Jameson has consistently argued that the historical conjuncture that is called postmodern identifies itself by “a de-differentiation of fields” such that “everything including commodity production and high speculative finance has become cultural” (1998a: 73). This crystallization of “the economic system and the cultural ‘structure of feeling’,” Jameson says, took place by the end of the sixties (1991a: xx). Empirically, in the contemporary global system of multinational capitalism, Perry Anderson comments, “economic life itself [has become] so pervaded by the symbolic systems of information and persuasion that the notion of an independent sphere of more or less acultural production [has] increasingly lost meaning” (1999: 73). In the contemporary world “saturated with signs and images,” everything is so “mediated by culture” that “their primary mode of representation” has become “cultural,” and culture, today, is not “merely a reflection of social and economic relations but . . . a means by which those relations may be enforced, amplified or contested” (Arac 1986: xxx). The omnipresence of culture in the postmodern period and its transformation as a means of domination and repression and exploitation prompt Jameson to suggest that today “culture impacts back on reality in ways that make any independent and, as it were, non- or extracultural form of it problematical” (1991a: 277). That is why he warns us that “until the omnipresence of culture in this society is even dimly sensed, realistic conceptions of the nature and
function of political praxis can scarcely be framed" (1992b: 22). In an unpublished essay entitled “Language and Modes of Production” Jameson observes that

with the eclipse of culture as an autonomous space or sphere, culture itself falls into the world, with the result that the latter becomes completely acculturated; in the society of the spectacle, the society of the image, media society, everything has become cultural and this will clearly make for real and new problems about the possibility of any politics . . . since [culture] is now virtually coterminous with society as a whole. (quoted in Pfeil 1988: 388)

It is precisely this prodigious expansion of culture in the postmodern period of capitalism and its socioeconomic functionality that Jameson brings to focus in his periodization.

Jameson argues that though many of the salient features of the postmodern art can be detected, “full blown” in the various forms of modernism of the earlier period, their “social position” is significantly different in late capitalism. The modernist forms dubbed “ugly, dissonant, obscure, scandalous, immoral, subversive, and generally ‘antisocial’” do not scandalize anyone anymore because of “a mutation” in the sphere of culture. Rather, they are not only “received complacently” but have themselves become “institutionalized and are “at one with the official or public culture.” The modernist movement formerly regarded as negative and oppositional, as a result of “canonization and academic institutionalization” is now merely “a set of dead classics” (Jameson 1991a: 4). It is because of this difference in the functionality of culture that Jameson regards postmodernism as a “cultural dominant” in accordance with the concept of mode of production. Based on this argument it is only from a “demonstrably erroneous” position
that we can consider the “constitutive features of postmodernism” to be “identical with and coterminous to those of an older modernism” (Jameson 1991a: 5). This idea of a cultural dominant, observes Steven Best, is “a differentiating notion which attempts to discriminate among different types of cultural artifacts.” Some new features and new forms, as the nostalgic mode and pastiche, the details of which will be discussed below, become “dominant” but they are “not the sole type” of image production “in a complex force-field where counteveling logics prevail” (1989: 353).

In his Whitney Museum lecture, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” Jameson enumerates a list of features specific to postmodernism. Cultural forms as varied as the poetry of John Ashbery, the architecture celebrated by Robert Venturi in his Learning from Las Vegas, the paintings of Andy Warhol, pop art and photo-realism, the music of John Cage, Philip Galss and Terry Riley, and of groups like the Clash, Talking Heads, and the Gang of Four, the films of Jean-Luc Godard, and a new crop of commercial films “equivalent” to the novels of William Burrouhgs, Thomas Pynchon, Ishamel Reed exemplify that postmodernism emerged as “specific reations against the established forms of high modernism.” The “effacement of some key boundaries” between high culture and mass or popular culture; the “effacement of the older categories of genre and discourse” found in contemporary theory which marks “the end of philosophy as such;” the emergence of pastiche; the concept of the death of the subject; the nostalgia mode (Jameson 1998a: 1-7). It is Jameson’s argument that there is a relationship between the production of these cultural forms and the social life of postmodernity. Jameson’s catalogue of the features of the new social life is worth quoting in full:
New types of consumption; planned obsolescence; an ever more rapid rhythm of fashion and styling changes; the penetration of advertising, television and the media generally to a hitherto unparalleled degree throughout society; the replacement of the old tension between city and country, centre and province, by the suburb and by universal standardization; the growth of the great networks of superhighways and the arrival of the automobile culture. (1998a: 19)

Jameson’s theory of the cultural logic “correlate[s] the emergence of new formal features in culture” enumerated above with the emergence of these features of the new type of “social life” and “a new economic order” (1998a: 3).

But Jameson reiterates that there is a distinction between modernism and postmodernism and says that the two would remain “utterly distinct in their meaning and social function” because of the “different positioning of postmodernism in the economic system of late capital and, beyond that, [of] the transformation of the very sphere of culture in contemporary society” (1991a: 5). Jameson recalls Perry Anderson’s suggestion that the most fundamental feature shared by the various modernisms is “their hostility to the market” and says that what distinguishes postmodernisms is that they “at least share a resonant affirmation, when not an outright celebration, of the market” (1991a: 305). The postmodern implements like the computer and the television are machines of reproduction that “articulate nothing but rather implode” and “make very different demands on our capacity for aesthetic representation than did the relatively mimetic idolatry of the older machinery” (1991a: 37). In the postmodern the high modernist art
forms are “no longer weird and repulsive,” nor is there anything “intolerable and scandalous” in contemporary art. Moreover, unlike the older high modernist art forms they are “commercially successful” too. Jameson argues that even if postmodern art has “all the same formal features as the older high modernism it has still shifted its position fundamentally within our culture” (Jameson 1998a: 18-19).

This transformation of the traditionally distinct and autonomous cultural sphere has been brought about by the penetration of capital into aesthetic production. As a result the latter has been “integrated into commodity production” where, Jameson says, “the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods . . . at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation” (1991a: 4-5). Thus, culture, which remained an uncommodified area, has come under capitalist colonization during the postmodern era. But, Jameson does not mean that all cultural production today is postmodern. What he means is that the postmodern is “the force field” in which a variety of “cultural impulses,” both “residual” and ‘emergent’ forms of cultural production must make their way” (1991a: 6). In other words, it can be said that the logic of late capitalism produces a hegemonic system replete with heterogeneous and contradictory forms, a system that accommodates a wide range of “very different, yet subordinate features” which exemplify both continuity and difference between modernism and postmodernism (Jameson 1991a: 4). This distinction between the emergent, residual and the dominant that Jameson uses helps him to provide “a more adequate account of postmodernism as a historical rupture than do radical postmodernists such as Baudrillard or Lyotard” (Best and Kellner 1991: 86). Jonathan Arac remarks that
the postmodern could well be “emergent” rather than the modern being “residual” as Jameson presents it (Arac 1997: 144). But what Jameson brings to focus is the global hegemony of the postmodern, “a net predominance at world level, which does not exclude a subordinate role at the national level, in any given case” (Anderson 1999: 122).

Jameson argues that of all the arts, it is architecture, under “the patronage of multinational business,” that has a “virtually unmediated relationship” with capital (1991a: 5). Architecture, he says, is “the privileged aesthetic language” of postmodernism, and, the “distorting and fragmentary reflections of one enormous glass surface to the other” can be understood as paradigmatic of “the central role of process and reproduction in postmodern culture” (1991a: 37). Most critics agree with this view of Jameson. Postmodern architecture “reproduces the experimental conditions of multinational capitalism”, writes Barry Chabot (1988: 13). David Harvey says that “[p]ostmodernism in architecture and urban design is market oriented” (1989: 77). He adds that its “aesthetic twists become an expression of class power” (1989: 114). Mike Davis remarks that postmodern architecture “has given freer exhibition than ever before to the spirit of fictional capital” (1989: 82). Jameson discusses the question of the relationship between architecture and fictional capital in “The Brick and the Balloon: Architecture, Idealism and Land Speculation.”

The sociopolitical and aesthetic fall-out of this strange relationship is very tragic proving the Benjaminian notion of the history of civilization referred to above---. that there is “no document of civilization that is not at the same time a document of barbarism”--- true (Benjamin 1982: 248). Based on the data provided by Robert Fitch in his The Assassination of New York Jameson says that in the restructuration of the city of
New York production was driven out to accommodate office space for finance, insurance and real estate resulting in the disappearance of 750,000 manufacturing jobs (1998a: 166-67). The value attached to land leading to land speculation is fictitious in that no commodity transaction is there to support it nor is there any labour that adds value to it. This “fictitious capital is oriented towards the expectation of future value” and is thus “intimately related to the credit system, the stock market, and finance capital” (Jameson 1998a: 184). So, in land trading what is actually traded is “a claim upon future revenues . . . a claim upon future profits from the use of land” (1998a: 185). Thus future becomes a space that is colonized on the basis of the expectation of profit. This, Jameson says, is nothing but “the structural reorganization of time itself into a kind of future market” which compels for a “planned obsolescence” in architecture which no longer has “any aura of permanence” (1998a: 185). Such restructuration of cities has created a new group of people called the “bag people” known euphemistically as “homeless.” Recognized and accredited as a “sociological category,” the bag people are “the consequence of the historical process of land speculation and gentrification” (1991a: 322).

