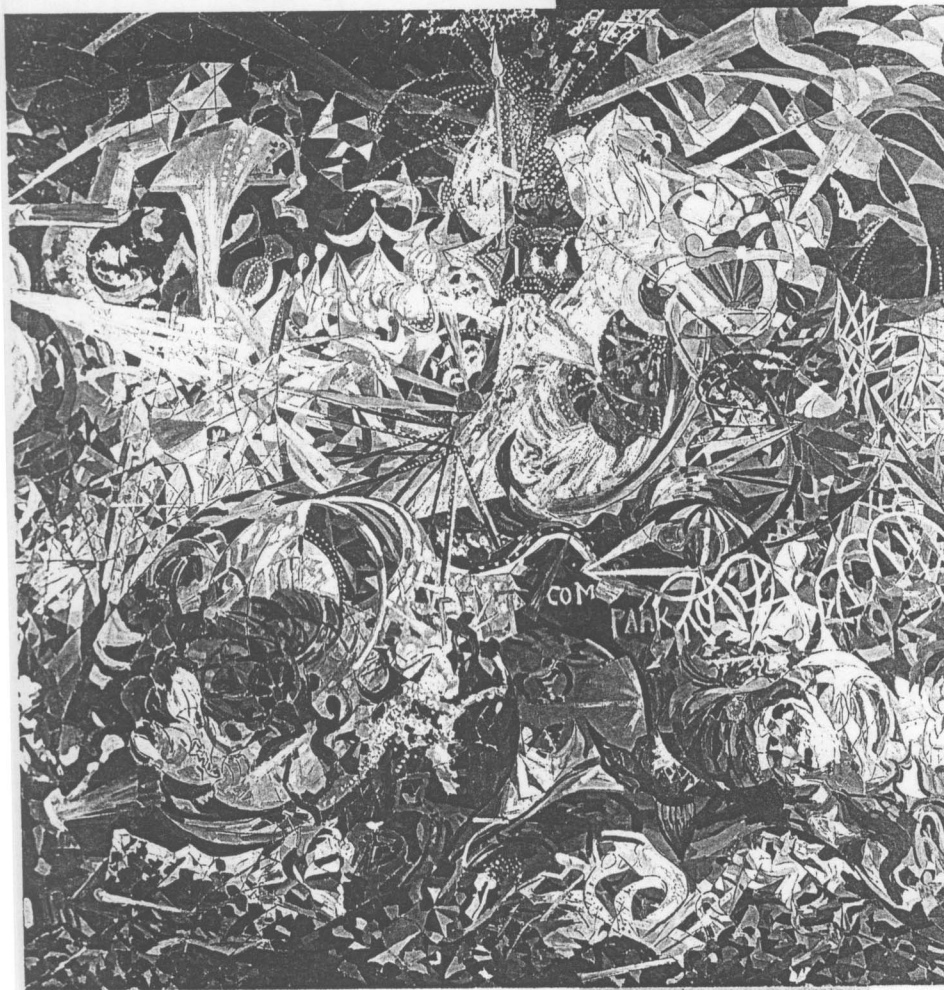


CONSUMER CULTURE & Postmodernism

Mike Featherstone



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been strongly endorsed by the swing to postmodernism. Yet despite the populist turn in analyses of consumer culture some of the questions raised by the critical theorists such as 'how to discriminate between cultural values', 'how to make aesthetic judgement', 'their relation to the practical questions of 'how we live' have not actually been superseded but have merely been put aside.

