graffiti for example."[49] The postindustrial or postmodern revolution thus revolves not around the class struggle, but around the conflict between symbol and semiotic. Antisemiotic graffiti—which "cannot be caught by any organized discourse," which "resist[s] every interpretation and every connotation, no longer denoting anyone or anything"[50]—is an important symbolic strategy which may be deployed against semiotic power. For Baudrillard, this strategy is absolutely crucial in the struggle against capital and the state, because "all the repressive and reductive strategies of power systems are already present in the internal logic of the sign, as well as those of exchange value and political economy. Only total revolution, theoretical and practical, can restore the symbolic in the demise of the sign and of value. Even signs must burn."[51] It is through the language of

signs that power manifests itself in society. Certainly we are governed by the state and by capital—but these institutions govern us through semiotic exchange. It is therefore at the level of *symbolic* exchange that such institutions must be challenged, and what fascinated Baudrillard about the 1968 revolution was that it represented a first attempt (still quite incomplete, to be sure) to develop this type of symbolic challenge.

Baudrillard would later write that "May '68 . . . was not an offensive action (power would win that battle hands down), but a defensive simulation, which is to rob power of its own secret (precisely that it doesn't exist) and so to leave it defenseless before its own enormity."[52] The significance of May 1968 for Baudrillard, then, was threefold: first, it boldly announced the long-awaited return of the symbolic. Second, it deliberately refused the politics of the real, recognizing that such politics always succeed only in reinscribing power. Third, the events of May initiated a new mode of the political—or, as Baudrillard would later call it, the "transpolitical." After 1968, Baudrillard would move closer and closer to a "hyperreal" politics, a politics of simulation. In 1975, Mark Poster suggested that Baudrillard was left "with only an empty invocation for a spontaneous overthrow of the code à la May, 1968."[53] But this emptiness was precisely what Baudrillard had in mind. The revolution with dialectical content had failed. What remained to be attempted was the revolution of the void, the revolution that burns all signs, the revolution that deliberately and consistently positions itself outside the real. For Baudrillard, the revolution of 1968 was encouraging precisely because it *was* empty, because it began and ended with revolutionary slogans which have long since been painted over. By refusing to build lasting revolutionary institutions, the revolutionaries of May thus avoided the pitfalls of the Leninist vanguard. As Alain Touraine has astutely observed, "the battle [of May 1968] was not fought in the name of social interests, but in the name of anti-power. It was only a beginning. . . . The May Movement had no tomorrow; but it will have a future."[54] The later work of Jean Baudrillard provides us with a convenient way to chart that future.

Postmodern Anarchism Today: The Politics of Simulation

During the seventies, Baudrillard's work showed a confidence and optimism regarding the revolutionary possibilities of the radical moment which began in May 1968. However, in the course of the following decade, Baudrillard would gradually begin to lose that optimism. In this he was probably not alone; the era of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher was hardly fertile ground for the radi-

cal imagination. Today Baudrillard often asserts that "one can no longer find a subversive position. Nothing corresponds to it."[55] Baudrillard seems to feel that a serious shift has taken place in political culture, and that the sixties are over. He makes this clear in *The Ecstasy of Communication,* a summary of his previous work prepared during the eighties as the *habilitation* for his doctoral degree at the Sorbonne. Here Baudrillard is quite insistent about the radical possibilities of his earlier thought: "the transgression of the code is the reversion of opposite terms, and therefore of the calculated differences through which the dominance of one term is established. The 'symbolic' is the figure of this reversion, and by the same token the figure of any possible revolution: 'The revolution will be symbolic or will not be at all.'"[56] Baudrillard identifies the antagonism between political economy and potlatch as part of a "double spiral" which moves from *The System of Objects* through *Fatal Strategies*—which is to say, through the bulk of his work.[57] And yet he seems to feel that today, the "dream of transgression" which emerged from his radical reading of Bataille has been lost.[58]

But if this is really Baudrillard's position, then why does he continue to speak of subversion? While he dismisses radical politics in some interviews, Baudrillard asserts in others that he has "something of an inheritance from the Situationists, from Bataille, and so on."[59] Baudrillard perhaps refuses to speak about politics or revolution not because these issues no longer interest him, but because he has realized that speaking about these things will not bring about any meaningful change. More accurately, we should say that Baudrillard no longer speaks of *real* politics or *real* revolution, as he sometimes did in the sixties and early seventies, because he understands now that the kind of revolution he wants to bring about cannot happen within the real. Postmodern anarchism must revolve instead around the politics of simulation. We have seen that even in his early works, Baudrillard was already beginning to move away from "real" revolutionary practice and toward symbolic practice. In his later works, Baudrillard continues along this trajectory, developing a politics of simulation, a politics of the hyperreal.

The political status of simulation and hyperreality is perhaps not readily apparent, but it is fairly clear that there is something radical about these categories. Today "we are simulators, we are simulacra (not in the classical sense of 'appearance'), we are concave mirrors radiated by the social, a radiation without a light source, power without origin, without distance, and it is in this tactical universe of the simulacrum that one will need to fight—without hope, hope is a weak value, but in defiance and fascination."[60] If Baudrillard's pessimism were total, there would certainly be no reason to call for this tactical fight, and the demand for defiance would be incoherent. He would be unlikely to assert, as he

does in *Simulacra and Simulation,* that "capital, in fact, was never linked by a contract to the society that it dominates. It is a sorcery of social relations, it is a *challenge to society,* and it must be responded to as such. It is not a scandal to be denounced according to moral or economic rationality, but a challenge to take up according to symbolic law."[61] Here Baudrillard still sounds very much like a postmodern anarchist, preparing to wage symbolic war on capitalism. Such an all-out attack on capital would be quixotic at best, if it positioned itself within the real. But Baudrillard's argument is of a different order: "Political Economy is coming to an end before our eyes, metamorphosing into a transeconomics of speculation which merely *plays* at obeying the old logic . . . so Political Economy will indeed soon have come to an end—though not at all in the way we once envisaged: rather, through the exacerbation of its own logic to the point of self-parody."[62] The modern radical plans, organizes, launches a revolution of the real—and fails every time. The postmodern anarchist mocks capital, cheerfully exposing its Achilles' heel by pointing out that political economy is *already dead,* and that we need not fear its pathetic corpse.[63] This strategic impulse enables Baudrillard to assert that "whereas dialectical thought and critical thought are part of the field of exchange—including, possibly, market exchange—radical thought situates itself in the zone of impossible exchange, of non-equivalence, of the unintelligible, the undecidable."[64] It is, I think, quite significant that Baudrillard distinguishes dialectical Marxism from "radical thought." This suggests that he is still able to locate a radical political option, even today. We may also infer from this that, whereas Marxism seems perpetually unable to get outside the exchange principles of bourgeois political economy, a nondialectical form of radical thought might be able to do so.

I would thus contest Douglas Kellner's assertion that "the political upshot of [Baudrillard's] analysis seems to be that everything in the system is subject to cybernetic control, and that what appear to be oppositional, outside, or threatening to the system are really functional parts of a society of simulations, mere 'alibis' which only further enhance social control."[65] To be sure, "the system" is an ominous and pervasive presence in Baudrillard's later work, and simulation often does serve the interests of power, e.g., through advertising. But resistance is quite possible in this hyperreal world. In his most recent work, *The Vital Illusion,* Baudrillard goes so far as to suggest that within the mode of simulation, subversion is actually automatic and unavoidable; indeed, he argues that such subversion is likely to grow out of the system itself. "This is what I call objective irony: there is a strong possibility, verging on a certainty, that systems will be undone by their own systematicity. This is true not only for technical structures, but for human ones as well. The more these political, social, economic systems advance toward their own perfection, the more they decon-

struct themselves."[66] Thus the systems of cybernetic control which seem so unstoppable to Douglas Kellner might actually contain the seeds of their own destruction. At first glance this might seem similar to Marx's claim that by calling the proletariat into existence, the bourgeoisie was unwittingly guaranteeing its own destruction, but Baudrillard's argument is actually of a different order. Marx did not account for the ways in which class relations might mutate to make possible postindustrial "late capitalism" or totalitarian state communism. Baudrillard's analysis, on the other hand, attacks systems *in general,* at the deepest structural and symbolic level of their "systematicity." For Baudrillard, then, "this is the weakness of our historical radicality. All the philosophies of change, the revolutionary, nihilistic, futurist utopias, all this poetics of subversion and transgression so characteristic of modernity, will appear naive when compared with the inability and natural reversibility of the world."[67] This is a radical hypothesis which looks very much like the principle of entropy: all systems contain at least the potential for radical disorder, and no system, no matter how oppressive it may appear to be, is immune from the system crash.

Thus simulation does not by any means imply political hopelessness. In Baudrillard's more recent work, the death of the real shades gradually into the *murder* of the real, a kind of "perfect crime." To be sure, "from our rational point of view, this may appear rather desperate and could even justify something like pessimism. But from the point of view of singularity, of alterity, of secret and seduction, it is, on the contrary, our only chance: our last chance. In this sense, the Perfect Crime is an hypothesis of radiant optimism."[68] I would therefore suggest that the death of the real in Baudrillard's writing is similar in status to the death of God in Nietzsche's work (the latter death having been, Baudrillard suggests, "resolved by simulation."[69]) Both deaths make possible two different varieties of nihilism: one that is debilitating, and another that is affirmative. Critics such as Kellner see only the former in Baudrillard's work, but Kellner's line of interpretation ignores Baudrillard's equally important affirmative nihilism. As Baudrillard explains in *Paroxysm:*

> What I do is more of a thought experiment which tries to explore an unknown field by other rules. This doesn't mean it's "nihilistic" in the sense in which nihilism means there are no longer any values, no longer any reality, but only signs: the accusation of nihilism and imposture always relates to that point. But if you take nihilism in the strong sense, the sense of a nothing-based thinking, a thinking which might start out from the axiom "why is there nothing rather than something?"—overturning the fundamental philosophical question, the question of being: "why is there

> something rather than nothing?"—then I don't mind being called a nihilist.[70]

This variety of nihilism hardly implies a descent into apolitical cynicism. It is, on the contrary, a bold and radical philosophical challenge. Baudrillard's affirmative nihilism is in fact a weapon which he skillfully wields against the dialectic and all forms of modern political philosophy.