Similar sentiments are expressed by Johannes Birringer who says that the social fabric of the cities is threatened by the capitalist real estate development which enforces the dislocation of the underprivileged. He writes:

This dislocation, acted out directly on the bodies of the homeless and the poor . . . marks significant changes both in economic and class relations under late capitalism. Our postmodern downtowns now often appear like crossed-out graveyards of an older, heroic industrial modernity. (1991: 40)
Birringer observes that the promotion of “restored patriotic statues” conceals the relation between the graveyard and the new fictitious capital. He continues:

These images of patriotism have not only become instantly manipulatable in postmodern corporate architecture; they also surface more and more frequently in the aesthetic productions of the postmodern culture industry. . . . [An] enforced aesthetic perception of the restored . . . monuments must necessarily neutralize their content, since as institutions of memory they mock the social ideals they embody. (1991: 40-41)

Birringer is certain that this postmodern space leaves behind a lot of confusion and contradictions but is unsure of the kind of resistance possible against the power of fictitious capital. He says that it is “unclear whether the architecturalization of the social body and the decorative use of aesthetic and symbolic images in the service of postmodern corporate power can be unmasked and subverted” (1991: 41). Jameson’s critique of the postmodern, it has to be said, attempts to unmask this very power and proposes possible forms of resistance against such forces.

“Postmodern architecture,” writes Jameson, is “a peculiar analogue to neoclassicism, a play of (‘historicist’) allusion and quotation that has renounced the older high modernist rigour and . . . recapitulate[s] a whole range of . . . aesthetic strategies” (1984e: xviii). If high modernism in architecture is credited with “the destruction of the fabric of the traditional city and its older neighbourhood culture” postmodern architecture is “a kind of aesthetic populism” which effaces the “frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture” (1991a: 2). It no longer embodies the high modernist ideology of “a radical act of separation and disjunction from that diseased city fabric” in
the effort to overcome the “pathology” of the “dead, inherited medieval city” (1994a: 141-42). Instead, we find a “rich plurality of styles” and “a will to include an entire world within” the structures themselves, as exemplified in Rem Koolhaas’s Library of France in Paris, and the Sea Trade Centre in Zeebrugge in Belgium (1994a: 129, 134). In these postmodern buildings can be seen “a selection of all the geometric forms and solids imaginable” functioning as a “new category of floating organs” that “overlap without coinciding” whose “nonform” negates the “expressive relationship” between inside and outside but rather “correspond aesthetically to the rather different realities within” (1994a: 135-38). Jameson says that “in this very spatial simultaneity the notion of the incommensurable waxes and along with it the urge and will to translate the givens of any single dimension into another one” (1994a: 138). The term “heterogeneity,” he continues, is “too weak” to genuinely characterize the “internal multiplicity” of these postmodern architectural forms for the simple reason that multiplicity is here “included and somehow contained” and in it is implied “a whole new concept of the relationship between individual items” (1994a: 140). These structures, thus, exemplify the postmodernist aesthetic which is demarcated by “the dialectic of inside and outside and the question of ornament or decoration” (1988b: 59).

In postmodern architecture we can see the “diversion” of aesthetic instincts into “instant commodification,” “the kitsch interior decoration and furniture” (Jameson 1991a: 97). The abolition of the distinction between inside and outside can be seen in the design of the supermarkets and department stores in which the former streets of the market become “so many aisles” which, in turn, become “the model and the emblem, the secret inner structure and the concept of the postmodern ‘city’” (1991a: 98). These instincts
betray "an appetite for photography" which is to say that the postmodern buildings seem to be "designed for photography" (1991a: 99). This, combined with the historicist elements as exhibits of the residues of various periods which "float loose under their own momentum" and which "flee each other in space, as it were, in free levitation" and become "a sign or logo for architecture itself" transform postmodern architecture into a text ready to be "consumed like a commodity" (1991a: 99-101). The postmodern architecture, Johannes Birringer writes, demonstrates "how capital is reinforced by elevating the commodity form into an abstractly self referential and excessive site of power" (1991: 7).

These postmodern forms of architecture with their "strange new feeling of an absence of inside and outside, the bewilderment and loss of spatial orientation . . . the messiness of an environment in which things and people no longer find their 'place'" produce a space distinct in its apparent depthlessness and lack of distance which Jameson calls "postmodern hyperspace" (1991a: 117-18). There is no doubt that the term "hyperspace" immediately brings to mind Baudrillard’s concept of "hyperreality," and prompts Margaret Rose to comment that Jameson’s use of the term ‘hyperspace’ echoes "not the language of postmodernist architecture but that of Baudrillard" (1991: 78). What Jameson means by “hyperspace” and how it describes postmodern architecture will be clear from what follows. Though one can find similarities of implication in the use of the term by the two theorists, it has to be said that while Baudrillard emphasizes the role played by the postmodern technology and media in the creation of a hyperreal postmodern world, what Jameson underlines is the role of the capitalist logic in postmodern architecture and the bewildering hyperspace it produces.
In the “milling confusion” of this hyperspace it is quite impossible to get one’s bearings because it transcends the individual human body’s capacity to “locate itself” and to “organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world.” This disjunction between the human body and its built environment is “the symbol and analogon” of a sharper dilemma which, Jameson says, is “the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects” (1991a: 44). What Jameson’s analysis of postmodern architecture illustrates is that it embodies the mutation in space brought about by the globalization of capital, a mutation which, he observes, is not accompanied by a corresponding transformation in the disposition of the subject. In other words, there is an “alarming disjunction” between our sense and perception of our body and its immediate situation and the surrounding built environment. Jameson’s emphasis, it has to be underlined, is on our inability to conceive our situation as individual subjects within the new world wide network of multinational capitalism. The postmodern hyperspace is impossible to represent. This is a new situation that demands a new form of political aesthetic that focuses on spatial issues. To overcome this spatial inability Jameson proposes the aesthetic of what he calls “cognitive mapping,” the details of which will be discussed later.

The allusions and quotations from the past, abundantly present in postmodern architecture, Jameson says, are not to be understood as “a reconstruction of the past” but as “a present reality” “transformed into a simulacrum by the process of wrapping, or quotation, and has thereby become not historical but historicist--- an allusion to a present out of real history which might just as well be a past removed from real history” (1991a:
118). The past is used in postmodern architecture as a glossy image and a fashion plate. This is a phenomenon we find in postmodern nostalgia films which will be discussed below. This “conscious and unconscious” incorporation of a variety of “impulses and styles” and “cooptation and absorption of adversarial components of culture,” as Christopher Sharrett terms it, is a “rendering of cultural schizophrenia and fall of the subject” (1989: 164). This “random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusions,” this “omnipresence of pastiche” which is compatible with an addiction for the sheer image, this “complacent eclecticism of postmodern architecture,” Jameson asserts, is “a tangible symptom of an omnipresent, omnivorous, and well-nigh libidinal historicism” (1991a: 17).

“Historicism,” as Jameson uses it, is not to be confused with “historicity.” Historicism is, in fact, the opposite of historicity. Clint Burnham, following Slavoj Zizek, says that historicity is distinguished by “the presence of an unhistorical kernel” and that this kernel “is the class struggle,” that which in history, according to Marxism, does not change. Historicism is, therefore, “historicity minus the unhistorical kernel of the Real” (Burnham 1995: 208-09). It is this historicism that Jameson finds characteristic of postmodern nostalgia films which, he says, “restructure the whole issue of pastiche and project it onto a collective and social level, where the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past is now refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the generation” (1991a: 19). We are not to think that the nostalgia films are symptomatic of a serious concern for the historical past or a genuine interest of the postmodern in history itself. Nor do they present something similar to what the nineteenth century historical novels did. Historical time, Jameson says, is modified in them and past
is presented as “a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum” (1991a: 18). This “tendency to generate images and simulacra of the past” is specific to the postmodern social situation. Here “genuine historicity or class traditions have become enfeebled.” These simulacra produce “a pseudopast for consumption” as a kind of “compensation and substitute” for a genuine sense of the past. This sense of the past, Jameson says, is an “essential component for groups of people in other situations in the projection of their praxis and the energizing of their collective project” (1986b: 310). That is why Jameson says that they are “never a matter of ‘representation’ of historical content;” on the other hand, they approach history “through stylistic connotation, conveying ‘pastness’ by the glossy qualities of the image” (1991a: 19).

This appetite for the glossy images of the past, this postmodern cult of the image exemplified in the nostalgia film “with its glossy evocation of the past as sheer consumable fashion and image” seems to be “a return of the repressed, an unconscious sense of the loss of that past” which it attempts to overcome. In the older cultural forms like the historical novel “a still living sense of history was able to express itself” (Jameson 1987c: 554-55). But in the postmodern, one of whose constitutive elements is a weakening of historicity, the relationship to history is “that of a consumer adding another rare object to the collection” and the nostalgia film is “a consumable set of images, marked very often by music, fashion, hairstyles and vehicles or motorcars.” In them, writes Jameson, “the very style of a period is the content and they substitute a fashion plate of the age in question” (1998a: 129). History is, thus, offered as a package of images, as a set of beautiful objects meant purely for aesthetic consumption. “It is the triumph of the image in the nostalgia film which ratifies the triumph over it of all the
values of contemporary consumer society, of late capitalist consumption” (Jameson 1992a: 85). Norman Denzin argues that the nostalgia films incorporate the “residual cultural meanings of the 1950s” and become “emergent critiques of the present.” He adds that they “reappropriate the residual past through pop images which simultaneously mock the past and the present.” This, Denzin says,

reflect[s] the pervasive tendency of the human beings to reinvent the past . . . [and] “implement[s] a pragmatic theory of the past . . . in which an objective-structural, mythical past is always symbolically reconstructed in the present, through the workings of interaction and memory. . . . Thus it is necessary to reject Jameson’s argument that these films condemn us to seek the historical through our own “pop images and stereotypes about the past.” (1992: 46)

Rejecting Jameson’s argument about the nostalgia films is one thing but to say that Jameson rejects “all literary . . . efforts which attempt to recover the past as mere ‘stereotypes about that past’” is quite another, for the simple reason that this last is a misunderstanding of Jameson’s statements on Doctorow (Denzin 1992: 46-7).