FOR EDNA, CLAIRE AND JOHN

Of interest here is the reflexive point which emerges most strongly in the chapters on postmodernism: the question of relevance; how and why we choose a particular frame of reference and evaluative perspective. If the study of consumption and concepts such as consumer culture manage to push their way into the mainstream of social science and cultural studies conceptual apparatus, what does this mean? How is it that the study of consumption and culture - both incidentally until recently previously designated as derivative, peripheral and feminine, as against the centrality which was accorded to the more masculine sphere of production and the economy - are granted a more important place in the analysis of social relations and cultural representations? Is it that we have moved to a new stage of intra- or inter-societal organization in which both culture and consumption play a more crucial role? Variants of this thesis can be found in the writings of Bell, Baudrillard and Jameson which are discussed in this volume. Yet in addition to this plausible assumption that we have moved into a stage of 'capitalism' (consumer capitalism), 'industrialization' (post-industrial or information society) or 'modernity' (high modernity or postmodernity) which is sufficiently new and distinctive to warrant a new concept to redirect our attention, we must also face the possibility that it is not the 'reality' which has changed, but our perception of it. This latter viewpoint is captured in the epigram by Max Weber which heads the final chapter 'Each sees what is in his own heart.' We therefore need to investigate the processes of conceptualization and de-formation amongst cultural specialists (artists, intellectuals, academics and intermediaries). This directs our attention towards the particular processes which take place within the specialist cultural field and its various subfields: the struggles between established and outsider groups to monopolize and stabilize symbolic hierarchies. It is only by attempting to understand the changing practices, interdependencies and power balances of culture specialists which influence the production of specialist culture, in the restricted sense of cultural models, interpretations, conceptual apparatuses, pedagogies and commentaries, that we can better understand our modes of perception and evaluation of culture 'out there'. This problem, that of the interrelationship between the changing nature of the various specialist formulations of culture and the various regimes of signification and practices which make up the fabric of everyday lived culture is not only important in understanding the swing towards positive and negative evaluations of mass, popular and consumer cultures, but also, I would argue, is central to the understanding of postmodernism. In my case, my interest in postmodernism was the outgrowth of the problems encountered in attempt-

PREFACE

I first became interested in consumer culture in the late 1970s. The stimulus was the writings of members of the Frankfurt School and other proponents of Critical Theory which were featured and discussed so well in journals like *Telos* and *New German Critique*. The theories of the culture industry, reification, commodity fetishism and the instrumental rationalization of the world directed attention away from a focus on production towards consumption and processes of cultural change. These various conceptualizations were particularly helpful to me in understanding an area which has long been under-theorized – at least in terms of attention directed at it by social and cultural theorists – the study of ageing. Despite the important theoretical problems it raises in terms of the intersection of lived time and historical time, the generational experience, the relationship of body and self, etc., it was clear that few attempts had been made to explore these problems in relation to substantive processes of cultural change. The writing of critical theorists and others (especially Ewen, 1976) seemed to provide a useful bridge by directing attention to the role of the media, advertising, images, the Hollywood ideal, etc., and raised the question of their effects on identity formation and everyday practices. At this time I was writing a book with Mike Hepworth (Hepworth and Featherstone, 1982) on the redefinition of middle age as a more active phase of 'middle youth', and an explanation which pointed to the development of new markets and the extension of active consumer-culture lifestyles with their emphasis upon youth, fitness and beauty to this group seemed plausible. This became explicitly formulated in a paper entitled 'Ageing and Inequality: Consumer Culture and the Redefinition of Middle Age' presented at the 1981 British Sociological Association Conference (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1982). It was followed by a more theoretical piece 'The Body in Consumer Culture' (Featherstone, 1982) and subsequently a special issue of the journal *Theory, Culture & Society* on Consumer Culture in 1983.

Today while there has been a steady growth of interest in, and use of the term, 'consumer culture', the theories of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and other critical theorists are no longer accorded great significance. Their approach is often presented as an elitist critique of mass culture which draws upon what are now regarded as dubious distinctions between real and pseudo individuality, and true and false needs. They are generally regarded as looking down on the debased mass culture and as having little sympathy for the integrity of the popular classes' pleasures. The latter position has

been strongly endorsed by the swing to postmodernism. Yet despite the populist turn in analyses of consumer culture some of the questions raised by the critical theorists such as 'how to discriminate between cultural values', 'how to make aesthetic judgements', and their relation to the practical questions of 'how we should live', it can be argued have not actually been superseded but have merely been put aside.