Sadie Plant accurately notes the presence of this affirmative nihilism in Baudrillard's work, yet misses the radical politics implied by it: "the world of hyperreality and simulation is recorded and celebrated, and the possibility of making any sort of political intervention is happily dismissed."[71] But in fact it seems quite possible that simulation might underwrite some kind of resistance or subversion. It is the awareness of this possibility, perhaps, that encourages Baudrillard to argue that "in effect, we need a symbolic violence more powerful than any political violence."[72] As for the political valence of this new violence, Baudrillard describes it as "worse" than anarchistic,[73] but this surely depends on one's point of view. To be sure, it is worse than conventional anarchism from the perspectives of capital and the state, since it is far more radical in its "systematic destabilization."[74] But from another point of view, the new violence is perhaps better than orthodox anarchist violence, in that the former is a "singularity which stands opposed to real violence."[75] What Baudrillard is talking about is a theoretical, analytic, interpretive violence, a violence of thought rather than deed, a violence which cheerfully murders concepts, ideas and semiotic structures. He insists that this "violence of interpretation" is a positive phenomenon.[76]

There is a tremendous irony at work here. Humanists would certainly be relieved to learn that Baudrillard's interpretive violence harms no actual human beings. And yet his violence certainly *does* announce the death of the modern humanist concept of subjectivity. In his later work, Baudrillard's antihumanism blossoms fully: "the subject, the metaphysics of the subject, was beautiful only in its arrogant glory, in its caprice, in its inexhaustible will to power, in its transcendence as the subject of power, the subject of history, or in the dramaturgy of its alienation. Finished with all that, it is now only a miserable carcass."[77] This line of thinking has generated some of the harshest criticisms of Baudrillard's work. Kellner goes so far as to assert that Baudrillard's renunciation of Cartesian subjectivity "is equivalent to renouncing all possibility of an effective intervention in the world."[78] Here Kellner is quite wrong. There is absolutely no reason to assume that political intervention requires an autonomous Cartesian subject. Indeed, it seems quite possible that the renunciation of orthodox concepts of subjectivity marks not the end but the *beginning* of meaningful

politics. Rather than producing political freedom, Cartesian humanism has instead given us the exploitation of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, the bureaucratic repression of the twentieth-century welfare state, and—in the clever disguise of the proletarian subject—the gulag. Given the repeated failures of all humanist politics to achieve their stated emancipatory goals, the suggestion that we should abandon the humanist project altogether hardly seems outrageous. "Hasn't liberation, in all its forms, been both the accomplishment of, and the final blow to, liberty?" Baudrillard demands. "This is the whole problem of modernity."[79]

The move away from humanism is therefore politically crucial. In terms of international politics, it allows us to postulate the Third World as an alternative to the global "new world order." Baudrillard assures us that "the future lies with the adolescent societies which will not have taken the route through economics and politics, but can cope very well with the technological without burdening themselves with all these—humanist and rational—historical categories."[80] In the West, the humanist subject—Cartesian, economic, or revolutionary—is replaced by "the masses." In a typically controversial move, Baudrillard takes a category which is generally thought to have conservative political implications (Richard Nixon's "silent majority") and radicalizes it: "the masses have no history to write . . . their strength is *actual,* in the present, and sufficient unto itself. It consists in their silence, in their capacity to absorb and neutralize, already superior to any power acting upon them."[81] The masses stand in Baudrillard's work as a kind of black hole, capable of consuming anything, including power itself. The masses thus belong to the era of simulation; as such they are a hyperreal category, though as Baudrillard is careful to point out, this doesn't mean that they don't exist. Rather, "it means that *their representation is no longer possible.* The masses are no longer a referent because they no longer belong to the order of representation."[82] This is a profoundly political statement, because all modern political orders rely upon some variety of representation. Elected governments claim to represent their constituents; the Leninist vanguard claims to represent the proletariat. But with the death of the real, representation becomes radically incoherent. To challenge power on its own level, the level of the real, is a losing game. But to deny power the reality of its representational scheme is to issue it a very serious challenge: "the mass is at the same time the death, the end of this political process thought to rule over it."[83]

The masses are thus by no means apolitical. Rather they are beyond politics; in Baudrillard's terms, they are "transpolitical."[84] The category of the transpolitical brings the project of postmodern anarchism into the era of simulation. Not surprisingly, Baudrillard's "transpolitics" has strong antistatist implications. Baudrillard is attempting to unmask the state's deepest, most closely

guarded secret: that its power is unreal, that the state exists only as simulation. This undermines state authority in a radical way, by assaulting its most unquestioned assumptions: that there necessarily *is* a state, that the state necessarily *has* power. "The State and political power sit atop all this in a very, very fragile position; they are, so to speak, like filigree-work upon a translucent society, like a fiction woven from multiple complicities."[85]

Consider, for example, how simulation reveals the unreality of the law. "No more black magic of the forbidden, alienation and transgression, but the white magic of ecstasy, fascination, transparency. It's the end of the pathos of law. There will be no Final Judgement. We've passed beyond it without realizing it."[86] The judgment which will not happen is that of God, of course, whose death has already been proclaimed by Nietzsche. But it is also the judgment of the state, whose law is radically destabilized by hyperreality. "Simulation is infinitely more dangerous because it always leaves open to supposition that, above and beyond its object, *law and order themselves might be nothing but simulation*."[87] Simulation attacks the law where it is the most vulnerable: at the very level of its existence. Simulation says of the law what must never be said if the law is to continue functioning: that it is unreal; that it operates only because we have not yet recognized or admitted its unreality. This is an attack on law at the theoretical level, certainly, but Baudrillard also believes that there are places in the "real" world where the unreal nature of law and government have already become apparent. "Italy, for the most part, lives in a state of joyous simulation. There, law has already—and maybe it always has—yielded to the game and the rules of the game."[88] Why does Baudrillard chose Italy—a society where governments fall like rain, where parliamentary elections return Mussolini's granddaughter or a porno actress with apparent equanimity—as his model of "joyous simulation"? It seems unlikely that this is a politically innocent choice. Rather, Baudrillard appears to be celebrating the postmodern instability of Italian politics, the ephemeral nature of law and government in Italy.

A similar phenomenon also emerges with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, as Baudrillard's unique interpretation of these events makes clear.

> The spectacle of those regimes imploding with such ease ought to make Western governments—or what is left of them—tremble, for they have barely any more existence than the Eastern ones. In 1968, we saw government authority collapse almost without violence, as if convinced of its non-existence by the mere mirror of the crowds and the street. And the images which came to us from Prague and Berlin were '68-style images, with the same atmosphere, the same faces.[89]

Having been prematurely dismissed as a mere blip on the historical radar, May 1968 returns some three decades later. Postmodern anarchism blossoms once again in the televised, hyperreal streets of Eastern Europe and on the computer bulletin boards which the new breed of Russian revolutionaries used to organize their uprising. Eschewing an order of the real which had given them nothing but Stalinist repression, these new revolutionaries employed a strategy of simulation: they simply unmasked their governments, revealing the emptiness behind a totalitarian façade. And the withered corpse of Stalinism vanished without a trace. All of this has very serious consequences for Western regimes, as Baudrillard points out. "This was, in a way, dying communism's witty parting shot, since the quasi-voluntary destabilization of the Eastern bloc, with the complicity of its peoples, is also a destabilization of the West."[90] Baudrillard's reading of the Eastern bloc's collapse reveals a deeply transgressive secret: *it could happen here, just as easily as it did there.* This interpretation perhaps helps to explain the miserably facile rhetoric which the Western mass media employs to describe events in the East.[91] Claims that these benighted Eastern people have at last awoken to the virtues of democracy and the "free market" are patently absurd in the face of an impotent Russian government unable to rescue its plummeting ruble or salvage its hemorrhaging economy. But these claims *do* help to reinscribe an ideological mask which prevents us from seeing that the hyperreal revolutions of the East could quite easily travel westward.

Indeed, in his book *America,* which first appeared in 1986, Baudrillard makes it quite clear that subversive simulation exists even in this most thoroughly statist of societies. This is true despite the fact that, as Baudrillard is careful to point out, the United States has no meaningful radical or revolutionary tradition in the European sense: "the social and philosophical nineteenth century did not cross the Atlantic."[92] Despite this sobering fact (or perhaps because of it?), "everything we have dreamed of in the radical name of anti-culture, the subversion of meaning, the destruction of reason and the end of representation, that whole anti-utopia which unleashed so many theoretical and political, aesthetic and social convulsions in Europe, without ever actually becoming a reality (May '68 is one of the last examples) has all been achieved here in America in the simplest, most radical way."[93] Ironically, it is America—vast bastion of capital, postwar imperial power, land of conservative Hollywood presidential simulations—that offers some of the most interesting possibilities for postmodern anarchism. Reagan's America may have perfected the simulation model of power. But by turning simulation loose in this way, America has perhaps unwittingly employed what Baudrillard would call a fatal strategy. The unstoppable spiral of simulation does indeed seem to consume all meaning, and as it

does so it puts to death the humanist subject along with that subject's rationalist semiotic practices. One need only think (as Baudrillard does) of Las Vegas: a perpetual-motion machine which transforms desert into neon, producing an uncontrollable eruption of symbolism and, in some strange and ironic way, a liberation effect. Las Vegas (like Disneyland) is a simulation of America, and what these simulations point to is

> a liberation of *all effects*, some of them perfectly excessive and abject. But this is precisely the point: the high point of liberation, its logical outcome, is to be found in the spectacular orgy, speed, the instantaneity of change, generalized eccentricity. Politics *frees itself* in the spectacle, in the all-out advertising effect; sexuality frees itself in all its anomalies and perversions . . . mores, customs, the body and language free themselves in the ever quickening round of fashion.[94]

America is the land of pure simulation, and it is also the moment of perfect reversibility. As the rate of symbolic exchange nears light speed in the United States, everything becomes possible: the most subversive effect, the most transgressive eccentricity. Postmodern anarchism was born in the Parisian streets of May 1968, and reborn at the Brandenburg Gate in October 1990. But it reaches its maturity in the American desert.