To Jameson, E.L. Doctorow “is the epic poet of the disappearance of the American radical past, of the suppression of older traditions and moments of the American radical tradition” and his books are “nourished with history in the more traditional sense” (1991a: 24, 21). His work is not to be compared with other postmodern works which use the nostalgia mode for different reasons and purposes. He says that Doctorow
has seized the whole apparatus of nostalgia art, pastiche, and postmodernism to work himself through them instead of attempting to resuscitate some older form of social realism, an alternative that would in itself become another pastiche. . . . I find it an intriguing attempt to undo postmodernism "homeopathically" by the methods of postmodernism . . . to recover some genuine historical sense by using the instruments of . . . substitutes of history. (1988c: 19)

The attempt to recover the genuine historical sense is, in fact, the attempt to recover genuine class consciousness so essential in building a meaningful resistance against the hegemonic powers of postmodernism. Jameson believes that it is one form of praxis which the cultural politics of postmodern times demand. To awaken historical consciousness and thereby to awaken class consciousness is part of the political process that attempts to fight the reifying powers of capitalism.

Clint Burnham says that the codes of the nostalgia film "demystify nostalgia as simply another lusted-for possession from the past" (1995: 209). But the very term 'nostalgia film' is a misnomer and does not suggest any genuine yearning for the past, any "passionate longing of the exile in time, the alienation of contemporaries bereft of older historical plenitudes" (Jameson 1998a: 129). On the contrary, these commercial films are nothing but "a depersonalized visual curiosity" which,

by transforming the past into visual mirages, stereotypes, or texts, effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project, thereby abandoning the thinking of future change to fantasies of
sheer catastrophe and inexplicable cataclysm, from visions of “terrorism” on the social to those of cancer on the personal. (1991a: 46)

This “mesmerizing new aesthetic mode” is “an elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way” (1991a: 21). This waning of historicity and the efforts to capture the past in glossy images which are part of the nostalgic mode have given rise to a new industry called “heritage industry” which, as David Harvey says, has become “big business.” Everything that echoes past forms,

directly produced copies of past urban infrastructures have become part and parcel of vast transformations of the . . . landscape to the point where . . . [it] is rapidly turning from the manufacture of goods to the manufacture of heritage as its principal industry” (1989: 86).

The nostalgic mode on which this postmodern industry depends so much prefers to approach the present by way of pastiche, stereotypes, and simulacra.

Jameson describes pastiche as a universal practice in postmodern times “engendered by the disappearance of the individual subject and the increasing unavailability of the personal style” (1991a: 17). He defines it as an imitation, like parody, of a “unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language” (1991a: 17). Pastiche is to be distinguished from parody in that it does not have the satiric impulse characteristic of parody. Pastiche and parody involve the imitation of individual styles, “the mimicry of other styles and particularly of the mannerisms and stylistic twitches of other styles.” But “parody capitalizes on the
uniqueness of these styles and seizes on their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation which mocks the original” (1998a: 4). Pastiche, Jameson explains, is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody’s ulterior motive . . . without that still latent feeling that there exists something normal compared with what is being imitated is rather comic. Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humour.” (1998a: 5)

What Jameson emphasizes is the fact that parody “retains a subversive ‘other’ voice” while pastiche, being the neutral practice that it is, lacks “any sense of a norm against which the original is to be compared” (Homer 1998: 104).

The crisis in historicity in the postmodern, referred to above, has been caused by the disappearance of the individual subject, or the loss of its “capacity actively to extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions across the temporal manifold and to organize its past and future into coherent experience” (Jameson 1991a: 25). To explain this postmodern phenomenon Jameson uses Jacques Lacan’s concept of schizophrenia as an aesthetic model. He suggests that schizophrenia is the disintegration of language into a proliferation of private languages in a cultural “practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory” (1991a: 25). In Lacanian terms “schizophrenia” is a linguistic pathology, “a breakdown in the signifying chain” whereby the relationship between the signifier and the signified is shattered, and the signified is now to be seen as “a meaning-effect, as that objective mirage of signification generated and projected by the relationship of signifiers among themselves” (Jameson 1991a: 26). When this signifying chain is unhinged, Jameson continues, “we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers” and “the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of
pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time” (1991a: 26, 27). In other words, it is a “diachronic disorientation,” a “disappearance of the thematics of time” and a “dissolution of the linear narrative” we find “adapted everywhere as a postmodern cultural style” (Latimer 1984: 120).

Jameson says that schizophrenia is a disease of language in which temporal connections have broken down. In “Periodizing the Sixties” he explains it thus:

The break-up of the Sign in mid-air determines a fall back into a now absolutely fragmented and anarchic social reality; the broken pieces of language (the pure Signifiers) now falling again into the world, as so many more pieces of material junk among all the other rusting and superannuated apparatuses and buildings that litter the commodity landscape and strew the ‘collage city,’ the ‘delirious New York’ of a postmodernist late capitalism in full crisis. (1988b: 201)

This “dissemination of the signifier without a signified,” writes Martin Donougho, leads everything “towards the condition of signifier.” There is no “distancing meta-language, but only metaphor, language ‘beside itself’” (1989: 87).

The history of this disintegration of bourgeois subjectivity and the consequent schizophrenic disjunction which produces a malfunction of language is narrated by Jameson in The Political Unconscious and Fables of Aggression. It begins with the rise of the capitalist mode of production. The disintegration of the subject, Jameson argues, is very much articulated in the dominant cultural products of the times and their modes of expression. In the precapitalist society we had “magical narratives” articulating the collective experience and consciousness of the relatively unified modes of production.
These "pre-individualistic narratives," Jameson writes, emerge from "a social world in which the psychological subject has not yet been constituted as such, and therefore in which later categories of the subject, such as the 'character', are not relevant" (1981a: 124). They become increasingly relevant and significant with the rise of capitalism and the evolution of the novel as the dominant form of art. With the rise of capitalism other new modes of individualistic narratives also begin to be developed but the novel emerges as the paradigmatic artistic form of bourgeois subjectivity.

Jameson argues that articulation of the disintegration of the subject becomes increasingly evident only with the moment of realism. The omniscient narrator in the early novels of Balzac is evidence of the unified and centred consciousness of a relatively coherent bourgeois subject. The constitutive feature of "the Balzacian narrative apparatus" is a "libidinal investment or authorial wish fulfillment, a form of symbolic satisfaction in which the working distinction between biographical subject, Implied Author, reader, and characters is virtually effaced" (1981a: 155). But his later novels register in their style, form and content a process of the disintegration within bourgeois subjectivity and society. Jameson concentrates on "writers who disclose the accelerating fragmentation and reification of experience in capitalist society" (Kellner 1989d: 16). By the end of the nineteenth century the bourgeois consciousness appears to be losing its direction and confidence. The literary representations of this beleaguered experience are the "experimental" novels of George Gissing, to describe which Jameson uses the Nietzschean category of "ressentiment." He quotes the following passage from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* to explain his point:
The slave uprising in ethics begins when *ressentiment* becomes creative and brings forth its own values: the ressentiment of those to whom the only authentic way of reaction— that of deeds —is unavailable, and who preserve themselves from harm through the exercise of imaginary vengeance. (1981a: 201)

This crisis which the individual subject experiences intensifies in the twentieth century with the expansion of European imperialism. It is the novels of Joseph Conrad, writes Jameson, that best articulate the fragmentation of the individual subject in a period characterized by the ill effects of an expanding colonialism accompanied by growing commodification. Conrad’s novels signify the growing reification of mass culture and the resistance against it in modernism. This was a period, Jameson says, when bourgeois consciousness and culture were becoming increasingly divided and fragmented in response to the effects of capitalist expansion. By the time we reach Wyndham Lewis in the second half of the twentieth century the various modernisms can be seen to articulate more virulent and fearful forms of this disintegrating subjectivity.

Discussing the concept of ressentiment, Norman Denzin has pointed out that though Nietzsche located it “at the heart of the early modernist experience, it clearly transcends modernism and has become part of the contemporary scene;” it is “the predominant postmodernist form of emotionality” (1992: 54). This, he adds, is “an emotional mood systematically produced by those social structures” which “espouse the equality of rights for all, but permit wide gaps between expectations and what is in fact received” (1992: 55). Taking a cue from Jameson he says that the cultural logic of late capitalism “amplifies] and increase[s] ressentiment” (1992: 55). What is to be noticed,
however, is that while Jameson underlines the articulation of ressentiment in cultural texts, Denzin's focus is on the socio-psychological impacts of ressentiment. Also, Jameson does not rule out the transcendence of ressentiment into postmodernism.