Of interest here is the reflexive point which emerges most strongly in the chapters on postmodernism: the question of relevance: how and why we choose a particular frame of reference and evaluative perspective. If the study of consumption and concepts such as consumer culture manage to push their way into the mainstream of social science and cultural studies conceptual apparatus, what does this mean? How is it that the study of consumption and culture – both incidentally until recently previously designated as derivative, peripheral and feminine, as against the centrality which was accorded to the more masculine sphere of production and the economy – are granted a more important place in the analysis of social relations and cultural representations? Is it that we have moved to a new stage of intra- or inter-societal organization in which both culture and consumption play a more crucial role? Variants of this thesis can be found in the writings of Bell, Baudrillard and Jameson which are discussed in this volume. Yet in addition to this plausible assumption that we have moved into a stage of 'capitalism' (consumer capitalism), 'industrialization' (post-industrial or information society) or 'modernity' (high modernity or postmodernity) which is sufficiently new and distinctive to warrant a new concept to redirect our attention, we must also face the possibility that it is not the 'reality' which has changed, but our perception of it. This latter viewpoint is captured in the epigram by Max Weber which heads the final chapter 'Each sees what is in his own heart.' We therefore need to investigate the processes of concept-formation and de-formation amongst cultural specialists (artists, intellectuals, academics and intermediaries). This directs our attention towards the particular processes which take place within the specialist cultural field and its various subfields: the struggles between established and outsider groups to monopolize and stabilize symbolic hierarchies. It is only by attempting to understand the changing practices, interdependencies and power balances of culture specialists which influence the production of specialist culture, in the restricted sense of cultural models, interpretations, conceptual apparatuses, pedagogies and commentaries, that we can better understand our modes of perception and evaluation of culture 'out there'. This problem, that of the interrelationship between the changing nature of the various specialist formulations of culture and the various regimes of signification and practices which make up the fabric of everyday lived culture is not only important in understanding the swing towards positive and negative evaluations of mass, popular and consumer cultures, but also, I would argue, is central to the understanding of postmodernism. In my case, my interest in postmodernism was the outgrowth of the problems encountered in attempt-

ing to understand consumer culture, and the need to explore the direct links made between consumer culture and postmodernism by Bell, Jameson, Baudrillard, Bauman and others.

A number of the chapters in this volume therefore also illustrate my concern to come to terms with the perplexing set of problems posed by the rise of the postmodern. They attempt to investigate the postmodern not only as a cultural movement (postmodernism) produced by artists, intellectuals and other cultural specialists, but also inquire into how this restricted sense of postmodernism relates to alleged broader cultural shifts in everyday experiences and practices which can be deemed postmodern. This relationship cannot merely be assumed to be one in which cultural specialists play a passive role as particularly well-attuned receivers, articulators and interpreters of signs and traces of cultural change. Their active role and interest in educating and forming audiences which become sensitized to interpreting particular sets of experiences and artefacts via the label postmodern, must also be investigated. This also points to the salience of the changing interdependencies and power struggles between cultural specialists and other groups of specialists (economic, political, administrative and cultural intermediaries) which influence their capacity to monopolize and de-monopolize knowledge, means of orientation and cultural goods. In short we need to ask not only the question 'what is the postmodern?' but why and how we are concerned with this particular question. We need, therefore, to inquire into the conditions of possibility for the positive reception of the concept of the postmodern and its emergence as a powerful cultural image, irrespective of the actual cultural changes and social processes which some would wish to foreground as evidence of the postmodern, the alleged shift beyond the modern.

While it may be quite legitimate to work from a high level of abstraction and label a particular large slice of Western history as 'modernity', defined in terms of a specific set of characteristics, and then assume that we have moved away from this core towards something else, as yet ill-defined, there is the danger that, the more the opposite set of features initially formulated as the negativity of modernity is considered, the more it begins to take on a tantalizing life of its own and seems to be made real. Those whose gaze was formerly directed by images and figures of order, coherence and systematic unity, now learn to look through new cognitive frameworks emphasizing disorder, ambiguity and difference. It is then not a large step towards 'postmodernity': a term which carries the weight of a fundamental epochal shift which becomes accorded credibility with a set of deductions from equally speculative terminology such as post-industrial or information society listed to support it. There is nothing wrong with high level speculative theory, except if it becomes presented and legitimated as having surpassed, or succeeded in discrediting the need for, empirical research. Unfortunately this would sometimes seem to have happened with the term 'postmodern' and its family of associates. In effect some would argue that

the implications of postmodernism are that we must seek to discredit and abandon the old methodologies and not attempt to account for the post-modern, rather we should practise postmodernism, and formulate a post-modern sociology.

A central intention then in this volume is to understand how postmodernism has arisen and become such a powerful and influential cultural image. This is not to assume that postmodernism is merely a deliberate 'artificial' construct of disaffected intellectuals out to increase their own power potential. Far from it. Rather it is to raise questions about the production, transmission and dissemination of knowledge and culture. The various chapters also take the experiences and practices designated as postmodernism seriously and seek to investigate and comprehend the range of phenomena associated with this category. Yet, once we focus on actual experiences and practices, it is clear that there are similarities between these alleged postmodern experiences and practices and many of those designated as modern (in the sense of *modernité*), and even pre-modern. This should therefore direct us away from some of the simple dichotomies and trichotomies suggested by the terms 'tradition', 'modern' and 'postmodern' and also lead us to consider similarities and continuities in experiences and practices which can effectively be regarded as *trans-modern* (and its associated category: *transmodernité*). It is such theoretical issues, the problems of conceptualization and definition necessary to comprehend the alleged salience or expansion of the role of culture within contemporary societies which make the question of the postmodern so intriguing.