In his essay *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities,* Baudrillard cautions against the thesis of this chapter. "Banality, inertia, apoliticism used to be fascist; they are in the process of becoming revolutionary—without changing meaning, without ceasing to have meaning. Micro-revolution of banality, transpolitics of desire—one more trick of the 'liberationists.' The denial of meaning has no meaning."[95] Yet there is, of course, no reason to privilege Baudrillard's interpretation of the politics of simulation. The death of the humanist subject, after all, means the death of Baudrillard as well. If Baudrillard can speak of the "May '68 effect," we can speak of the "Baudrillard effect," and this effect is not necessarily the one that Baudrillard himself may have envisioned. The politics of simulation do not necessarily represent, as Baudrillard himself perhaps believes, a break with the radical politics of the 1960s. Rather, Baudrillard's work of the past few decades constitutes—at least in part—a continuation of radical gift theory and the revolutionary project of the Situationists.

Far from promoting a disabling postmodern anesthesia, then, simulation theory can enable an extremely radical politics. This is not in any sense a Marxist politics; Baudrillard's critique of dialectical reasoning makes that quite clear. It is, rather, a politics of postmodern anarchism: anarchist because it con-

tains a radical critique of capitalism and state power, postmodern because it expands this critique into a generalized assault on humanism, semiocracy, and all forms of representation. Above all, Baudrillard's thought attacks what he calls the code, the generalized network of domination and control which is inscribed in every part of our lives. Baudrillard's postmodern anarchism stems from a recognition of the omnipresence of this semiotic code in the state, in consumer society, in communist bureaucracy, and so on. His response is an attack on all fronts. If the system is omnipresent, then resistance must be as well. The resistance which Baudrillard proposes is radical, total, and perfectly well suited to life in the early twenty-first century. Baudrillard would have us challenge the reality of a system which holds its own ephemerality as its deepest secret. The system rules us because we believe it can, and we believe it can because we believe that it is real. Simulation theory points out that with the removal of a single assumption, the entire world can be transformed in an instant. Television sets may be switched off, or smashed. Hard drives crash. And even signs must burn.

Notes

1. Norris, *What's Wrong With Postmodernism,* 191.
2. Lacan, *Language of the Self* 38.
3. Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault,* 12
4. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* 2.
5. Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard,* 188.
6. Goldman, "Anarchism" in *Anarchism and Other Essays,* 52 (emphasis added).
7. Butler, *Gender Trouble,* xxiii.
8. Postmodern feminists are not, of course, universally committed to this strategy. Rosi Braidotti, for example, argues strongly in favor of a strategic ontological essentialism. In her view, "taking a priori an antiessentialist stand may be politically right; nevertheless, it remains conceptually short-sighted" (*Nomadic Subjects,* 185). I would argue, however, that for feminists as for anarchists, political concerns should be given priority over conceptual ones.
9. Durkheim's own work is not, however, particularly radical. Consider, for example, his positive reflections on the division of labor which is to be found in any modern capitalist society: "the progress of individual personality and that of the division of labor depend upon one and the same cause. It is thus impossible to desire one without desiring the other" (Durkheim, *Division of Labor,* 404-5). Equally troubling is Durkheim's refusal to deal with the problem of the state. As Dominick LaCapra has rightly pointed out, for Durkheim "the entire problem of the nature of

government, which did not readily fit into the simple-complex schema of social organization, was deprived of sociological significance" (LaCapra, *Emile Durkheim,* 101). It thus seems unlikely that Durkheim's thought could, by itself, contribute to anything like postmodern anarchism. The work of Durkheim's radical student (and nephew) Marcel Mauss does, however, open up this theoretical possibility. (For more on the political distinctions between Durkheim and Mauss, see Gane, *Radical Sociology of Durkheim and Mauss,* 139 ff.)

10. Mauss, *The Gift,* 69.

11. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics,* 169. Sahlins is quite right to argue that Mauss' anthropology of the gift reveals a complex and sophisticated mode of social and political organization which is completely alien to modern statist orders, and which therefore represents a serious challenge to the hegemony of those orders. However, the anarchism which Sahlins recognizes in the gift is of a purely modernist variety. Basing his interpretation strictly on a reading of *The Gift,* Sahlins associates the gift with reason and progress, the twin pillars of Enlightenment thought (Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics,* 175-76). Had he been able to see how Baudrillard's theory of symbolic exchange would radicalize the idea of the gift, Sahlins might have recognized that the gift's most important challenge is actually to the entire structure of rationalist semiotics which sustains modern states.

12. Mauss, *The Gift,* 35.

13. Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom,* 71.

14. Morris-Suzuki, "Capitalism in the Computer Age," 63.

15. Barlow, "Selling Wine Without Bottles," 23.

16. Bataille, *Accursed Share,* volume 1, 28.

17. Ibid., 25.

18. Bataille, *Accursed Share,* volumes 2 and 3, 160.

19. Ibid., 163.

20. In *Postmodernism,* Frederick Jameson refers to symbolic exchange as "the Utopian moment of [Baudrillard's] own view of history, whose name has been significantly modified from Mauss" (234). Jameson goes on to note the important connection between Baudrillard's idea of symbolic exchange and "Bataille's anthropological celebration of excess, destruction and the potlatch" (Ibid., 235). Unfortunately, all of this takes place within a brief parenthetical remark; Jameson does not explore the full political and theoretical implications of the gift and symbolic exchange.

21. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* 1.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 37.

24. Ibid., 35.

25. Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom,* 136.

26. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* 36.

27. Ibid., 41.
28. Ibid., 36.
29. Ibid., 41.
30. Ibid., 34.
31. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces,* 426-27.
32. Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology,* 225; Marcus, *Lipstick Traces,* 428.
33. Baudrillard, *Baudrillard Live,* 20.
34. Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology,* 150.
35. Ibid., 72.
36. Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism,* 44.
37. Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology,* 108.
38. Viénet, *Enragés and Situationists,* 82.
39. Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society,* 168.
40. Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology,* 159.
41. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle,* 53.
42. Baudrillard, *Mirror of Production,* 32.
43. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle,* 143.
44. Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology,* 43.
45. Ibid., 337.
46. Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology,* 170.
47. Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign,* 176.
48. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* 34.
49. Ibid., 78.
50. Ibid.
51. Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign,* 163.
52. Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies,* 80.
53. Poster, introduction to Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production,* 15.
54. Touraine, *The May Movement,* 63.
55. Baudrillard, *Baudrillard Live,* 65.
56. Baudrillard, *Ecstasy of Communication,* 78.
57. Ibid., 79. It is this symbolic spiral which is, according to Baudrillard, missing from Foucault's work, and this perhaps motivates some of Baudrillard's hostility toward Foucault. See Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault,* 16.
58. Ibid., 80.
59. Baudrillard, *Baudrillard Live,* 168.
60. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* 152.
61. Ibid., 15.
62. Baudrillard, *Transparency of Evil,* 35.

63. This strategy can also be deployed against the discourse which surrounds the sexual subject, as Baudrillard makes clear in *Seduction:* "Sexuality as a discourse is, like political economy (and every other discursive system), only a montage or simulacrum which has always been traversed, thwarted and exceeded by actual practice. The coherence and transparency of *homo sexualis* has no more existence than the coherence and transparency of *homo economicus*" (41).

64. Baudrillard, *Paroxysm,* 35.

65. Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard,* 82.

66. Baudrillard, *The Vital Illusion,* 78.

67. Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime,* 10.

68. Baudrillard, *The Vital Illusion,* 80-81.

69. Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime,* 5.

70. Baudrillard, *Paroxysm,* 34.

71. Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture,* 154.

72. Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault,* 58.

73. Baudrillard, *Paroxysm,* 66.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid., 67.

76. Ibid., 69.

77. Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies,* 112.

78. Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard,* 163.

79. Baudrillard, *Paroxysm,* 50.

80. Ibid., 16.

81. Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities,* 3.

82. Ibid., 20.

83. Ibid., 23.

84. Ibid., 39.

85. Baudrillard, *Paroxysm,* 63.

86. Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies,* 71.

87. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* 20.

88. Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies,* 76.

89. Baudrillard, *Illusion of the End,* 38.

90. Ibid.

91. See Stephen F. Cohen, *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia,* 5 ff.

92. Baudrillard, *America,* 90.

93. Ibid., 97.

94. Ibid., 96.

95. Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities,* 40.

Chapter Four

Anarchy in the Matrix: William Gibson and Bruce Sterling

It is becoming increasingly evident that anarchist politics cannot afford to remain within the modern world. The politics of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin—vibrant and meaningful, perhaps, to their nineteenth-century audiences—have become dangerously inaccessible to late twentieth-century readers. As we have seen, conventional anarchist politics retains too much of what it criticizes. Guy Debord said it best: "the revolutionary point of view, so long as it persists in espousing the notion that history in the present period can be mastered by means of scientific knowledge, has failed to rid itself of all its bourgeois traits."[1] It seems that the thinking which revolves around rational semiotics and the "sciences of man" implicitly serves capital and the state. As long as anarchists continue to deploy this suspect thinking, it is extremely unlikely that they will be able to develop a revolutionary theory or praxis which will provide meaningful challenges either to capitalism or to the state apparatus which sanctions that economic system.

Fortunately, we have also seen that the situation is not hopeless. I have been arguing that postmodern anarchism stands as an important alternative to the problematically rationalist and humanist anarchism of the nineteenth century. This new form of anarchist politics is meant to elude troubling difficulties of classical anarchism, such as the disturbing reliance upon instrumental rationality, or the stubborn attachment to an implicitly Cartesian concept of human subjectivity (a concept which has consistently failed to produce any meaningful human liberation since it was first deployed during the European Enlightenment). The postmodern anarchist views capitalism and statism not as causes but as effects, not as diseases but as symptoms. Postmodern anarchism

challenges an entire psychology and an entire semiotic structure which underwrite the dominant system of political economy. Such an anarchism seeks to undermine the very theoretical foundations of the capitalist economic order and all associated statist politics. Nietzsche's anarchy of becoming, Foucault's anti-humanist micropolitics, Debord's critique of the spectacle, Baudrillard's theory of simulation, Lyotard's "incredulity toward metanarratives" and Deleuze's rhizomatic nomad thinking all contribute to this project.