In our own postmodern times fragmentation of subjectivity seems to have reached its completion and we often hear about the "death of the author." This is an experience, Jameson argues, which suggests:

first, the breakdown of temporality suddenly releases this present of time from all activities and intentionalities that might focus it and make it a space of praxis; thereby isolated, that present suddenly engulfs the subject with undescrivable vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming, which effectively dramatizes the power of the material . . . signifier in isolation. (1991a: 27)

The fragmentation of the individual subject and the consequent loss of the signifying chain of the relationship of temporality results in the linguistic malfunction, referred to above, whose aesthetic or cultural consequences become visible in the postmodern pastiche and the nostalgia mode.

This schizophrenic malfunction of language in postmodernism can be presented in a different way as the result of the reification of the sign itself which asserts the arbitrary relationship between the sign and the referent, or the signifier and the signified. Instead of the differential logic of the various modernisms we have the schizophrenic logic of postmodernism. Sean Homer describes this as the disappearance of the central ego and the alienated subject posited by realism and modernism respectively and the emergence of the decentred fragmented subject celebrated by poststructuralism (1998: 123).
So, in this historical narrative of the fragmentation and disintegration of the self that Jameson unfolds,

the various stages of subjectivity are related to the various stages of socioeconomic development and cultural forms. Or rather, subjectivity and literary form itself are read as products of changing and evolving social conditions, concretizing Marx's dictum that consciousness is a product of social being. (Kellner 1989d: 17-18)

Commenting on Jameson's reference to the schizoid nature of the individual subject in the postmodern times David Harvey says that to conceive of the alienation of the individual in the classical Marxist sense is no longer possible because the category of alienation presupposes a coherent self. He continues:

It is only in terms of such a centred sense of personal identity that individuals can pursue projects over time, or think cogently about the production of a future significantly better than time present, and time past.

. . . [P]ostmodernism typically strips away that possibility by concentrating upon the schizophrenic circumstances induced by fragmentation and all those instabilities that prevent us even from picturing coherently. . . .

Nevertheless there is good reason to believe that alienation of the subject is displaced by fragmentation of the subject in postmodern aesthetics.

(1989: 53-4)

The fragmented nature of the postmodern cultural texts fits well with "postmodernism's preoccupation with participation, performance, and happening rather than with an authoritative and finished art object, with surface appearances rather than roots," says
Harvey (1989: 53). Patricia Waugh observes that Jameson is quite correct “to connect the schizophrenic tendency in postmodernism with a pervasive nostalgia” (1989: 346). But she also reminds us that “the decentred and fragmented subject of much postmodernist writing is premised upon the disintegration of a preexisting belief in the possibility of realizing the full autonomous subject of Enlightenment rhetoric” (1989: 347).

Jameson’s argument regarding the progressive fragmentation of the individual subject as outlined in The Political Unconscious and Fables of Aggression was that in aesthetic terms this disintegration was articulated in writers like George Gissing, Joseph Conrad and Wyndham Lewis. It is this argument that finds “its completion” in Jameson’s critique of postmodernism (Kellner 1989d: 15). Here he shows the way in which “schizophrenic disjunction or écriture” as a cultural style “becomes available for more joyous intensities” (Jameson 1991a: 29). The disjunction that Jameson speaks about, in fact, incapacitates the individual subject to logically link the past and the future with the present so that s/he is lost in a perpetual present. Consequently, in aesthetic terms, we are confronted not with a unified text much less by the presence of a distinct personality and sensibility, but by a discontinuous terrain of heterogeneous discourses uttered by anonymous unplaceable tongues, a chaos different from that of the classic texts of high modernism precisely insofar as it is not recontained or recuperated within an overarching mythic framework. (Pfeil 1988: 384)

In the schizophrenic cultural text of the postmodern the pure isolated material signifier “is no longer an enigmatic state of the world or an incomprehensible yet mesmerizing
fragment of language but something closer to a sentence in free-standing isolation” (Jameson 1991a: 28). Jameson cites the examples of John Cage’s music, some narratives of Samuel Beckett, especially Watt, and “Language Poetry or the New Sentence” which use “schizophrenic fragmentation” as the “fundamental aesthetic” (1991a: 28). These “works of art” can in no way be regarded as unified or organic but as “a virtual grab bag or lumber room of disjoined subsystems and random raw materials and impulses of all kinds” whose reading “proceeds by differentiation rather than by unification” which stresses “disjunction to the point at which the materials of the text, including its words and sentences, tend to fall apart into . . . a set of elements which entertain separations from one another” (1991a: 29).

Jameson refuses to celebrate this chaos of the heaps of fragments that the postmodern cultural texts are, this “paralogical and paratactical arts that dissolve the modernist narrative” (O’Neill 1995: 146). But he is criticized by Angela McRobbie for looking back “nostalgically to the notion of unity or totality.” She cites the case of Stuart Hall who, she says, has said that “it is just this decentring of consciousness which allows him as a black person, to emerge, divided, yes, but now fully foregrounded on the postmodern stage.” She adds that Stuart Hall “sees in fragmentation something more reflective of the ongoing and historical condition of subaltern groups” (1995: 27-28). Mike Featherstone also finds fault with Jameson for being “guilty of over-generalization” and for his lack of “sensitivity to historical concreteness” (1989: 128). Featherstone’s complaint is that Jameson’s interest in totalizing compels him to relate “cultural changes to well defined epochs” and thus “underestimate the differentiation of culture within precapitalist societies and hence the uniqueness of the elements of the postmodern” (1989:
Angela McRobbie says that the problem is, partly, in the "imprecise use of the term 'fragmentation'" and argues that fragmentation, "as a kind of 'structure of feeling', is by no means the sole property of those living under the shadow of the postmodern condition" (1995: 28). Featherstone seems to imply that Jameson is still adhering to the orthodox reflective theory based on the concept of base and superstructure whereas, in fact, he is using the Marxian dialectical model of the mode of production which "relates all cultural and superstructural phenomena to the socioeconomic foundation and which interprets stages of cultural and superstructural development as part of the trajectory of the history of capitalism" (Kellner 1989d: 18). Jameson's argument is that these stages correspond to the stages in the construction of the bourgeois individual subject in emergent capitalism and its schizophrenic disjunction in the postmodern times. Jameson's response to these methodological objections is that

the totalizing account of the postmodern always included a space for various forms of oppositional culture: those of marginal groups, those of radically distinct residual or emergent cultural languages, their existence being already predicated by the necessarily uneven development of late capitalism. (1991a: 159)

Jameson's description of postmodernism in terms of "cultural hegemony" does not "suggest some massive and uniform cultural homogeneity of the social field," but implies, rather, "its coexistence with other resistant and heterogeneous forces which it has a vocation to subdue and incorporate" (1991a: 159). Whatever Jameson's clarifications are, it still has to be said that "Jameson's notion of hegemony appears too much like homogeneity, more Lukacsian in its inflection than Gramscian" (Li 1991: 136). The
sociopolitical issues related to this totalizing approach of Jameson will be discussed in
detail later.

In the postmodern, then, as mentioned above, the past itself seems to have
disappeared. In the postmodern architecture where it still remains in the form of
quotations and allusions,
renovation and restoration allow them to be transferred to the present in
their entirety as those other, very different and postmodern things called
simulacra. Everything is now organized and planned; nature has been
triumphantly blotted out along with peasants, petit-bourgeois commerce,
handicrafts, feudal aristocracies, and imperial bureaucracies. (Jameson
1991a: 309-10)

In other words, it can be said that the old enclaves of agriculture and its concomitant
provincial cultures have been swept away or assimilated into the culture of late
capitalism. The once culturally significant and distinctive agriculture identified as “the
Other of Nature” has now become an industry with its peasants and their labour
“classically commodified in terms of value equivalences” (Jameson 1994a: 27). Jameson
doesn’t mean that this commodification is visible evenly all over the world but that “the
tendency toward global commodification is far more visible and imaginable than it was in
the modern period” (1994a: 27). In different terms, this can be explained as the tendency
towards “one enormous urban system” in which

the very conception of the city itself and the classically urban loses its
significance. . . . [T]he urban becomes the social in general, and both of
them constitute and lose themselves in a global that is not really their
opposite either but something like their own outer reach, their prolongation into a new kind of infinity. (1994a: 28-29)

Thus, when the boundaries of the rural and the urban dissolve and when the world of late capitalism becomes wholly built and constructed having had nature effectively abolished from it, what happens is a kind of standardization: we hear the same language, see the same programme, and consume the same goods (1994a: 29). What Jameson means is that we live in "a more homogeneously modernized condition" or it can be said that postmodernism is "more modern than modernism itself" (1991a: 310).