Such theoretical questions about the relationship of culture to society, which imply that we have too long operated with an overtly social conception of social structures and suggest that our general conception of culture is in need of major revision, have emerged in the 1980s. Indeed it is difficult to separate the question of the postmodern from the noticeable rise of interest in theorizing culture, which has propelled it from a peripheral status towards the centre of the various academic fields. This has also been reflected in the attention we have given to postmodernism in *Theory, Culture & Society* in a number of special issues. Our attention in the first place was directed towards the 'debates' between Habermas and Foucault which prompted me to construct a special issue of *TCS* around the question of 'The Fate of Modernity' (1985, 2(3)). It became clear in the planning of this issue and the subsequent response that the question of postmodernism needed a much broader and fuller treatment. This occurred in the double special issue on 'Postmodernism' (1988, 5(2-3)). I recall a good deal of scepticism at the time about whether postmodernism was merely a passing fad or fashionable theme of short duration. Postmodernism has surely now outlived the duration of a fad, and shows signs of remaining a powerful cultural image for some time yet. This is a very good reason for social scientists and others to be interested in it. Yet whether from this impulse there emerge useful social scientific conceptualizations of the postmodern which can be integrated into

the current conceptual armoury, or even surpass it and point to the emergence of, or need for, new modes of conceptualization and cognitive frameworks, remains to be seen. As it stands, we cannot but welcome the emergence of the postmodern for the range of social and cultural theoretical problems it has thrown up.

I would like to thank all my colleagues and friends involved in *Theory, Culture & Society* for their help and encouragement in putting together this book. In particular I have discussed many of the ideas at length with Mike Hepworth, Roland Robertson and Bryan S. Turner and I much appreciate their support. I would also like to acknowledge the encouragement and help of Stephen Barr, Zygmunt Bauman, Steve Best, Josef Bleicher, Roy Boyne, David Chaney, Norman Denzin, the late Norbert Elias, Jonathan Friedman, the late Hans Haferkamp, Doug Kellner, Richard Kilminster, Arthur Kroker, Scott Lash, Hans Mommaas, Stephen Mennell, Carlo Mongardini, Georg Stauth, Friedrich Tenbruck, Willem van Reijen, Andy Wernick, Cas Wouters and Derek Wynne, with whom I've discussed many of the issues raised in this volume. In addition I must mention the generous support given by my colleagues in the Department of Administrative and Social Studies at Teesside Polytechnic and in particular the role of Laurence Tasker and Oliver Coulthard who provided the institutional support and encouragement which has helped to make *Theory, Culture & Society* a viable journal, and has been so crucial in nourishing and sustaining my interest in the postmodern. I would also like to thank Jean Connell, Marlene Melber and the Data Preparation Section for so patiently keying in the many versions of the various chapters.

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- 1 'Modern and Postmodern: Definitions and Interpretations' was given at seminars at Goldsmiths' College, London University in February 1988, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario in March 1988 and at the Amalfi European Prize for Sociology Conference in Amalfi, Italy in May 1988. A further version was given at the Centro de Investigacao y Estudos de Sociologia, Lisbon, June 1989. A version of it appeared as 'In Pursuit of the Postmodern', *Theory, Culture & Society* 5(2-3), 1988.
- 2 'Theories of Consumer Culture' is a revised version of the paper 'Perspectives on Consumer Culture' which first appeared in *Sociology*, 24(1), 1990.
- 3 'Towards a Sociology of Postmodern Culture' was presented at a seminar at Leeds University in May 1987 and at the European Sociological Theories Group Conference on Social Structure and Culture in Bremen in June 1987. It has appeared in H. Haferkamp (ed.), *Social Structure and Culture*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989 and in H. Haferkamp (ed.), *Sozial Struktur und Kultur*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990.
- 4 'Cultural Change and Social Practice' was given at a workshop on the work of Fredric Jameson organized by Doug Kellner at the International