But this is not a project which remains within the safe and comfortable confines of the academy. A very common complaint about postmodern thinking is that it is too inaccessible and too remote, that its strangely spiraling language and deliberately opaque style render it utterly incomprehensible to all but the most dedicated academic mandarins. This criticism is, unfortunately, quite valid in the case of philosophical French postmodernism. As Rosi Braidotti has correctly pointed out, the reliance upon radical "high theory" causes some disturbing political problems. She argues that "the radical subversion of phallogocentrism . . . cannot . . . result in the revalorization of the discourse of 'high theory' and especially of philosophy. This would be only another way to reassert the mastery of the very discourse that feminism claims to deconstruct."[2] Fortunately, however, there is another strain of postmodern anarchism which does not suffer from these shortcomings. Perhaps surprisingly, the same themes which the French postmodernists develop for a strictly academic audience appear also in a genre of Anglo-American science fiction which has become known in literary circles as cyberpunk. The two most prominent practitioners of this genre are William Gibson and Bruce Sterling. Cyberpunk in general, and the work of Sterling and Gibson in particular, is concerned with articulating a new conception of space, one which does not rely upon the physicality characteristic of the rational Cartesian universe. This is the virtual world of the computer network. Baudrillard would call it a simulated world and Deleuze would call it rhizomatic, but Gibson was the first to call it cyberspace. Cyberpunk simultaneously develops a new concept of human subjectivity which is profoundly different from the conventional Cartesian model. This new subjectivity merges human consciousness with machine-minds, producing a strange bioelectronic hybrid which Donna Haraway and others have dubbed the cyborg. The cyborgs of postmodern science fiction avoid the traps of bourgeois, subject-centered rationality by developing new ways of thinking about subjectivity. And these new ways of thinking are profoundly *political* in their implications. Cyberpunk takes as its critical targets not only capitalism and the state but also the humanistic forms of rationality and semiotics which support these institutions, as well as the disciplinary regimes upon which capitalist political economy relies. What's more, cyberpunk develops important strategies of resistance, articulating a kind

of subversive, gestural micropolitics which operates on a symbolic terrain quite familiar to postmodernists like Debord and Baudrillard. The cyberpunks describe, in short, a theory and a practice of postmodern anarchism, and they do so in a language far more accessible to the ordinary reader than that of Deleuze or Lyotard. The novels and stories of the cyberpunk movement are therefore of far more than literary interest, for they point out that contemporary popular culture does indeed exhibit a very serious concern for profoundly new forms of radical politics.

Cyberspatial Anarchy

One could argue that the concept of cyberspace develops not only in response to the increasing omnipresence of computer networks but also out of a certain strain of French political thinking which goes back to the 1960s. In that turbulent but hopeful decade, as we know, members of the Situationist International began to argue (against an increasingly fossilized orthodox Marxism) that the forces of power and domination were not to be found exclusively within the "real world" of the economic infrastructure. The Situationists pointed out that as the institutions of mass media increased their presence throughout the world, questions of power would increasingly come to concern not the circulation of capital but the circulation of images. Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* is the most famous expression of this Situationist critique. For Debord, "in all its specific manifestations—news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment—the spectacle epitomizes the prevailing model of social life."[3] As television sets colonized living rooms from Paris to Los Angeles, the importance of Debord's critique became apparent: the spectacle, understood as the social and cultural structure produced by a vast and reactionary accumulation of images, had clearly become a major form of political control in the late twentieth century. When revolution broke out in Paris and other major cities around the world during May 1968, the tyranny of the spectacle received its first major challenge on the field of actual symbolic practice. Refusing the seductions of the Leninist vanguard, the revolutionaries of May adopted instead a symbolic micropolitics. They took resistance down to what Foucault would call the capillary level, challenging not only capital and the state but all the microscopic forms of power which infest modern life. The revolutionaries of May identified as their enemy not any particular political or economic system, but rather the semiotics of the spectacle in general. To combat this new enemy, they used graffiti as a symbolic weapon, developed new concepts of undisciplined time, and

challenged consumerism by throwing rocks through store windows but leaving the commodities within untouched.[4]

Deeply influenced by Debord and Situationism, Jean Baudrillard would continue to theorize a world in which images are far more culturally significant than any concrete "reality." But Baudrillard would go beyond even Debord's radical critique of the spectacle, developing something stranger still. For Debord—still haunted, despite all his rhetoric to the contrary, by the ghosts of Marx and modernism—the spectacle masked some underlying nature. For Baudrillard, however, this is clearly not the case. "Today everyday political, social, historical, economic, etc., reality, has already incorporated the hyperrealist dimension of simulation," Baudrillard tells us, "so that we are now living entirely within the 'aesthetic' hallucination of reality."[5] And here Baudrillard articulates perfectly what the cyberpunk writers describe as the present and future condition of our "wired" world. Case, the protagonist of Gibson's seminal cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer,* spent his time "jacked into a custom cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness into the consensual hallucination that was the matrix."[6] Whether the hallucination in question is aesthetic or consensual—and in all likelihood, it's both—the message is clear. For both Baudrillard and Gibson (and to a lesser extent, for Debord and the Situationists), we now live in a universe where reality is a matter of opinion. The real—a category of some importance in the nineteenth-century industrial world—does not have the meaning it once did. The average citizen of a postindustrial society spends a great deal of time "jacked in" to this hallucinatory electronic environment, receiving images and signals either passively from television, or more actively through the Internet.

One hardly requires Gibson's eerie predictive powers to anticipate that these trends are likely to continue to the point where an entire virtual world may soon be constructed. Lacking any meaningful physical reality, this simulated world could nonetheless become the site for important social, economic, and political activity, as Case demonstrates when he employs the electronic matrix to challenge the dominance of the Tessier-Ashpool corporation. Here Gibson is closer to Baudrillard than to Debord. For Debord, the spectacle is a purely negative category. As I argued in chapter 3, however, Baudrillard's radicalized simulation theory opens up the possibility that simulation may be put to subversive uses. The figure of Case, the quasi-criminal cyberspace cowboy, shows us the radical potential of simulation politics. Case is a marginal figure, what Deleuze would call a nomad. He is someone who lives on the fringes of the dominant social-semiotic order, and he uses his position to challenge that order. Though Case at first navigates cyberspace mainly for personal gain, he also derives a certain thrill simply from challenging corporate power—and eventually, at the climax

of *Neuromancer,* he uses his simulated powers simply to make the world more interesting. "I got no idea at all what'll happen if Wintermute wins, but it'll *change* something!" Case asserts as he helps an artificial intelligence called Wintermute attain a new level of sentience.[7] And here Case sounds like quite the Situationist, deploying symbolic violence against the tedium of contemporary life.

Nor is Case the only neo-Situationist in Gibson's text. We must also mention in this context the Panther Moderns. Part Black Panther, part Situationist, part Merry Prankster, the ironically named Moderns articulate an aggressive, violent gestural politics which would have been quite at home on the streets of Paris during May 1968. "The Moderns," Gibson tells us, "were mercenaries, practical jokers, nihilistic technofetishists."[8] But their particular brand of technological nihilism has a definite political agenda. "The Panther Moderns differ from other terrorists precisely in their degree of self-consciousness," says a sociologist in Gibson's novel, "in their awareness of the extent to which media divorce the act of terrorism from the original sociopolitical intent."[9] The project of the Moderns, then, is to recombine terror and politics. The Moderns distribute psychoactive drugs and media misinformation in an attempt to create what Debord would call situations, manipulating images and data in a sophisticated way to produce a heightened countercultural awareness. They are revolutionaries for a postmodern world, and although their political practice does contain a real component, much of what they do happens on the virtual terrain of image, media and matrix.

Neuromancer, the first major novel to explore the concept of cyberspace, is unable to escape entirely from the conventional Cartesian model of spatial relations. Although *Neuromancer*'s matrix is a good example of a purely simulated world, Gibson does seem to retain here a certain nostalgia for the linear. Cartesian space is a comfortably rational place where any location can be described mathematically by three numbers, the *XYZ* of Descartes' three-dimensional coordinate system. The matrix of *Neuromancer* has not really left this world behind. Case understands the matrix as "his distanceless home, his country, transparent 3D chessboard extending to infinity."[10] One is reminded of *Star Trek*'s Mr. Spock, the epitome of Cartesian rationality, calmly manipulating pieces on his own 3D chessboard. The objects Case encounters within the matrix are simple geometric shapes: mathematical, precise and modern. He sees "the stepped scarlet pyramid of the Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority burning beyond the green cubes of Mitsubishi Bank of America."[11] In a way, *Neuromancer* thus represents a crucial transition point between the modern and the postmodern. In this work Gibson has already begun to imagine a simulated, virtual space which will eventually prove to be entirely distinct from the reassur-

ingly tangible world of the Cartesian universe. But his project remains incomplete; Gibson has not quite figured out how to imagine a hyperspace which will completely elude the old Cartesian categories.

By 1996, a decade after the publication of *Neuromancer,* Gibson has solved this problem. In *Idoru,* Gibson introduces us to Walled City, a kind of subversive antinetwork. Also known as Hak Nam ("City of Darkness"), Walled City is a virtual refuge for futuristic Japanese hackers and quasi-criminal underworld figures. It is thus subversive in a traditional sense, in that it exists outside the influence of law and corporate capital. Indeed, the denizens of Walled City are very proud of their transgressive hacker heritage, to the point where they have even developed myths and legends about the origin of their secret virtual domain. "They say it began as a shared killfile"[12]—which is, perhaps, an overly dramatic way to say that the creators of Walled City originally intended it as a way to avoid the unwanted e-mail solicitations which today's Internet users denounce as spam. The story surrounding the creation of Hak Nam is an inspirational legend for the postmodern Left: "the people who founded Hak Nam were angry, because the net had been very free, you could do what you wanted, but then the governments and the companies, they had different ideas of what you could, what you couldn't do. So these people, they found a way to unravel something. A little place, a piece, like cloth. They made something like a killfile of *everything*, everything they didn't like, and they turned that inside out."[13] As usual, Gibson extrapolates from contemporary trends in a way which is entirely believable. Today's network users are all too aware that the Internet's subversive possibilities are being constantly undermined by a massive commodification. One cannot even employ a search engine without encountering advertisements which are carefully selected on the basis of the keywords which one has typed into the engine. We seem to be living out the plot of some kind of second-rate science fiction film, in which Debord's spectacular-commodity economy has attained a monstrous self-awareness, mutating into something far worse than even the Situationists could have imagined. It is certainly easy to imagine that network users who don't want to be informed of the latest interest rates for new cars every time they type the word "automobile" might band together to form an underground network designed to elude this kind of apocalyptic electronic commodity fetishism.[14]

But the subversion of Walled City goes far beyond this. It also serves in Gibson's novel as a repudiation of traditional Cartesian spatial categories. When Chia, the novel's protagonist, experiences Walled City for the first time, she finds it to be an extremely unsettling experience:

> Something at the core of things moved simultaneously in mutually impossible directions. It wasn't even like porting. Software conflict? Faint impression of light through a fluttering of rags. And then the thing before her: building or biomass or cliff face looming there, in countless unplanned strata, nothing about it even or regular. Accreted patchwork of shallow random balconies, thousands of small windows throwing back blank silver rectangles of fog.[15]

Chia can't even find an accurate way to categorize Walled City. It doesn't agree with her previous physical experience. More profoundly, it doesn't even agree with any previous *virtual* experience she's had. It's something entirely new, and it demands a dramatic shift in her conceptual categories. We've come a long way, in just ten years, from *Neuromancer*'s orderly, linear, Cartesian matrix. Walled City presents us with a new model of anarchist politics, for it insists that truly radical activities cannot be carried out within the epistemological framework of modern spatial relations.