Though "Nature" is said to have been abolished from the postmodern world there is a return of nature, an awareness of nature, in the postmodern. Ecologically, the repressed comes back "in the deplorable conditions in which the technological search for profits has left the planet, and humanly, in the disillusionment with people’s capacity to change" (Jameson 1994a: 50-51). Thus, in the postmodern, there is the coexistence of two "seemingly incompatible movements" (1994a: 52). This is one of those features Jameson calls "antinomies of postmodernity" which raise the issue of "naturalism," of "nature and human nature" (1994a: 8). The question of the search for profits brings in the role of the market rhetoric which is based on a conception of "the sinfulness and aggressivity of human nature that can alone be balanced and tamed by an equally natural propensity of human beings to do business and make money" (1994a: 51). Jameson says that "the market offers a whole postmodern metaphysic, which contrasts oddly with the desacralization commerce and nascent capitalism were so often thought to have brought into the older feudal society" (1994a: 51). This contradiction, "built into postmodernism," writes Terry Eagleton, is "both radical and conservative" (1997: 132). The free market,
which is supposed to gratify the natural human desire for freedom and which claims to offer maximum "freedom" to the consumer is built on the ideology that "[m]arket is in human nature" (Jameson 1991a: 263). But Eagleton reminds us:

The logic of the marketplace is one of pleasure and plurality, of the ephemeral and discontinuous, of some great decentred network of desire of which individuals seem the mere fleeting effects. . . . The more market forces threaten to subvert all stability, the more stridently one will need to insist upon traditional values. . . . But the more this system appeals to metaphysical values to legitimate itself, the more its own rationalizing and secular activities threaten to strike them hollow. (1997: 132)

It is because of this antinomy of the postmodern that Eagleton says that postmodernism "fails to recognize that what goes at the level of ideology does not always go at the level of the market" (1997: 132).

Just as Nature has been commodified by the penetration of the market forces into those hitherto alien domains, so has the Unconscious been colonized by capital in the postmodern times. That is why Jameson says that in postmodernity cultural and aesthetic production have been assimilated into "commodity production" (1998a: 134). He argues that in modernism "art was a realm beyond commodification;" in late modernism there still were "zones of art exempt from the commodifications of commercial culture;" and, the postmodern culture is characterized by "the supersession of everything outside of commercial culture, its absorption of all forms of all culture, high and low, along with image production itself" into a single system (1998a: 134-35). What has happened is a generalized mutation of the image on a global scale into spectacle whereby the image
itself becomes a commodity and it is “vain to expect a negation of the logic of commodity production from it” and so “all beauty today is meretricious and the appeal to it by contemporary pseudo-aestheticism is an ideological manoeuvre and not a creative resource” (1998a: 135). But there is a very interesting paradox involved in this commodification of the cultural realm. It is at the very same moment when the aesthetic is fully integrated into the commodity system that it achieves some kind of a “genuine autonomy” in the form of the materiality of the signifier. Jameson writes: The concept of the autonomy of culture allows us to “witness with greater precision its historical dissolution, and at the same time to register the paradox of a thing that disappears by becoming universal, rather than by extinction” (1992a: 202).

One of the most obvious consequences of this cultural transformation in which the market becomes all-conquering and all-inclusive is the loss of the negative edge of art. Perry Anderson says that Jameson’s “draconian” conclusion on this cultural mutation is this: “where once beauty could be a subversive protest against the market and its utility-functions, today the universal commodification of the image has absorbed it as a treacherous patina of the established order” (1999: 110). The disappearance of what Jameson calls “the depth models” illustrates this best. Jameson’s thesis is that if at all any cultural document is “not to sink to the level of sheer decoration, it requires us to reconstruct some initial situation out of which the finished work emerges.” If that situation is not mentally restored, the work of art “will remain an inert object, a reified end product impossible to grasp as a [socially] symbolic act in its own right, as praxis and as production” (1991a: 7). Vincent Van Gogh’s celebrated peasant shoes, “A Pair of Boots,” one of the canonical works of high modernist visual art, can be reconstructed as
representing “the whole object world of agricultural misery, of stark rural poverty, and the whole rudimentary human world of backbreaking peasant toil, a world reduced to its most brutal and menaced, primitive and marginalized state” (1991a: 7). Recalling Martin Heidegger’s observation that Van Gogh’s work illustrates the general function of art as the mediating entity between the worldless ethonic powers of Nature and the civilized historical human world, Jameson says that it stands in stark contrast to the typical postmodern painting of Andy Warhol, *Diamond Dust Shoes*. What we have in the latter is a random collection of dead objects hanging together on the canvas like so many turnips, as shorn of their earlier life world as the pile of shoes left over from Auschwitz or the remainders and tokens of some incomprehensible and tragic figure in a packed dance hall. (1991a: 8)

Jameson argues that Warhol’s work “turns centrally around commodification” and “explicitly foregrounds the commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital.” Nevertheless, adds Jameson, his works “ought to be powerful and critical statements” (1991a: 9). The most evident difference between the two works is that in the later one there is “a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense” which is “the supreme formal feature” of all postmodernism (1991a: 9). Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes* betrays a “waning of affect” and a decorative exhilaration characteristic of postmodern culture (1991a: 10). But we are not to think that the painting is without any effect, that it is without any feeling or emotion, or “all subjectivity has vanished from the newer image” (1991a: 10). But it is “the affect of the drug trip,” “a hallucinogenic hilarity draped over an object from the outside, not in fact a property of the object itself” (Latimer 1984: 119).
So, with the emergence of postmodernism, the fundamental hermeneutic depth models of modernism have fallen into disrepute and instead an aesthetic of surfaces has come to hold sway. These depth models are “the dialectical one of essence and appearance,” “the Freudian model of latent and manifest, or of repression,” “the existential model of authenticity and inauthenticity,” and the semiotic model of “signifier and signified” which have been replaced by “surface or multiple surfaces” (Jameson 1991a: 12). Jameson remarks that this depthlessness of the postmodern is not “merely metaphysical” but physical and literal as well (1991a: 12). The disappearance of the depth models also signals the disappearance of the concepts of anxiety and alienation, isolation and solitude, hysteria and neurosis, the psycho-pathologies of the bourgeois ego, so prominent in modernism. It also means the end of the unique, individual or personal style, “the end of the distinctive individual brush stroke.” It means “the liberation in contemporary society from the older anomie of the centered subject,” the liberation not only from anxiety but also from “every other kind of feeling as well” (1991a: 15).

This loss of depth in the postmodern art, Jameson says, is “radically antianthropomorphic” and is characterized by “[t]he ultimate contemporary fetishization of the human body” which transforms it into a simulacrum whose function is defined in Sartrean terms as “the derealization” of the world of everyday reality (1991a: 34). In this transformation human beings become, at least momentarily, “so many dead and flesh coloured simulacra”, and the world becomes “a glossy skin, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density” (1991a: 34). This experience provided by the pleasure of the simulacra of images is defined by Jameson as “hysterical sublime” (1991a: 34). It is a blend of terror and exhilaration qualitatively different from the pleasurable pain
described by Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke. At a time when Nature itself has been radically eclipsed “by late capitalism, by the green revolution, by neocolonialism and the megalopolis,” the “other of our society” is not Nature at all, but technology, says Jameson (1991a: 34-35). By invoking the fashionable current theme of the Sublime conditioned by the historical moment of postmodernity when “affect itself becomes ‘free-floating and impersonal’,” Jameson responds to Lyotard’s “counterhistorical” use of the Sublime “to qualify the postmodern” (Redfield 1995: 161, n.1). In the hysterical sublime that Jameson characterizes as typically postmodern there is a cancellation of the impetus of modernism whose initiative had always come from the gap between the conceivable and the representable that Kant defined as the sublime as distinct from the merely beautiful.

After the initial “thunderous unblocking” of energies of the postmodern there has been a perceptible regression recently which Jameson has delineated in his later essays on the postmodern. This is a kind of release from the bonds of the modern Sublime into a “renewal of production as such after a long period of ossification and dwelling among dead monuments” (1991a: 313). Jameson says that though originally this was thought to be a kind of emancipation from the dead weight of those monuments, it has tended to degenerate into a new cult of the Beautiful. The new aesthetic of the simulacra represents a “colonization of reality” achieved by “spatial and visual forms which is at one and the same time a commodification of that same intensively colonized reality on a world-wide scale” and a “return of the Beautiful” that celebrates “‘an end of art’” (1998a: 87). Perry Anderson explains Jameson’s idea of this new ‘end of art’ theory and the postmodern aesthetic thus:
With this degraded aestheticism, art appears to sink back once again into a culinary condition. At the same time, the intellectual liberation wrought with the coming of Theory, as a breakdown of barriers between ossified disciplines and the unexpected styles of thought, has undergone a regression too. For the latest phase has seen a reinstatement of all the outdated autarchies that the de-differentiating impulses of the postmodern sought to sweep away, starting with ethics and aesthetics themselves. (1999: 135)

The postmodern concept of the 'end of art' can be explained as "the return of Beauty and the decorative" and the "abandonment of the quest for the Absolute or of truth claims and its redefinition as a source of sheer pleasure and gratification" (Jameson 1998a: 86). But there is something more important involved in this redefinition than meets the eye. Jameson observes that

the very deployment of the theory of the 'end of art' was also political, insofar as it was meant to suggest or to register the profound complicity of the cultural institutions and canons, of the museums and the university system, the state prestige of all the high arts, in the Vietnam War as a defense of Western values: something that also presupposes a high level of investment in official culture and an influential status in society of high culture as an extension of state power. (1998a: 75)

This is not surprising at all given that the de-differentiation of fields characteristic of the historical conjuncture we call postmodern has made everything political, or everything
cultural or economic so that any “conjectures about our current situation can be taken as statements about late capitalism or about the politics of globalization” (Jameson 1998a: 73).