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- 5 'The Aestheticization of Everyday Life' was first given at the Popular Culture Association Conference, New Orleans in April 1988. It was also given at the Conference on Modernity as History, Copenhagen in September 1988 and at a seminar at Lund University, Sweden in October 1988. A version of it will appear in S. Lash and J. Friedman (eds), *Modernity and Identity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
 - 6 'Lifestyle and Consumer Culture' was first presented at the Conference on Everyday Life, Leisure and Culture at the University of Tilburg in December 1985. It appeared in Ernst Meijer (ed.), *Everyday Life: Leisure and Culture*, Tilburg, 1987 and in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 4(1), 1987.
 - 7 'City Cultures and Postmodern Lifestyles' was presented at the 7th European Leisure and Recreational Association Congress on Cities for the Future, Rotterdam in June 1989. It has appeared in the post-congress volume *Cities for the Future*, edited by L.J. Meiresonne, The Hague: Stichting Recreatic, 1989.
 - 8 'Consumer Culture and Global Disorder' was presented at the Conference on Religion and the Quest for Global Order, St Martin's, West Indies in October 1987. It will appear in W.R. Garrett and R. Robertson (eds), *Religion and the Global Order*, New York: Paragon House.
 - 9 'Common Culture or Uncommon Cultures?' was first given at the Higher Education Foundation Conference on the Value of Higher Education, St Anne's College, Oxford in March 1989. A revised version has appeared in *Reflections on Higher Education*, 4 (Dec.), 1989.

modern

postmodern

modernity

postmodernity

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MODERN AND POSTMODERN: DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Any reference to the term 'postmodernism' immediately exposes one to the risk of being accused of jumping on a bandwagon, of perpetuating a rather shallow and meaningless intellectual fad. One of the problems is that the term is at once fashionable yet irritatingly elusive to define. As the 'Modern-day Dictionary of Received Ideas' confirms, 'This word has no meaning. Use it as often as possible' (*Independent*, 24 December 1987). Over a decade earlier, in August 1975, another newspaper announced that 'postmodernism is dead', and that 'post-post-modernism is now the thing' (Palmer, 1977: 364). If postmodernism is an ephemeral fashion then some critics are clear as to who are responsible for its prominence: 'today's paid theorists surveying the field from their booklined studies in polytechnics and universities are obliged to invent movements because their careers – no less than those of miners and fishermen – depend on it. The more movements they can give names to, the more successful they will be' (Pawley, 1986). For other critics these strategies are not just internal moves within the intellectual and academic fields; they are clear indicators and barometers of the 'malaise at the heart of contemporary culture'. Hence 'It is not difficult to comprehend this cultural and aesthetic trend now known as Postmodernism – in art and architecture, music and film, drama and fiction – as a reflection of ... the present wave of political reaction sweeping the Western world' (Gott, 1986). But it is all too easy to see postmodernism as a reactionary, mechanical reflection of social changes and to blame the academics and intellectuals for coining the term as part of their distinction games. Even though certain newspaper critics and para-intellectuals use the term in a cynical or dismissive manner, they confirm that postmodernism has sufficient appeal to interest a larger middle-class audience. Few other recent academic terms can claim to have enjoyed such popularity. Yet it is not merely an academic term, for it has gained impetus from artistic 'movements' and is also attracting wider public interest through its capacity to speak to some of the cultural changes we are currently going through.

Before we can look at the means of transmission and dissemination of the concept, we need a clearer notion of the range of phenomena which are generally included under the umbrella concept postmodernism. We therefore need to take account of the great interest and even excitement that it has generated, both inside and outside the academy, and to ask questions about

the range of cultural objects, experiences and practices which theorists are adducing and labelling postmodern, before we can decide on its political pedigree or dismiss it as merely a short swing of the pendulum.