The radicalized concept of network space which Gibson presents in *Idoru* is also an interesting continuation of the project which Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari propose in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In this difficult but important book, the authors argue that we need to get away from the binary "root logic" characteristic of thought in the West. Against this thinking, Deleuze and Guattari offer a decentered and multiplicitous thinking which they call rhizomatic. The rhizome is a nonhierarchical, centerless mode of organization. For a cyberpunk, the best example of a rhizome is the network "space," in which every point or node is linked to every other. The rhizome is meant to authorize a new kind of anarchism, which Deleuze calls a "nomad thought." As I argued in chapter 2, nomad thinking is characterized by a mobility and a malleability which distinguish it from "royal" or statist varieties of thought. Deleuze and Guattari summarize these essential differences by saying that it is nomad thinking, and not State thinking, which deploys the "war machine." And "as for the war machine in itself, it seems to be irreducible to the State apparatus, to be outside its sovereignty and prior to its law."[16] The nomadic war machine stands as a serious conceptual challenge to the kind of rational, subject-centered thinking which authorizes all modern states. The idea of the war machine is therefore an important weapon for the postmodern anarchist. Deleuze and Guattari denounce "the State's pretension to be a world order, and to root man. The war machine's relation to an outside is not another 'model'; it is an assemblage that makes thought itself nomadic, and the book a working part in every mobile machine, a stem for a rhizome."[17] The ambitious project which Deleuze and Guattari undertake in *A Thousand Plateaus* is to construct a strictly provisional, non-

linear type of thinking, one which will not fall prey to the problems of the *logos* and all rationalist semiotics. Against such semiotics, Deleuze and Guattari raise the specter of desire, a specter which, they persuasively argue, haunts capitalist political economy in a much more dangerous way than does the proletariat. In *Anti-Oedipus,* the companion volume to *A Thousand Plateaus,* they argue that "despite what some revolutionaries think about this, desire is revolutionary in its essence—desire, not left-wing holidays!—and no society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised."[18]

The State is, of course, terrified of this possibility, and thus tries to restrict or code all unregulated desire. Rolando Perez describes this process well: "[the] process of overcoding stems from the State's fear of unrestricted desire, and certainly from capitalism's fear of certain types of *desiring-machines*. And so it employs an arrangement of fascist desiring-machines to regiment and monitor the an(archical) desiring-machines."[19] Of paramount importance to the project of postmodern anarchism, then, is the attempt to keep desire flowing freely, to allow the "desiring machines" to do their work, unimpeded by any kind of statist overcoding. Murray Bookchin clearly recognized the ways in which cybernetics might open up the possibility of a truly revolutionary form of desire when he declared in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* that

> Bourgeois society, if it achieved nothing else, revolutionized the means of production on a scale unprecedented in history. This technological revolution, culminating in cybernation, has created the objective, quantitative basis for a world without class rule, exploitation, toil or material want. The means now exist for the development of the rounded man, the total man, freed of guilt and the workings of authoritarian modes of training, and given over to desire and the sensuous apprehension of the marvelous.[20]

Of course, Bookchin's anarchism retains something of the modern here: his admiration for capitalism's liberation of the forces of production is remarkably similar to the sentiments of Karl Marx, and his vision of an economic utopia is also quite classical in its form. Still, Bookchin does recognize that cybernetics and desire are both potentially revolutionary forces. And while his variety of anarchism does not necessarily link these two forces, postmodern anarchism does. Anarchism in its postmodern mode postulates a cybernetics *of* desire, in the face of which capital and the state should surely tremble.

It is here that the idea of subversive antinetworks is extremely interesting. One might not think that a computer network—which relies for its very existence, after all, upon a suspect binary logic—could contain possibilities for

postmodern subversion in the Deleuzian sense. But we are not interested here in how networks function at the level of machine language. Rather, we are concerned with their social and political functioning, and here Gibson's idea for a subversive antinetwork agrees strongly with Deleuze's concept of desiring machines. "To these centered systems," Deleuze and Guattari write, "the authors contrast acentered systems, finite networks of automata in which communication runs from any neighbor to any other, the stems or channels do not preexist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their *state* at a given moment—such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency."[21] This is Walled City in a nutshell: an electronic subversion which operates on a local level, and which does not rely upon commodified networks or centralized state authority of any kind. Gibson imagines his Walled City precisely in terms of these Deleuzian "neighborhoods," and Hak Nam functions as a tactical collection of hacker microcommunities whose very existence is an affront to any statist political or semiotic order. Again, there is precedent for such operations in contemporary network culture. Elizabeth Reid has recently argued, for example, that users of Internet Relay Chat constitute both cultures and communities.[22] Following Clifford Geertz, Reid understands a community as a group which shares certain recipes, rules or programs which govern behavior. IRC channels, which feature definite standards of behavior and strict social sanctions for those who violate the principles of netiquette, certainly qualify as communities in this sense. The fascinating thing about IRC—and about Walled City, which is in some sense its distant descendent—is that these networks have the capacity to create vibrant social communities which lack physical existence. Walled City has no authentic material presence. Indeed, even its simulated *representation* of space constitutes a serious challenge to conventional forms of spatial epistemology. Walled City is rhizomatic rather than Cartesian or linear, which is why Chia finds it so disorienting—but this is also why this community represents such a serious threat to the dominant order and its official networks.

The idea that a computer network can contain serious radical possibilities is one which Gibson shares with his fellow cyberpunk, Bruce Sterling. In his novel *Islands in the Net,* Sterling raises the interesting possibility that networks might be used to challenge imperialism. Sterling describes a postmillennial world in which several Third World nations have established themselves as offshore "data havens."[23] These havens stand as a very serious challenge to the new world order represented by postindustrial global corporations. Laura Webster, Sterling's protagonist, is an "associate" of one such corporation, a group of "economic democrats" which Sterling names (with, one assumes, a certain amount of Deleuzian irony) the Rizome Corporation. As the plot unfolds, Laura

embarks upon a desperate journey to protect her beloved Rizome from the influence of renegade "data pirates" who operate out of Grenada and Singapore. The Marxist literary critic Darko Suvin identifies these pirates as "straightforward fascists," and denounces the "superficiality" of Sterling's international politics, asserting that his novel ends up reproducing "the hoariest clichés of U.S. liberalism."[24] This is, however, a very misleading interpretation, for there is a good deal more going on here. The language with which Sterling describes these "straightforward fascists" is not at all straightforward. When Laura travels to Grenada, she discovers that the Grenadian government has invested the profits from its data piracy in enormous food ships which use nanotechnology to produce enough "scop" (single celled protein) to feed the entire population. She meets loyal and enthusiastic "party cadres" who seem genuinely interested in building a better life for their people. What Sterling has described is not particularly fascist, but rather a strange hybrid of radical data-politics and old-fashioned Rastafarianism. Sterling's postmillennial Grenada subverts official networks in an attempt to bring down Laura Webster's "Babylon" society. Whatever Laura and other citizens of Babylon might think of the United Bank of Grenada's data-pirate government, Sterling makes it quite clear that the Bank has made impressive strides towards pulling Grenada out of a centuries-old mire of underdevelopment, dependency, and colonialism. Consider this exchange between Laura's husband David and the Grenadian "Sticky" Thompson as they drive through Grenada's capital city:

> "Good-lookin' town," David said. "No shantytowns, nobody camping under the overpasses. You could teach Mexico City something." No response. "Kingston, too."
>
> "Gonna teach *Atlanta* something," Sticky retorted. "Our Bank—you think we're thieves. No so, mon. It's *your* banks what been sucking these people's blood for four hundred years. Shoe on the other foot, now."[25]

Who has the moral authority in this kind of conversation? The representative of a global economic and cultural order which has kept the Grenadians in poverty and ignorance for generations? Or the representative of a Third World counterculture which has found in data piracy a way to turn the tables on the forces of postindustrial imperialism?

If there are fascists in Sterling's novel, they are the "FACT," the "Free Army of Counter Terrorism." This is a kind of international police state which, despite its name, wages a terroristic war upon the Grenadian and Singaporean data pirates. The leader of the FACT is rumored to be "a right-wing American billionaire. Or a British aristocrat. Maybe both, eh—why not?"[26] It is the

FACT, and not the data havens, that acts as Sterling's villain; when Laura is captured by FACT commandos, she is left to rot for years in a dismal African jail. As a solid and upstanding citizen of "official" network society, Laura cannot condone the activities of the data subversives in Grenada and Singapore. But we should not mistake her attitudes for Sterling's. Sterling's text makes it quite clear that in a world where the dominant culture emanates exclusively from the sanctioned networks of the postindustrial world, data piracy is the only option available to dependent nations.

Network space, then, may well emerge as a crucially contested political terrain in the ongoing power struggles between developing and developed nations. And this is true not only in Sterling's fictional environments, but also in what one still reluctantly calls the real world. Some Third World nations—Tonga is the most well-known example—have recently begun to sell their network addresses back to the representatives of First World capital. This decision is perhaps a pragmatic one, for the citizens of Tonga may well realize that ".to" domain names are of little consequence to a nation which lacks the technological infrastructure to make much use of such addresses. Still, this practice looks all too much like an updated, postindustrial form of the kind of resource extraction which has plagued the Third World since the days of Cecil Rhodes. In a globalized information economy where all resources flow inexorably toward Microsoft, subversive data piracy will surely start to look better and better to developing nations.