This postmodern concept of the “end of art” goes along with a kind of aesthetic populism in which the distinction between high culture and a so called mass culture or commercial culture so much integral to modernism has disappeared, and “new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern” have emerged (Jameson 1991a: 2). Jameson argues that the Utopian function of modernist art consisted partly in “the securing of a realm of authentic experience over against the surrounding environment of middle- and low-brow commercial culture” (1991a: 63). It is this “constitutive differentiation” that has now disappeared in the postmodern (1991a: 63). This, he continues, is in reality “a mere reflex and symptom of a . . . cultural mutation in which what used to be stigmatized as mass or commercial culture is now received into the precincts of a new and enlarged cultural realm” (1991a: 64). This enlargement has happened owing, in part, to “the democratization of culture” (1991a: 153). In this “relative democratization” and the popular character of the various postmodernist forms there is “an experience of culture accessible to far more people than the older modernist languages were.” This, Jameson says, is not an “altogether bad” thing and there is no reason why it should be condemned (1988c: 12). But looking at it from a different perspective, Jameson says that postmodernism “in the limited sense of an ethos and a ‘life-style’” is the expression of “the ‘consciousness’ of a whole new class fraction”
transcending group limits and named “yuppies.” But he does not mean that this “new petit bourgeoisie,” this “professional-managerial class” have become something like “a new ruling class” but that the cultural values and practices and “the local ideologies” of the yuppies have articulated “a useful dominant ideological and cultural paradigm” for late capitalism (1991a: 407).

The ‘broadening’ of the social basis of culture referred to above and the consequent cultural transformation in which, as has already been pointed out, the market becomes all-inclusive result in the absorption of the high and low into a single system whereby a sort of leveling is effected. Jameson prefers to call this leveling process “plebeianization” rather than democratization following Brecht (1991a: 306, 1994a: 152). The greater levels of literacy and education and the abundance of information made available by the new technology have had a role to play in this plebeianization. Though this broadening of the social basis of culture and the “social metamorphosis” are to be welcomed, Perry Anderson observes that “a great thinning of its critical distance” yields what he calls “the flat postmodern potion” (1999: 111, 113). He goes on to suggest that in this process “[q]uality has once again been exchanged for quantity” though it can be looked at differently as “a welcome emancipation from class confinement or as a dire contraction of inventive energies.” This, in other words, is a kind of “cultural coarsening” which is “on global display” (1999: 113).

Jameson looks at this plebeianization from a different perspective also. He says that it does not so much indicate a closing of class difference as a cancellation of social differences. There is a “weakening if not the outright disappearance” of the “category of
otherness” in the collective imaginary which, he argues, is “one of the basic structural features of postmodernity” (1994a: 151-52). The earlier distinction between “the underworld and the overworld” seems to have given way to a fantasmagoria of interchangeable status and an aleatory social mobility. In postmodernity the “proletarian, the lumpen, and their cousins the urban criminal (male) and prostitute (female)” have given way to “a youth culture” in which “the urban punks are merely the opposite numbers to the business yuppies” and a “recirculation” is possible between “the underworld and the overworld of high-rent condos and lofts” (1994a: 152). Such a plebeianization, Anderson remarks, “perforce denotes not greater popular enlightenment, but new forms of inebriation and delusion” (1999: 112).

With this momentous transformation in culture and the social imaginary and the ‘end of art’ associated with it there is a corresponding transformation in civil space as well, argues Jameson. He says that it has to be considered in terms of the end, in late capitalism, of civil society itself. The “class nightmares” of the modernist moment “involved the construction of a kind of private bourgeois space secure for the Other” and the “cleansing of those lower depths or spaces of radical otherness” (1994a: 153). Bourgeois civil society was the term, Jameson says, that

came into currency to describe the new private spaces that capitalism opened up for its new dominant class; it was at one with the philosophical paradoxes . . . of an experience and a conception of a radically nonpublic and nonsocial space that was however produced socially and constituted
an integral component in the functioning of this particular social formation. (1994a: 153-54).

This space was complexified by the appearance of the new space of work "seemingly public but owned by private individuals" and "the space of the street" the quotidian space of everyday life which, Jameson says, was "a sign of the breakup of the private and the personal as it is of the emergence of consumption and commodification over against the public realm itself" (1994a: 154). In postmodernity the private space and its traditional values and the public space have all disappeared. What we have in their stead is a space of jagged no-man's-land where "neither private property nor public law exists," where all traditional forms of boundaries have disappeared. This is a space "beyond the law," "beyond all national or political jurisdiction, in which the worst crimes can be committed with impunity and in which the very social persona itself dissolves" (1994a: 158-59). This, in fact, is "the end of the civic" and of "official government which now dissolves into the private networks of corruption and informal clan relationships" (1994a: 158).

What Jameson implies is the emergence of the new multinational or transnational corporations which have become hegemonic transforming the national governments into mere agents responsible to implement their policies in various geographical areas. This new space, he says, is "a fully built and posturban infinite space, where corporate property has somehow abolished the older individual private property without becoming public" (1994a: 159). And, we are "the subjects of a corporate, collectivized, postindividualistic age" (1991a: 306).
This new order of the postindividualistic age has seen the disappearance of the “prophets and seers” of modernism both as cultural producers and as politicians (Jameson 1991a: 306). Jameson says that “the poststructuralist motif of the ‘death of the subject’” signals the end of the “quaint romantic values” of the “genius,” the Great Artist, and the Great Work (1991a: 306). “If modernism thought of itself as a prodigious revolution in cultural production, however, postmodernism thinks of itself as a renewal of production as such after a long period of ossification and dwelling among dead monuments” (1991a: 313). By becoming “school classics” and by distancing themselves from their readers as “monuments” the “great modernist works” became reified (1991a: 317). What Jameson means by reification here is that in the realm of cultural products there has been “a radical separation between consumers and producers.” This develops and perpetuates the conviction within the consumer that the production of the product in question is beyond anything s/he “can imagine.” The consumer of culture feels a “deep sense of inferiority in the face of the cultural other” (1991a: 315). Thus, the product “somehow shuts us out even from a sympathetic participation, by imagination, in its production” (1991a: 317). The product is “consumed” and enjoyed by us. But, Jameson says that consumption in the social sense is very specifically “the word for what we in fact do to reified products of this kind, that occupy our mind and float above that deeper nihilistic void left in our being by the inability to control our destiny” (1991a: 317). Reification “paralyze[d] form production in general” and “blocked the creative mind” in contradiction to the modernist posture as “the unblocking of human energy” (1991a: 317). But in the relief of the postmodern “the various modernist rituals were swept away and form production again became open to whoever cared to indulge it.” Consequently, the modernist formal values
were now regarded "elitist" and, hence, either abandoned or destroyed along with the crucial categories of "subject" and "work." Whatever the freedom granted by the postmodern relief the linguistic arts have had to retreat "before the democracy of the visual and the oral" in postmodernity (1991a: 318).

Reification, Jameson argues, thus, accounts for the waning of historicity, the effacement of the traces of human labour from commodity production, the aestheticization of the commodity process, the fragmentation of the human psyches and the fracturing of their subjective identities, the colonization of the last enclaves of resistance to the hegemonic forces of capitalism, and also the separation of the signifier and the signified. The details of this last mentioned shall be discussed in relationship to Baudrillard's theory of the postmodern. Jameson himself has spoken about the importance of these Marxian concepts in contemporary discussions on class analysis. He says that "those doctrines of reification and commodification which played a secondary role in traditional or classical Marxian heritage are likely to . . . become the dominant instruments of analysis and struggle" (1992b: 267). Terry Eagleton acknowledges that the "power and versatility of insight Jameson can generate from [the] notions [of commodification and reification] is little short of staggering." But at the same time he points out that Jameson's equating of reification and rationalization is "spurious" (1986: 63). Sean Homer has observed that Jameson does not seem to "accept the 'prevailing' view of reification as a specific form of alienation; on the contrary, for Jameson, alienation appears to designate a specific form of reification" (1998: 166). He says that Jameson's conflation of the two different concepts of rationalization and reification
follows Georg Lukacs's theory of reification which is "a synthesis of Marx and Weber" (1998: 167). This conflation, he suggests, has "detrimental consequences," and "the valorization of reification at the expense of questions of class struggle tends to displace the more properly political concerns of historical materialism" (1998: 166, 167).