In the first place the broad range of artistic, intellectual and academic fields in which the term 'postmodernism' has been used, is striking. We have music (Cage, Stockhausen, Briers, Holloway, Tredici, Laurie Anderson); art (Rauschenberg, Baselitz, Mach, Schnabel, Kiefer; some would also include Warhol and sixties pop art, and others Bacon); fiction (Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, and the novels of Barth, Barthelme, Pynchon, Burroughs, Ballard, Doctorow); film (*Body Heat*, *The Wedding*, *Blue Velvet*, *Wetherby*); drama (The theatre of Artaud); photography (Sherman, Levine, Prince); architecture (Jencks, Venturi, Bolin); literary theory and criticism (Spanos, Hassan, Sontag, Fielder); philosophy (Lyotard, Derrida, Baudrillard, Vattimo, Rorty); anthropology (Clifford, Tyler, Marcus); sociology (Denzin); geography (Soja). The very names of those included and excluded in the list will doubtless strike some as controversial. To take the example of fiction, as Linda Hutcheon (1984: 2) argues, some would wish to include the novels of Garcia Marquez and even Cervantes under the heading of postmodernism and others would want to refer to them as neo-baroque and baroque. Scott Lash would want to regard Dada as postmodernism *avant la lettre* (Lash, 1988). There are those who work and write unaware of the term's existence and others who seek to thematize and actively promote it. Yet it can be argued that one of the functions of the interest in postmodernism on the part of critics, para-intellectuals, cultural intermediaries and academics has been to diffuse the term to wider audiences in different national and international contexts (this is one of the senses in which one can talk about the globalization of culture); and to increase the speed of interchange and circulation of the term between the various fields in the academy and the arts, which now want to, and have to, pay more attention to developments among their neighbours. In this sense it is possible that some greater agreement on the meaning of the term might eventually emerge as commentators in each particular field find it necessary to recapitulate and explain the multiplex history and usages of the term in order to educate new, academic audiences.

To work towards some preliminary sense of the meaning of postmodernism it is useful to identify the family of terms derived from 'the postmodern' and these can best be understood by contrasting them to those which derive from 'the modern'.

modern

modernity

modernité

modernization

modernism

postmodern

postmodernity

postmodernité

postmodernization

postmodernism

If 'the modern' and 'the postmodern' are the generic terms it is immediately apparent that the prefix 'post' signifies that which comes after, a break or rupture with the modern which is defined in counterdistinction to it. Yet the term 'postmodernism' is more strongly based on a negation of the modern, a perceived abandonment, break with or shift away from the definitive features of the modern, with the emphasis firmly on the sense of the relational move away. This would make the postmodern a relatively ill-defined term as we are only on the threshold of the alleged shift, and not in a position to regard the postmodern as a fully fledged positivity which can be defined comprehensively in its own right. Bearing this in mind we can take a closer look at the pairings.

Modernity—postmodernity

This suggests the epochal meaning of the terms. Modernity is generally held to have come into being with the Renaissance and was defined in relation to Antiquity, as in the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns. From the point of view of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German sociological theory, from which we derive much of our current sense of the term, modernity is contrasted to the traditional order and implies the progressive economic and administrative rationalization and differentiation of the social world (Weber, Tönnies, Simmel): processes which brought into being the modern capitalist-industrial state and which were often viewed from a distinctly anti-modern perspective.

Consequently, to speak of postmodernity is to suggest an epochal shift or break from modernity involving the emergence of a new social totality with its own distinct organizing principles. It is this order of change that has been detected in the writing of Baudrillard, Lyotard, and to some extent, Jameson (Kellner, 1988). Both Baudrillard and Lyotard assume a movement towards a post-industrial age. Baudrillard (1983a) stresses that new forms of technology and information become central to the shift from a productive to a reproductive social order in which simulations and models increasingly constitute the world so that the distinction between the real and appearance becomes erased. Lyotard (1984) talks about the postmodern society, or postmodern age, 'which is premised on the move to a post-industrial order. His specific interest is in the effects of the 'computerization of society' on knowledge and he argues that the loss of meaning in postmodernity should not be mourned, as it points to a replacement of narrative knowledge by a plurality of language games, and universalism by localism. Yet Lyotard, like many users of the family of terms, sometimes changes register from one term to the next and switches usages, preferring more recently to emphasize that the postmodern is to be regarded as part of the modern. For example, in 'Rules and Paradoxes and Svelte Appendix' he writes "'postmodern" is probably a very bad term because it conveys the idea of a historical "periodi-

zation". "Periodizing", however, is still a "classic" or "modern" ideal. "Postmodern" simply indicates a mood, or better a state of mind' (Lyotard, 1986-7: 209). The other interesting point to note about Lyotard's use of postmodernity in *The Postmodern Condition*, is that where he talks about the changes in knowledge accompanying the move to the post-industrial society he still conceives this as occurring within capitalism, adding weight to the argument of critics that the move to the postmodern society is under-theorized in Lyotard's work (see Kellner, 1988). Although the move is assumed at some points, it is easier to avoid the accusations of providing a grand narrative account of the move to postmodernity and the eclipse of grand narratives, by insisting on a more diffuse notion of 'mood' or 'state of mind'. Fredric Jameson (1984a) has a more definite periodizing concept of the postmodern, yet he is reluctant to conceive of it as an epochal shift, rather postmodernism is the cultural dominant, or cultural logic, of the third great stage of capitalism, late capitalism, which originates in the post World War Two era.