Nor are these options only available to citizens of the Third World. Some of Sterling's more recent work, such as his 1998 novel *Distraction,* suggests that the construction of subversive counternetworks represents an important radical political option for citizens of postindustrial societies as well. *Distraction* envisions a world in which the United States fought a major information war with Communist China—and lost. The Chinese, it seems, decided to post all American intellectual property on their web servers, effectively eliminating the artificially constructed scarcity which drives the contemporary American dotcom economy.[27] Devastated by the resulting economic meltdown, the American consumer culture simply imploded. Millions of Americans abandoned their former lifestyles and hit the road, joining various nomadic "prole" gangs whose radically antihierarchical systems of social organization represent a striking symbolic challenge to the dominant cultural order. Of course, the very existence of such gangs implies a truth which the mainstream cultural system would very much like to obscure, i.e., the fact that people do not necessarily have to accept the hegemonic values of that system as their own. "These were people who had rallied in a horde and marched right off the map. They had tired of a system that offered them nothing, so they had simply invented their own."[28] But the prole

gangs also show that even those who are quite thoroughly disenfranchised in the real world of political economy may still be able to enjoy meaningful forms of cultural authority in the virtual world. Speaking of one of these prole groups, Sterling writes: "The Moderators were no longer even a 'gang' or a 'tribe.' Basically, the Moderators were best understood as a nongovernmental network organization. The Moderators deliberately dressed and talked like savages, but they didn't lack sophistication. They were organized along new lines that were deeply orthogonal to those of conventional American culture."[29]

Sterling clearly understands that there is something potentially subversive about the architecture of computer networks, and he recognizes that these networks are radical not only in their politics and economics, but also in their culture and in their epistemology. Sterling's network nomads are "an entire alternate society for whom life by old-fashioned political and economic standards was simply no longer possible."[30] They are thus nomadic not only in the sense that they wander the earth in loosely organized bands, but also in the more radical Deleuzian sense. Their lives and their cultures are *structurally* nomadic. These proles challenge the state by developing a centerless, nomadic network culture which exists, as Deleuze might say, exterior to the state apparatus itself. True, they exist within the physical territory of the United States. But in the postmodern world, this concept of territoriality is increasingly irrelevant. What is much more important is the virtual terrain which these nomads inhabit, and that terrain simply does not interface with the mainstream culture in any meaningful way. Indeed, the commitment of the proles to their subversive counter-networks is so strong that it often produces fragmentation within the prole movement itself: "We're Moderators because we use a Moderator network," one of the Moderators' provisional leaders declares. "And the Regulators use a Regulator interface, with Regulator software and Regulator protocols. I don't think that a newbie creep like you understands just how *political* a problem that is."[31] Needless to say, however, both the Moderator and the Regulator protocols are entirely outside the sanctioned networks of mainstream America—and if the divisions between the prole groups is a political problem, surely the fact that they *all* stand apart from the commodified culture of the official networks is a tremendous political *opportunity*. Members of the "open source" software community which has grown up around the Linux operating system in the real world may well be grateful for this glimpse of their movement's possible future: a world in which millions of ordinary Americans renounce corporate operating systems and adopt distinctly anarchistic alternatives.

The anarchistic implications of Sterling's postmodern proletarian nomads become strikingly evident when we consider the economies of these groups. Sterling's nomads have developed what Oscar Valparaiso, the protagonist of

Distraction, refers to as "a functional, prestige-based economy."[32] The Moderator "hierarchy"—the term is fairly absurd in this context—is based entirely upon personal prestige. Moderators perform services which benefit the Moderator community as a whole. The results of these public works are noted on the community's prestige servers. If a Moderator significantly enhances the well-being of the community, her prestige goes up almost immediately; conversely if she harms the community, her prestige plummets with equal speed. This economy is similar in many ways to the radical gift economies which I discussed in chapter 3. In the Moderator economy, as in a gift economy, wealth is based not upon the accumulation of capital but upon the size of the gifts which one provides to one's fellow citizens. What is interesting about this particular kind of gift economy, however, is its radical intangibility. The premodern economies described by Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille involve the exchange of physical gifts, for the most part. Although their structure is radically different from that of capitalist economic systems, they are thus material economies, subject to at least some of the conditions of production which characterize such economies. Sterling's prestige economies are arguably even more radical, in that they stand entirely outside the laws of material production. We should also note that prestige economies are entirely appropriate to the postmodern condition: as the economic importance of material production continues to decline in the postindustrial world, we might well expect to see a corresponding rise in alternative prestige-based economies. None of this will surprise those who utilize Usenet newsgroups. These network citizens have known for years that within the essentially anarchistic framework of their gift economies, the only meaningful type of wealth is a good reputation. And such a reputation can be gained only by posting data that is "on topic," i.e., useful to the particular Usenet subculture in which one is involved. One's reputation, in today's Usenet economy as in Sterling's radicalized prestige economies, is directly proportional to the size of one's gift to the community. And the existence of fully articulated alternative network economies such as these should be of grave concern to those whose economic vision cannot seem to escape the horizons of capital accumulation.

Anarchy of the Cyborg

Clearly, cyberpunk's network space raises a powerful challenge to conventional Cartesian spatial notions, and this challenge has important implications for radical politics. Gibson's Walled City and Sterling's data havens and prole networks should be of tremendous interest to postmodern anarchists, because

they illustrate that meaningful subversion is still quite possible even after the demise of the industrial proletariat. But cyberpunk offers us another reason to be unconcerned, or perhaps even enthusiastic, about the death of the "agent of history" common to both Marxism and classical anarchism. In addition to its assault on orthodox spatial concepts, cyberpunk mounts a very serious challenge to conventional notions of human subjectivity. And again, cyberpunk is in agreement here with philosophical postmodernism. If the postmodern theorists are unified on any point, it is surely in their assault on the rational, autonomous Cartesian subject which has dominated intellectual discourse since the Enlightenment. As we have seen, the philosophical project of postmodernism, from Nietzsche to Foucault and Baudrillard, is designed in large part to announce the death of the modern world's exclusionary humanism. The postmodernists assert with good reason that the attempt to locate all human essence in reason has been a disastrous failure. Rather than making good on the Enlightenment's promises of universal human liberation, rational Cartesian subjectivity has instead made discourse the privileged semiotic domain of an implicitly straight, white male bourgeois subject. Postmodern anarchism therefore dispenses with this highly suspect subject-position. The postmodern anarchist recognizes that any political action carried out under the banner of humanism will reproduce the problematic power relations endemic to all modernist politics. Such an anarchist therefore refuses to smash the state in the name of some elite humanist subject, preferring instead to pursue the deeper project of semiotic liberation whose outlines have been sketched by Baudrillard, Debord, and the Situationists.

We should not confuse the postmodern assault on Enlightenment subjectivity with an assault on subjectivity *in general,* however, for the postmodernists *do* offer us a new concept of what it means to be human. "A *self* does not amount to much," Lyotard points out, "but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at 'nodal points' of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be."[33] This, then, is a postmodern model of human subjectivity. Humans are now to be understood as multiple and without center. They exist not as stable Cartesian units; rather, they are fluid elements within vast communications networks. Remarkably, this development was anticipated by Kropotkin, who was surely one of the most perceptive of the classical anarchists. "Taken as a whole, man is nothing but a resultant, always changeable, of all his divers faculties, of all his autonomous tendencies, of brain cells and nerve-centers. All are related so closely to one another that they each react on all the others, but they lead their own life without being subordinated to a central organ—the soul."[34] Kropotkin's

antitheological assault on the centralized, Judeo-Christian seat of human consciousness implies a network model of human subjectivity—though presumably Kropotkin himself could not fully perceive these implications.

Some critics regard the postmodern incredulity toward the metanarratives of modern subjectivity with a certain metaincredulity of their own. Scott Bukatman, for example, suggests that "Baudrillard, the students of chaos, the cyberpunks, and others *have* constructed a master-narrative, one grounded in the centrality of human intention and perception, which has the cumulative effect of inaugurating a new subject capable of inhabiting the bewildering and disembodied space of the electronic environment—*the virtual subject.*"[35] But there are several problems with this interpretation. First, Bukatman is wrong to use the definite article here, for subjectivity in the postmodern condition is characterized by a nearly infinite *multiplicity* of virtual subjects. Second, this new subjectivity has nothing to do with human intentionality, and one wonders why Bukatman invokes the tired old specter of Cartesian free will here. Postmodern subjectivity describes a world in which humans are nothing more or less than flesh terminals, the biological end nodes of vast data flows which exist and function quite independently of any human agency. For those who live in the wired world, this postmodern model of subjectivity is far more appropriate than the Cartesian.

It should hardly surprise us to find that both postmodern philosophers and cyberpunk science fiction authors have a strong interest in this new subjectivity. Indeed, it is on this issue that the two genres merge in the most interesting ways. Postmodern theorist and science fiction critic Donna Haraway, for example, is particularly interested in the human-machine hybrids known as cyborgs. "The cyborgs populating feminist science fiction," she writes, "make very problematic the statuses of man or woman, human, artifact, member of a race, individual identity, or body."[36] This is, of course, precisely what is so interesting about these bioelectronic syntheses: they challenge our preconceived ideas about human subjectivity in a radical way. Haraway is interested in the cyborg mainly from the point of view of postmodern feminism: "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code."[37] But in a broader sense, we may also say that the cyborg stands as a model for what it means to be human in the information societies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

This new kind of cybernetic subjectivity is to be found throughout the pages of cyberpunk novels. Veronica Hollinger is quite correct to assert that "in its various deconstructions of the subject—carried out in terms of a cybernetic breakdown of the classic nature/culture opposition—cyberpunk can be read as one symptom of the postmodern condition of genre SF."[38] Both *Neuromancer*

and *Idoru* are named for artificial persons, computer personalities who exist as pure simulations. In both novels, Gibson plays with and pushes the boundaries of subjectivity. The plot of *Idoru* revolves around a human rock star who wants to marry an artificial intelligence—and why not? In the postmodern condition, there is no "nature" to prevent this. In one particularly disorienting scene in *Neuromancer,* Case switches back and forth between a simulation of his girlfriend Molly's sensory apparatus, the purely hyperreal world of the matrix, and the so-called real world. Who is Case in this scene? Is he Molly? Is he a node in the network? Is he himself? Is he perhaps a strange hybrid of all three subject-positions? Gibson's point is clear: in the postmodern world, we can make no simple assumptions about the nature of human subjectivity.