While the question of Lukacs's concept of reification being "a synthesis" of Marx and Weber is debatable, Jameson's view that Lukacs "strategically retranslate[s]" Weber's term "rationalization" as "reification" in *History and Class Consciousness* is significant. The dynamic of reification, he adds,

is a complex one in which the traditional or "natural" unities, social forms, human relations, cultural events, even religious systems, are systematically broken up in order to be reconstructed more efficiently, in the form of new post-natural processes or mechanisms; but in which at the same time, these now isolated broken bits and pieces of the older unities acquire a certain autonomy of their own, a semiautonomous coherence which, not merely a reflex of capitalist reification and rationalization, also in some measure serves to compensate for the dehumanization of experience reification brings with it, and to rectify the otherwise intolerable effects of the new process. (1981a: 63)

The history of aesthetic forms is, in fact, the history of the process of reification. It shows the process of reification as "the analytical dismantling" of the natural unities such as
social groups, institutions, human relationships, forms of authority, activities of a cultural and ideological as well as of a productive nature into their component parts with a view to their “Taylorization,” that is, their reorganization into more efficient systems which function according to an instrumental, or binary, means/ends logic. (1981a: 227)

It is this process which was described above in the progressive disintegration of individual subjectivity as reflected in the novels of Balzac, Gissing, Conrad, and Wyndham Lewis. There is also another loss “inherent” in the process outlined: “the wholesale dissolution of traditional institutions and social relations.” This loss is inflicted by “the penetration of a money economy” which has reached its furthest limits in postmodern times (1981a: 227). It is Jameson’s thesis that this penetration of capital into the as yet unaffected realms of agriculture and culture is what is most characteristic of postmodernism. How the exposition of this process becomes detrimental to questions of class struggle and the political concerns of historical materialism, as Homer alleges, is not clear. On the contrary, a clear understanding of the ways in which this process of reification operates in the cultural realm helps the formulation of an effective cultural political strategy against the forces perpetrating such dismantling and fragmentation. Maybe, Jameson “exaggerat[es] the totalizing logic of late capitalism and its reifying power” a little bit (Homer 1998: 169). But he never means that resistance is not possible against “such a ubiquitous force” nor that we cannot “achieve a position from which to provide a critique of reification” as Homer seems to suggest (1998: 169). In fact, his
whole theory of postmodernism can be described as a critique of the ambiguous process of reification.

In the latest stage of this process of reification, Jameson, following Guy Debord, says that the image is “the final form of commodity reification” and it “imposes itself everywhere, at the same time that it insistently begins to designate a technological origin” (1998a: 110). Because of this ever increasing presence and the pervasive influence of the visual image in our times it could very justifiably be said that the postmodern culture is primarily a visual culture. “Social space is now completely saturated with the culture of the image,” says Jameson (1998a: 111). This saturation and the “mindless fascination” for the image have transformed the world into a naked body to be stared at and on offer to be possessed visually. It is this voyeuristic element within it that prompts Jameson to say that “[t]he visual is essentially pornographic” (1992a: 1). In postmodernism, everything, the classifiable and the unclassifiable, has been “triumphantly penetrated and colonized” by the image and fully translated into “the visible and the culturally familiar” (1998a: 111). This has opened up the once closed space of the aesthetic realm so that the “autonomy of art” has now become an outmoded notion and the “specificity of the aesthetic” is “necessarily blurred or lost altogether” (1998a: 111). Because commercial culture has absorbed everything of this aesthetic realm along with the production of images, the “image is the commodity today” (1998a: 135). Wendy Kozol has pointed out that “Jameson’s emphasis on the visual echoes Benjamin’s concern with the visual images” and that he shares with both Walter Benjamin and Pierre Bourdieu “a compelling fascination with the social functions, legitimizing forces, and utopian dreams embedded
Jameson writes, the written text has lost its “privileged and exemplary status” to the visual image and, “the intervention of the machine, the mechanization of culture and the mediation of culture by the Consciousness Industry are now everywhere the case.” Culture, he adds, has now so obviously become materialistic and technological both in its structure and its function that we tend to describe it by the term “media” which simultaneously “conjoins” the multiple dimensions of “the material, the social, and the aesthetic” (1991a: 68). It is because of this dominance of the new technology that Jameson speaks of the “deep constitutive relationship” of postmodernism “to a whole new technology, which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system” (1991a: 6).

Technology, Jameson says, serves adequately as a “shorthand to designate that enormous properly human and anti-natural power of dead human labour stored up in our machinery” and it has become the “other” of the postmodern society (1991a: 35). And, technological development is “the result of the development of capital rather than some ultimately determining instance in its own right” (1991a: 35). As we have already seen, the new structural moment of capitalism that we call postmodernism involves a technological revolution. In the consequent new stage those older vehicles of production are “subsumed under the radically different industrial dynamic of the computer, of nuclear energy, and of the media” (Jameson 1992a: 61). Unlike the machines of the modern age the postmodern machines are machines of reproduction that “make very different demands on our capacity for aesthetic representation.” Postmodern technology, Jameson continues, is “mesmerizing and fascinating” and it offers “some privileged
representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp" (1991a: 37-8). This is why Clint Burnham says that during the past few years we have witnessed "a paradigm shift in how we view and use technology;" we have witnessed "the post-modernization of everything" (1995: 193). The "tireless series of "technological revolutions"" has been able "to de-spatialize the market place and replace it in the electronic environs of the home and cerebral cortex" (Burnham 1995: 194). Thus, we understand from Jameson's periodization of postmodern culture that it is not "just a set of aesthetic forms, it is also a technological package" (Anderson 1999: 122).

Implicit in all this is the "essential homogenization of a social space and experience now uniformly modernized and mechanized" and "the triumphant achievement" of "standardization and conformity" (Jameson 1991a: 366). This has been achieved by the triumphant intervention of the new technology of computer, communication and television. Television, Perry Anderson says, is the most significant of these which has "no modernist past" (1999: 122). Television and video are "closely related to the dominant computers and information technology" of late capitalism (Jameson 1991a: 76). The "whole or total flow" of images emanating from the flat surface of this purely postmodern machine is symptomatic of the postmodernist concern with depthlessness referred to above. It is Jameson's argument that the television and video represent challenges to the aesthetic forms of modernism, to the contemporary dominance of language and the conceptual instruments associated with linguistic and semiotic sciences. In its total flow the viewing subject is assimilated absolutely into the
mechanical structure of the video medium. What Jameson means is that while other aesthetic forms of representation like the novel and the film produce effects of “real time” even when actually distorting it, the television and video lock the viewer into the time of the medium which is the real time of the machine itself spooling to its end but at the same time producing the impression of fictive time out of its rigorously non fictive language (1991a: 68-70). Steven Connor says that there is a difference in Jameson’s use of the concept of “total flow” from that of Raymond Williams who he is drawing from. Williams uses the term, writes Connor, to “describe the experience of broadcast TV, which works over the course of an evening or period of viewing rather than being organized into clearly separated programmes.” But Jameson uses “total flow” to “define the particular recalcitrance of a certain kind of avant-garde video-text, which presents itself as ‘fragments in flight’, and as a kind of pure and empty duration” (Connor 1989: 164).

In this almost uninterrupted flow of images flashing across the flat, mini screen, Jameson observes, there is a “blockage of fresh thinking,” and a “structural exclusion of memory” with the result that nothing seems to “haunt” the viewer’s mind or “leaves its afterimages” and, thus, “critical distance” is lost (1991a: 70-71). David Harvey’s views on television and its effects are very much similar to Jameson’s. He says that in the age of television which is a product of late capitalism there has emerged “an attachment to surfaces rather than roots, to collage rather than in-depth work, to superimposed quoted images rather than worked surfaces, to a collapsed sense of time and space rather than solidly achieved cultural artifact” (1989: 61). Television presents all kinds of events and
achievements in the living or drawing room, divorced from material history as simultaneously existing phenomena equal in importance. This is the reason why Harvey says that the media, of which television is the most influential, have to be examined “in the context of the promotion of a culture of consumerism” (1989: 61). Jameson is doing exactly that in discussing the “symbiosis between the media and the market” in “the omnipresent consumerism of the postmodern today” (Jameson 1991a: 275, 274).

Jameson argues that there is a transcoding taking place in this new nexus of the media and the market where the codes of the two systems are “identified in such a way as to allow the libidinal energies of the one to suffuse the other, without, however . . . producing a synthesis” (1991a: 275). In “the tendential identification of the commodity with its image,” he says, the boundaries of the two systems are “washed over” and “an ind differentiation of levels” takes place. This is a characteristic postmodern de-differentiation where the older differentiation between the thing and its concept is done away with and “economics and culture, base and superstructure” become one. The commodities themselves become the content of the media image and the “same referent seems to maintain in both domains.” In other words, the products are diffused throughout the space and time of the programme segments in such a way that one is not sure when the “narrative segment has ended and the commercial has begun” (1991a: 275). The new technology of reproduction epitomized by the computer and information technology affords a “technological bonus of pleasure” and promotes the “consumption of the very process of consumption itself” in which the pleasure provided by the machinery is “ritually devoured at each session of official media consumption itself” (1991a: 276).
Another feature of the symbiosis of the media and the market reverses the process which Guy Debord implies when he says that the image is the final form of reification. Jameson observes:

[It is not the commercial products of the market which in advertising become images but rather the very entertainment and narrative processes of commercial television, which are, in their turn, reified and turned into so many commodities: from the serial narrative itself . . . to what the camera shots do to space, story, characters and fashion. (1991a: 276)]

As a result categories like “fiction” and “reality” have become obsolete and a “new realm of image reality” that is both factual and fictional has emerged which, like the classical sphere of culture, is “semiautonomous and floats above reality.” But in the classical period “reality persisted independently” of the cultural sphere. On the contrary, the cultural sphere, today, cannot boast of an autonomous mode of existence. Jameson’s argument, in short, is that in late capitalism the contents of the media have become commodities and in their symbiotic nexus the market and the media are affiliated in such a fashion that the two are indistinguishable (1991a: 277).