Lyotard's invocation of a postmodern mood or state of mind points us towards a second meaning of modernity-postmodernity. The French use of *modernité* points to the experience of modernity in which modernity is viewed as a quality of modern life inducing a sense of the discontinuity of time, the break with tradition, the feeling of novelty and sensitivity to the ephemeral, fleeting and contingent nature of the present (see Frisby, 1985a). This is the sense of being modern associated with Baudelaire which, as Foucault (1986: 40) argues, entails an ironical heroicization of the present; the modern man is the man who constantly tries to invent himself. It is this attempt to make sense of the experience of life in the new urban spaces and nascent consumer culture, which developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, which provided the impetus for the theories of modern everyday life in the work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin discussed by David Frisby (1985b) in his *Fragments of Modernity*. The experience of modernity also forms the subject matter of Marshall Berman's (1982) book *All That is Solid Melts into Air* in which he looks at the visions and idioms accompanying the modernization process which he pulls together under the term 'modernism'. Berman discusses the modern sensibility that is manifest in a wide range of literary and intellectual figures from Rousseau and Goethe in the eighteenth century to Marx, Baudelaire, Pushkin and Dostoevsky in the nineteenth.

Apart from the confusing use of modernism to take in the whole of the experience and the culture that accompanied the modernization process, Berman and many of those who are currently trying to delineate the equivalent experience of postmodernity focus upon a particularly restrictive notion of experience: that which appears in literary sources and is so designated by intellectuals. But we have to raise the sociological objection against the literary intellectual's licence in interpreting the everyday, or in providing evidence about the everyday lives of ordinary people. Of course,

some intellectuals may have articulated well the experience of the shocks and jolts of modernity. Yet we need to make the jump from modernity or postmodernity as a (relatively restricted) subjective experience to outlining the actual practices, and activities which take place in the everyday lives of various groups. Certainly the descriptions of subjective experience may make sense within intellectual practices, and within aspects of the practices of particular audiences educated to interpret these sensibilities, but the assumption that one can make wider claims needs careful substantiation.

To take an example of the alleged experience of postmodernity (or *postmodernité*), we can refer to Jameson's (1984a) account of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. Jameson gives a fascinating interpretation of the experience of the new hyperspace of postmodern architecture, which, he argues, forces us to expand our sensorium and body. Yet we get little idea how individuals from different backgrounds actually experience the hotel, or better still, how they incorporate the experience into their day-to-day practices. Perhaps for them to interpret the experience as postmodern they need guidelines to make sense of things they may not fully notice, or view through inappropriate codes. Hence, if we want to understand the social generation and interpretation of the experience of postmodernity we need to have a place for the role of cultural entrepreneurs and intermediaries who have an interest in creating postmodern pedagogies to educate publics. The same can be said for two other features of postmodern culture identified by Jameson: the transformation of reality into images and the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents. Here we can take an example which encompasses both features: the media, which tends to be central to many discussions of the postmodern sensibility (one thinks for example of Baudrillard's simulational world, where 'TV is the world'). Yet for all the alleged pluralism and sensitivity to the Other talked about by some theorists one finds little discussion of the actual experience and practice of watching television by different groups in different settings. On the contrary, theorists of the postmodern often talk of an ideal-type channel-hopping MTV (music television) viewer who flips through different images at such speed that she/he is unable to chain the signifiers together into a meaningful narrative, he/she merely enjoys the multiphrenic intensities and sensations of the surface of the images. Evidence of the extent of such practices, and how they are integrated into, or influence, the day-to-day encounters between embodied persons is markedly lacking. Thus while learned references to the characteristic experiences of postmodernity are important we need to work from more systematic data and should not rely on the readings of intellectuals. In effect we should focus upon the actual cultural practices and changing power balances of those groups engaged in the production, classification, circulation and consumption of postmodern cultural goods, something which will be central to our discussion of postmodernism below.

on between high and mass/popular culture; a scepticism promiscuously favouring eclecticism and the mixing of codes: parody, pastiche, irony, playfulness and the celebration of