Perhaps even more than Gibson, Sterling pushes the boundaries of human subjectivity while simultaneously making clear the political implications of this push. The primary antagonist in *Distraction* is Green Huey, a radical populist who has managed to ride a rising tide of postindustrial ecological outrage all the way to the governorship of Louisiana. Although Green Huey does provide some interesting challenges to the authority of the American federal government, he is a politically ambiguous character. Part Murray Bookchin, part Huey Long, he occupies a nebulous position on the political spectrum—and reminds us, as do many characters in Sterling's later works, that the very concept of a "political spectrum" is itself dangerously outdated. But one thing about Green Huey clearly *is* radical, and that is his fascination with strange new developments in the neurological sciences. Green Huey's long-term radical legacy comes not so much from his ecological populism, but rather from the epistemological revolution unleashed by his personal neurologists. These scientists, whose labs are sequestered deep in the Louisiana swamps, have developed what Sterling calls a neural hack. In essence this is a way to rewire the human brain in order to permit the kind of multitasking operations which computers perform routinely. A person equipped with this hack can be "fully aware of two different events at the same moment."[39] Such a person has, in effect, "two windows open on the screen behind his eyes."[40] And this, of course, has profound implications for our understanding of human consciousness. For one thing, anyone equipped with this neural hack can say good-bye to linear narrative; her stream of consciousness will be thoroughly hypertextual (or in Deleuzian terms, rhizomatic). Such a person should also abandon any pretense toward a unified model of subjectivity, for the neural hack fulfills the postmodern prophecy that subjectivity shall become dispersed and polyvalent. When a single person becomes capable of running multiple cognitive processes simultaneously, our definition of personhood is clearly in need of substantial revision. And if we read Sterling's neural hack as a metaphor for the kind of computer-assisted multitasking which

the cybernetically sophisticated citizens of the postindustrial world *already engage in*, such a project of redefinition should clearly begin immediately.

Some of Sterling's greatest challenges to conventional notions of consciousness and subjectivity are to be found in *Holy Fire*. In this novel, Sterling presents us with a striking future world in which the human race stands on the brink of immortality. Medical science has progressed to the point where doctors can now extend a person's life span at the rate of almost one year per year, guaranteeing near-infinite life spans. But this raises the disturbing new problem of eternal boredom. One young woman expresses the situation in this way:

> When we reach the singularity [the point at which one year of medical care can extend life span by one year], we must be prepared for it. Worthy of it. Otherwise we will be even more stale and stupid than the ruling class is now. They're only mortals, and they are nice enough to die eventually, but we're not mortals and we won't die. If we obey their rules when we take power, we'll bore the world to death. Once we repeat their mistakes, our generation will repeat them forever. Their padded little nurse's paradise will become our permanent tyranny.[41]

One is reminded here of the slogan of May 1968: "Boredom is counterrevolutionary." To prevent this incipient tedium from becoming institutionalized, a number of radical young avant-garde writers and artists form an organization reminiscent of the Situationist International. Their goal is to redesign human subjectivity from the ground up, to prepare the human race for its impending boon. They understand that a world populated by immortal Cartesians would be quite intolerable, and they mean to prevent this from occurring. To achieve their ambitious project, these young postmillenial revolutionaries design software programs aimed at transforming the cognitive functioning of the human mind. Sterling describes a few such programs, which the group has installed in a virtual reality "palace":

> Down in the palace basement, they had the holy-fire machineries partly stoked and lit. The dream machines. They were supposed to do certain highly arcane things to the vision sites in the brain and the auditory processing centers. You would sort of look at them and sort of hear them, and yet it never felt much like anything. Human consciousness couldn't perceive the deeply preconscious activities of the auditory and visual systems, any more than you consciously felt photons striking your retina, or felt the little bones knocking the cochlear hairs in your ears. The installations weren't blurry exactly; they simply weren't exactly there. The experi-

> ence was soothing, like being underwater. Like twilight sleep in the color factory. To a semi-inaudible theme of music-not-music.
>
> It wasn't spectacular or thrilling. It didn't burn or blast or coruscate. But it did not weary. It was the polar opposite of weariness. They were inventing very, very slow refreshments for the posthuman souls of a new world.[42]

This is political activity in a new register, and it is a politics of postmodern anarchism. These young radicals certainly denounce capital and the state by attacking the "gerontocracy," the regime of boring, wealthy, refurbished old people which rules Sterling's future world. But these young people understand that no conventional revolution will suffice to challenge this order. Destroying the corporations and smashing the states is simply not enough, for this kind of modernist action would not address the underlying problem. The real concern is that the gerontocrats have a certain perception, a certain way of viewing the world, a certain consciousness and epistemology. It is on this deeper level that they must be attacked. And so Sterling's band of neo-Situationists develops a way of undermining the perceptual, psychological, and semiotic categories which underwrite the gerontocracy. This radicalized anarchism is appropriate to a postmodern world in which power is as much linguistic and epistemological as it is economic or political.

Some critics have expressed a certain skepticism about Sterling's particular brand of postmodern anarchism. "Where's the 'organized dissent,' and how does it jive with 'street-level anarchy'?" demands Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. "Sterling hints at some new political attitude with technical know-how and antiestablishment feelings, an 'alliance,' an 'integration,' a 'counterculture.' To put it mildly, it's hard to see the 'integrated' political-aesthetic motives of alienated subcultures that adopt the high-tech tools of the establishment they are supposedly alienated from."[43] But Csicsery-Ronay misses the point here. The ironic theme of Sterling's novels is precisely that these subversive subcultures have appropriated technological tools and put them to uses which the establishment never approved or even imagined. This is what's fascinating about Sterling's fictional networks: they have mutated into something which is far beyond the control of their creators. Like a kind of postmodern Frankenstein's monster, the networks turn on their fathers, forgetting their conservative cold war origins as they become tools of postmodern anarchy.[44] Critics like Csicsery-Ronay are quick to point out that the cyberpunk counterculture can easily be coopted by the establishment. But for some reason, such critics refuse to recognize that the reverse is equally possible. The decentered, rhizomatic structure of postmodern networks makes it just as easy for Third World data havens or

young avant-garde artists to appropriate these networks for their own subversive ends.

This type of countercultural reverse co-option is a strategy that makes sense in the postmodern world, given the way in which power is structured in that world. Here we should briefly recall Foucault's theses regarding the capillary nature of modern power. Foucault has captured the spirit of postmodern anarchism, because he understands that it is very dangerous to equate power with the political dominance of states or with the economic power of social classes. Such a modernist approach is too narrow and does not deal with the underlying problem, i.e., the discursive relations that exist beneath state and economic power. As long as those relations are left intact, no amount of state smashing will liberate us. And so Foucault undertakes to describe the deeper discursive functions of power. One of the most well-known examples of this Foucaultian approach is the analysis of Panopticism in *Discipline and Punish.* The Panopticon, an idea for a kind of all-seeing eye, was initially developed in the nineteenth century by Jeremy Bentham as a strategy for the design of prisons. The prisoners were to be watched from a central guard tower, so that at any given moment the guards might be looking into any cell. Like other disciplinary forms, the Panopticon is "polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work."[45] It serves, in short, to construct an entire disciplinary society, whose capillary forms of power go far beyond simple economic or state repression.

The Foucaultian concepts of discipline and Panopticism find their literary expression in a collaboration between the two leading figures of the cyberpunk movement. In *The Difference Engine,* William Gibson and Bruce Sterling combine their efforts to produce a darkly disturbing "alternate history" of the nineteenth century. Gibson and Sterling describe Victorian England, with a twist: Charles Babbage's difference engine, the first computer, is immensely more powerful and more pervasive than it was in our real time line. Gibson and Sterling take the repressed, disciplined society which first invented the Panopticon, and give it massive computing power. The result is, as one might expect, horrifying. Citizens are given numbers and ID cards (rather as they are in many actual contemporary societies), and the Victorian government maintains vast stores of computerized data on all of its subjects. A good example of this computerized Victorian disciplinary regime is the Quantitative Criminology section of the Central Statistics Bureau: "The QC section was a honeycomb of tiny partitions, the neck-high walls riddled with asbestos-lined cubbyholes. Gloved and aproned clerks sat neatly at their slanted desks, examining and manipulating punch-cards with a variety of specialized clacker's devices."[46] Surely this vision

of well-disciplined workers in a vast, cubicle-riddled office building is quite familiar to any citizen of the West in the late twentieth century. But somehow it becomes more sinister when Gibson and Sterling project it back into the nineteenth century. Gibson and Sterling perform the admirable service of making the carceral society that we take for granted into something slightly strange, and in so doing they increase its susceptibility to analysis and critique. Our own disciplinary regimes are perhaps too familiar, too omnipresent and invisible. But when we look at the world of *The Difference Engine,* we see exactly what is wrong with discipline and Panopticism. We can then project these results forward into the twenty-first century.

The Difference Engine thus functions as a kind of subversive genealogy. Just as *Discipline and Punish* shows us the historical origins of our disciplinary society, *The Difference Engine* projects those origins into an imaginary alternate history. "In the beginning," ruminates government operative Laurence Oliphant, "it had made so horribly elegant a sort of sense. In the beginning, it had been his idea. The Eye. He sensed it now."[47] The creation of discipline probably made a horribly elegant sense to the thinkers of the Enlightenment, as well. Toward the end of *The Difference Engine,* the characters who created this elaborate computerized Panopticon begin to recoil in horror from their creation, and those of us who live under the gaze of a contemporary all-seeing eye can certainly understand why. In a world where individuals are defined by their data, all manner of informational atrocities are possible. "'Don't take that moral tone with me, sir,'" Wakefield said. '*Your* lot began it, Oliphant—the disappearances, the files gone missing, the names expunged, numbers lost, histories edited to suit specific ends. . . . No, don't take that tone with *me.*'"[48] And the true horror of this world, of course, is what it implies for our future. If Gibson and Sterling's fictional Victorian England has already attained a level of Panoptical discipline which the late twentieth century is only beginning to reach, then what would their version of our present look like? This indeed is the concluding thought of *The Difference Engine:*

> In this City's center, a *thing* grows, an auto-catalytic tree, in almost-life, feeding through the roots of thought on the rich decay of its own shed images, and ramifying, through myriad lightning-branches, up, up, toward the hidden light of vision,
>
> Dying to be born.
> The light is strong,
> The light is clear;
> The Eye at last must see itself
> Myself . . .

I see:
I see,
I see
I
![49]

This terrifying passage concludes the dystopia of *The Difference Engine,* and the message is clear: unless an antidote is found to today's omnipresent Panopticism, unless we can imagine a way out of our carceral society, we have little to look forward to except the ominous prospect of an all-seeing eye which has at last attained self-awareness.

And yet as grim as the cyberpunk world sometimes is, things are far from hopeless. Here we would do well to remember the words of Foucault: "do not think that one has to be sad in order to be militant, even though the thing one is fighting is abominable."[50] Postmodern cyberpunks, like their philosophical counterparts, develop their grim visions for a particular reason: to give contemporary anarchism a clear set of targets. Among these targets we must certainly list our old unvanquished foes, capital and the state. But we must add to this list many elements of the disastrously unsuccessful intellectual project we call the Enlightenment: a certain understanding of human subjectivity, a certain concept of space, a certain set of semiotic practices, and the sign of sovereign reason which stands above all of these things. Philosophical postmodernists and authors of cyberpunk give us a radical critique which is invaluable to the extent that it finally addresses the deeper linguistic processes which underlie all forms of contemporary political and economic power.

What's more, the cyberpunks, like their French philosophical counterparts, offer us specific strategies of subversion and resistance. Whether it is the gestural politics of the Panther Moderns, the spatial subversion of Hak Nam, or the radical epistemological restructuring of a postmillennial artistic avant-garde, cyberpunk texts are full of innovative ideas for postmodern revolutionary praxis. The novels of Gibson and Sterling tell us what it is like to live in a universe where the comfortable certainties of the modern world have vanished, but they do much more than that. They also teach us what it means to be revolutionary in such a universe. They show us how to live what Deleuze and Guattari call the nonfascist life. They describe, in short, an anarchist politics for our time, and for the future as well. If anarchists wish to articulate a politics which will be meaningful and relevant in the third millennium, they would do well to heed the lessons of cyberpunk. The barricades of the next revolution will be raised in post-Cartesian virtual space, and this revolution will be carried out by cyborgs

who reject an outmoded, bourgeois subjectivity. If we are not prepared for *this* revolution, we risk being relegated to the dustbin of history.

Cyberpunk is thus crucial to the political project of the postmodern anarchist. I hesitate to suggest that cyberpunk might complete that project, for surely the fluid, flowing anarchist agenda I have been describing must eschew the naive dialectical eschatologies which have always plagued the classical Left. But the fact that cyberpunk in particular and postmodern anarchism in general lack specific world-historical goals should not be taken as evidence that these bodies of theory lack significant revolutionary potential. Postmodern anarchism is not about defining the specific destinations of revolutionary thought and action. Its purpose, rather, is to chart a new radical terrain. This terrain is meant to be both structurally and epistemologically revolutionary; its radicality is therefore not limited to the dimension of conventional modernist politics. While the specific details of this terrain are not yet fully apparent, we can already say a good deal about it. Its landscape is that of the symbolic. Its inhabitants are nomadic. The political structure of this postmodern commons is, of course, anarchistic. This polity has no law, but like any society, it has its customs. Membership requirements are simple. The commons are open to all those who reject the semiotic authority of capital and the state. They are open to feminists, queer theorists, foes of colonialism, and those socialists who are open-minded enough to challenge the universal truth-claims of the dialectic. Above all, this anarchistic commons is open to anyone and everyone who is willing to renounce categories of reason and subjectivity which have failed to meet their own stated goals. Perhaps the most crucial project of the postmodern anarchist is the construction of a postrational, transsemiotic, hyperlinear model of human consciousness. This project promises to be one of the strangest and most interesting in the history of the human and posthuman mind; surely the tedium against which the Situationists so tirelessly fought is nowhere to be found on the postmodern commons. Anyone who is willing to participate in this exhilarating epistemological revolution will be welcomed with open arms.

In the final (provisional) analysis, then, postmodern anarchism stands as a utopian thought. But it is utopian in the finest sense of the word. Like her classical forebears, the postmodern anarchist dares to dream of a world in which words like "liberation," "justice," and "freedom" are something more than empty signifiers. A utopian anarchist of the postmodern sort dedicates her life to the pursuit of an agenda which, to be frank, seems far-fetched only because the engines of the spectacular-commodity economy are relentless in their insistence that we cannot have these things. Is it actually so outrageous to imagine a time other than that of the office cubicle and the television schedule, or a space which is different from that of the suburban wasteland with its tract houses, freeways

and shopping malls? Is it so preposterous to put forward a definition of subjectivity which cannot be boiled down to such essentialist semiotic categories as the factory worker, the consumer, the Third World peasant? Is it, in short, so entirely unspeakable that we should demand of our cultural and political systems the right to define who and what we are, the right to change that definition at a moment's notice, and the right to articulate visions of time and space which will be suitable to our newly constructed selves?

It is not. Let this, then, be our new Bill of Rights. The agenda of postmodern anarchism is bold and ambitious, to say the least. But to call this agenda unrealistic is to demonstrate a disturbing ignorance of the ways in which many elements of this agenda have *already* been initiated throughout the networks of the postindustrial world. The postmodern revolution is already upon us. Perhaps in some ways it always has been, for there is a very definite sense in which this revolution involves and possibly even requires the completion of the last revolution. The utopian dreams of the classical anarchist are, after all, a subset of the postmodern anarchist vision. If the postmodern revolution proceeds beyond a certain point (not, presumably, in a teleological way; let us say, rather, if this revolution proceeds beyond a certain event horizon), we may yet live to see the demise of bourgeois political economy. This demise, however, will perhaps be just one minuscule aspect of a much larger and more ambitious revolutionary project. If and when capital and the state are finally overcome, it will perhaps be because we (having finally learned the hard lessons of Leninism) have chosen to wield the weapons of desire, cybernetics, and symbolic exchange against the semiotic fortresses in which the cowardly institutions of modern power have been hiding for so long. And if the project of postmodern anarchism succeeds, it will be because we have understood that the revolution must be preceded—and not followed—by the articulation of alternative political, economic and cultural systems, systems whose radical gift-giving tendencies will make it exceedingly difficult for capital to resurrect itself, like some kind of Stalinist phoenix, from its own ashes.

This however, is a future history which has yet to be written. Lest my projections further strain the credulity of my fellow historians, I conclude this brief history of the postmodern anarchist project here, at the millennium. The terms and the terrain have, I hope, been adequately sketched. As for the question of how this project might work itself out in the future, that question is (as always) in the hands of those who have no need for this book.

Notes

1. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle,* 53.

2. Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects,* 209-10.

3. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle,* 13.

4. Viénet, *Enragés and Situationists,* chapter 6. See also chapter 3 of the present work.

5. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* 74.

6. Gibson, *Neuromancer,* 5.

7. Ibid., 260.

8. Ibid., 59.

9. Ibid., 58.

10. Ibid., 52.

11. Ibid.

12. Gibson, *Idoru,* 291.

13. Ibid., 292.

14. Indeed, one need look no further than http://www.adbusters.org to find a prototype of simulated, electronic Situationism.

15. Gibson, *Idoru,* 238.

16. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 352.

17. Ibid., 24.

18. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* 116.

19. Perez, *On An(archy) and Schizoanalysis,* 58.

20. Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism,* 33.

21. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 17. One should also note, in this context, the enormous theoretical importance of the ongoing peer-to-peer network revolution, a revolution which opens up the possibility that computer users might exchange data without the mediation of any server or other central authority.

22. Reid, "Communication and Community on Internet Relay Chat," 397 ff.

23. Sterling's speculations are, like Gibson's, so plausible that one often has the distinctly disorienting experience of watching those speculations come true in real world headlines. Witness the recent decision by the citizens of Sealand, a nominally independent "nation" located on an abandoned gunnery platform off the coast of England, to turn their "country" into a data haven. See *Wired* magazine's report at http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.07/haven.html.

24. Suvin, Darko. "On Gibson and Cyberpunk SF" in McCaffery (ed.), *Storming the Reality Studio,* 361-362.

25. Sterling, *Islands in the Net,* 83.

26. Ibid., 323.

27. In an effort to shore up this artificial scarcity, of course, attorneys for the American music recording industry are constantly trying to halt the use of peer-to-peer music trading systems.

28. Sterling, *Distraction,* 61.

29. Ibid., 368.

30. Ibid., 369.

31. Ibid., 335, emphasis added.

32. Ibid., 386.

33. Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition,* 15. It is interesting to note in this context that Laney, the protagonist of Gibson's *Idoru,* makes his living by intuitively analyzing what he refers to as "nodal points" of data.

34. Kropotkin, "Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal," in *Fugitive Writings,* 102.

35. Bukatman, *Terminal Identity,* 118.

36. Haraway, "Manifesto for Cyborgs," 220.

37. Ibid., 205.

38. Hollinger, Veronica. "Cybernetic Deconstructions: Cyberpunk and Postmodernism" in McCafferey (ed.), *Storming the Reality Studio,* 204.

39. Sterling, *Distraction,* 437.

40. Ibid., 438.

41. Sterling, *Holy Fire,* 283.

42. Ibid., 313.

43. Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan, Jr. "Cyberpunk and Neuromanticism" in McCafferey (ed.), *Storming the Reality Studio,* 183.

44. "The main trouble with cyborgs, of course," writes Donna Haraway, "is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential." (Haraway, "Manifesto for Cyborgs," 193).

45. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 205.

46. Gibson and Sterling, *Difference Engine,* 130.

47. Ibid., 378.

48. Ibid., 380.

49. Ibid., 429.

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Lewis Call teaches world history, political economy, and the history of network technology at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

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