Modernization-postmodernization

On the face of it, both terms seem to sit unhappily amidst discussion of modernity-postmodernity, modernism-postmodernism. Modernization has been regularly used in the sociology of development to point to the effects of economic development on traditional social structures and values. Modernization theory is also used to refer to the stages of social development which are based upon industrialization, the growth of science and technology, the modern nation state, the capitalist world market, urbanization and other infrastructural elements. (In this usage it has strong affinities with the first sense of modernity we discussed above.) It is generally assumed, via a loose base-superstructure model, that certain cultural changes (secularization and the emergence of a modern identity which centres around self-development) will result from the modernization process. If we turn to postmodernization it is clear that a concomitant detailed outline of specific social processes and institutional changes has yet to be theorized. All we have is the possibility of deriving the term from those usages of postmodernity which refer to a new social order and epochal shift mentioned above. For example, Baudrillard's (1983a) depiction of a post-modern simulational world is based upon the assumption that the development of commodity production coupled with information technology have led to the 'triumph of signifying culture' which then reverses the direction of determinism, so that social relations become saturated with shifting cultural signs to the extent that we can no longer speak of class or normativity and are faced by 'the end of the social'. Baudrillard, however, does not use the term 'postmodernization'.

Yet the term does have the merit of suggesting a process with degrees of implementation, rather than a fully fledged new social order or totality. One significant context for the utilization of the term 'postmodernization' is the field of urban studies and here we can point to the writings of Philip Cooke (1988) and Sharon Zukin (1988a). For Cooke, postmodernization is an ideology and set of practices with spatial effects which have been notable in the British economy since 1976. Zukin also wants to use postmodernization to focus on the restructuring of socio-spatial relations by new patterns of investment and production in industry, services, labour markets and telecommunications. Yet, while Zukin sees postmodernization as a dynamic process comparable to modernization, both she and Cooke are reluctant to regard it as pointing to a new stage of society, for both see it as taking place within capitalism. This has the merit of focusing on processes of production as well as consumption and the spatial dimension of particular cultural practices (the redevelopment of downtowns and waterfronts, development of urban artistic and cultural centres, and the growth of the service class and gentrification) which accompany them.

Modernism–postmodernism

As with the pairing modernity–postmodernity, we are again faced with a range of meanings. Common to them all is the centrality of culture. In the most restricted sense, modernism points to the styles we associate with the artistic movements which originated around the turn of the century and which have dominated the various arts until recently. Figures frequently cited are: Joyce, Yeats, Gide, Proust, Rilke, Kafka, Mann, Musil, Lawrence and Faulkner in literature; Rilke, Pound, Eliot, Lorca, Valéry in poetry; Strindberg and Pirandello in drama; Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Cézanne and the Futurist, Expressionist, Dada and Surrealist movements in painting; Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Berg in music (see Bradbury and McFarlane, 1976). There is a good deal of debate about how far back into the nineteenth century modernism should be taken (some would want to go back to the bohemian avant-garde of the 1830s). The basic features of modernism can be summarized as: an aesthetic self-consciousness and reflexivity; a rejection of narrative structure in favour of simultaneity and montage; an exploration of the paradoxical, ambiguous and uncertain open-ended nature of reality; and a rejection of the notion of an integrated personality in favour of an emphasis upon the de-structured, de-humanized subject (see Lunn, 1985: 34ff). One of the problems with trying to understand postmodernism in the arts is that many of these features are appropriated into various definitions of postmodernism. The problem with the term, as with the other related terms we have discussed, revolves around the question of when does a term defined oppositionally to, and feeding off, an established term start to signify something substantially different?

According to Kohler (1977) and Hassan (1985) the term 'postmodernism' was first used by Federico de Onis in the 1930s to indicate a minor reaction to modernism. The term became popular in the 1960s in New York when it was used by young artists, writers and critics such as Rauschenberg, Cage, Burroughs, Barthelme, Fielder, Hassan and Sontag to refer to a movement beyond the 'exhausted' high modernism which was rejected because of its institutionalization in the museum and the academy. It gained wider usage in architecture, the visual and performing arts, and music in the 1970s and 1980s and then was rapidly transmitted back and forth between Europe and the United States as the search for theoretical explanations and justifications of artistic postmodernism shifted to include wider discussions of postmodernity and drew in, and generated an interest in, theorists such as Bell, Kristeva, Lyotard, Vattimo, Derrida, Foucault, Habermas, Baudrillard and Jameson (see Huyssen, 1984). Amongst the central features associated with postmodernism in the arts are: the effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life; the collapse of the hierarchal distinction between high and mass/popular culture; a stylistic promiscuity favouring eclecticism and the mixing of codes; parody, pastiche, irony, playfulness and the celebration of