This new symbiotic relationship overcomes spatial and temporal constraints and helps capitalist forces in facilitating their operations across the world and in creating a global market for their goods and services. They also serve in the production of hegemonic ideology which, Stuart Hall says, is accomplished “by means of winning the active consent of those classes and groups who were subordinated” by the hegemonic powers. Media, he continues, are key actors in the production of consent--- at once free of
direct control by powerful social groups while also subject to working within limits and conditions neither of their choosing nor within their direct control (1982: 85). The dominance of the capitalist class is secured not by ideological compulsion but by cultural leadership which, today, is held by the powerful media. Thus, what Jameson means by the social function of the media has been negated by the increasing commercialization of information and the nexus between the media and the market. Media as an embodiment, or, as part, of the traditional public sphere comes directly into conflict with its social function when it identifies itself with the market. As part of the public sphere, the media have to address their audience as rational citizens. Rational beings are the last thing that the market forces seek. On the other hand, what they want are individual consumers and in alliance with the media they are engaged in what Harvey calls “the mobilization of desire and fantasy” (1989: 61). They produce what Herbert Schiller calls “corporate speech.” Using the principle of the right to “free flow of information” the multinational corporations pour their speech, amplified by the mass media circuits, into other areas, especially the Third World countries. Included in this corporate speech are popular media products as well as “the huge volume of financial, economic, and organizational data that allow the transnational corporate order to function.” Hence, corporate speech, Schiller says, is “indistinguishable from corporate global activity” (1989: 318-27).

There is no doubt that corporate speech and its dissemination across the globe have been made possible by the new postmodern technology and the symbiosis of the media and the market. Based on the use of, and approach to technology also postmodernism is distinct from modernism. Jameson describes modernism as “the
experience and the result of *incomplete* modernization*” and the postmodern, he says, “begins to make its appearance whenever the modernization process no longer has archaic features and obstacles to overcome and has triumphantly implanted its own autonomous logic” (1991a: 366). As a result, the very excitement, thrill and pleasure the new inventions generated in the earlier periods have disappeared and technological innovation has now become such a boringly routine commercial imperative that Anderson calls it “this banalization” of technique. “The charisma of technique,” he writes, has been “transformed into routine, and lost its magnetic powers for art” (1999: 87). This is the paradigm shift in technology that Clint Burnham speaks of, reference to which has already been made. Anderson says that if modernism was “seized by images of machinery” postmodernism is “sway to a machinery of images” (1999: 88). He also refers to Julian Stallabrass who, in his *Gargantua*, considers digital photography, cyberspace exchange, computer games, graffiti and television as “prefigurations of a future mass culture that threatens to supersede the spectacle itself . . . by effacing the boundaries between the perceived and the enacted altogether.” This book, he continues, “fulfills Jameson’s call for a sequel to Adorno and Horkheimer’s ‘Culture Industry’ to address subsequent forms of manipulation” (1999: 122). Thus, he concludes, the new technology conjures “the possibility of a self-sealed universe of simulation capable of veiling— and so insulating—— the order of capital more completely than ever” (1999: 123).

It has already been suggested that there is a popular, if not populist, dimension to postmodern culture and its art and aesthetics. It is the technological revolution that helped the dissolution of the barriers in the way of cultural consumption and the resultant
plebeianization of culture referred to above. The role played by the media in the popularization of culture and in the dissolution of the barriers between a high elite culture and a low mass culture is also very significant. It is important to understand that Jameson does not approve of the sterile binary opposition that ethical and moral value judgements and ahistorical aesthetic critique of high-low/mass culture have valorized. He emphasizes the need for "a genuinely historical and dialectical approach" which "demands that we read high and mass culture as objectively related and dialectically interdependent phenomena, as twin and inseparable forms of the fission of aesthetic production under capitalism" (1992a: 14).

Traditionally, mass culture has been explained as commercial culture or "popular culture" that caters to the wider strata of the population as against a high culture which caters to a minority of intellectuals and is dubbed an "establishment phenomenon" associated closely with the academies (Jameson 1992a: 9). This is a position which invokes social value and suggests that because of its popularity mass culture is more authentic than high culture whose high priests claim that because it is autonomous it is incomparable and superior to the degraded popular culture. Contrary to this proposition in which the binary system of value operates, Jameson argues that a genuinely historical and dialectical analysis would show that both high and mass culture are "twin and inseparable forms of the fission of aesthetic production under capitalism," and "objectively related and dialectically interdependent phenomena" (1992a: 14). The high culture that is the dialectical opposite of mass culture in this analysis is nothing other than modernism. He explains:
Capitalism systematically dissolves the fabric of all cohesive social groups without exception, including its own ruling class and thereby problematizes aesthetic production and linguistic invention which have their sources in group life. The result . . . is the dialectical fission of older aesthetic expression into two modes, modernism and mass culture, equally dissociated from group praxis. (1992a: 23)

Thus, it can be seen that there is a “profound structural interrelatedness” between the two and they share the same “social and aesthetic situation” to which they respond differently. And that difference is that while commodity production exerts an “all-informing structural influence” on mass culture, for modernism “the commodity form signals the vocation” to devise “an aesthetic language incapable of offering commodity satisfaction, and resistant to instrumentalization” (1992a: 14-16).

Jameson’s historical analysis helps us to understand that both modernism and mass culture have almost the same social content and raw materials to which they respond in different ways. When the market begins to penetrate the aesthetic realm the “institutional status of artistic consumption and production vanishes” and art “becomes one more branch of commodity production” (1992a: 18). With the “universal commodification of our object world” in late capitalism the distinction between high and mass culture has vanished and art is produced mainly to be consumed (1992a: 12). But mass culture is not to be understood as a “group of commercial products but as a realm of social life irrespective of the enormous changes and mutations undergone by ‘mass culture’ since wartime Hollywood and on into postmodernism” (1992b: 107). It is to be
grasped not as "empty distraction or 'mere' false consciousness" but as "a transformational work on social and political anxieties and fantasies." A mass cultural text is not just an "ideological manipulation" but also a medium in which "genuine social and historical content" is "tapped and given some initial expression" to be manipulated and contained by capitalist interests (1992a: 29). This shows that mass culture is not only ideological but it includes Utopian impulses as well.

Jameson reiterates that we can do justice to this "ideological function" of mass culture only if we are willing to acknowledge its "Utopian or transcendent potential":

> that dimension of even the most degraded type of mass culture which remains implicitly, and no matter how faintly, negative and critical of the social order from which, as a product and commodity, it springs. . . . [T]he works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well. (1992a: 29)

Thus, the ideological has to be understood as Utopian as well. Mass audiences are not merely seduced to consuming reactionary culture but they derive pleasure out of it. The acquiescence of the audience is rewarded with a compensatory gratification. In support of his argument Jameson quotes Stanley Aronowitz who observes that mass culture creates "a system of pseudo-gratifications" and thus "functions as a sort of social regulator." This is done by the attempt to absorb "tensions arising out of everyday life and to deflect frustrations which might otherwise actualize themselves in opposition to the system into channels which serve the system." Aronowitz says that these tensions are generated by "the contradictions between the promises" of the capitalist system and "the reality of
gratification provided and between the increasing socialization of production and the atomization of individuals within the mass society” (quoted in Jameson 1976b: 58). The consumption of the mass culture, thus, is “no longer diversions or distractions but the unconscious or semiconscious exercise of collective fantasy,” writes Jameson. Mass culture taps such sources of collective fantasy and provides itself with “an energy power” and “puts itself in a position to manipulate and to control such energies as well” (1976b: 58). Jameson refers to the suggestion in Ernst Bloch’s work that even a cultural product that distracts us can only realize that aim by “fastening and harnessing our attention and our imaginative energies in some positive way and by some type of genuine, albeit disguised and distorted content” (1976b: 57-8). Such content is the Utopian content of even the most degraded type of cultural product. That is the reason why Jameson observes that ideological manipulation and Utopian gratification are inseparable aspects of all cultural texts. They embody the class relations existing in a social order and it is imperative for any radical form of criticism to analyze the dynamics of class consciousness and to unravel the political unconscious of those texts.

Jameson’s proposition of the Utopian dimension of cultural texts can be considered the logical extension of his observation that “all class consciousness--- or in other words, all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling-class consciousness just as much as that of oppositional or oppressed classes--- is in its very nature Utopian” (1981a: 289). What Jameson means is that class consciousness which is defined in relation to another class is Utopian to the extent that it expresses the unity of a collectivity. It is not unnatural for human beings to imagine the form and nature
of a society without repression and exploitation, without commodification and reification and to become conscious of such a social order "is also an objective possibility, a property of reality and of the current situation" (1994a: 75).

Thus, the ideological and Utopian aspects are common to both forms of culture and it is not surprising that "the historical separation between high and mass culture" took place at the historical moment of modernism. But Jameson emphasizes that it is important that works such as that of Shakespeare, Dickens, Balzac, Chaplin and Hitchcock which unite "a wide 'popular' audience with high aesthetic quality" have to be distinguished from what is now popularly categorized as mass culture (1992a: 15). Genuine popular art like the folk art of the past was "in fact the 'organic' expression" of the collective experience of "a unified social group with its own cultural specificity" which cannot in any way be identified with products of mass culture. (1992a: 15). The reifying powers of capitalism have fragmented and instrumentally reorganized and atomized the social groups and all aspects of human life to meet its demands "by way of the corrosive action of the universal commodification and the market system" (1992a: 15). Consequently, Jameson argues, the "popular" does not exist any more "except under very specific and marginalized conditions" (1992a: 15). So, in Jameson's theory, "what separates and differentiates these two realms [is] what unites them," writes Sean Homer (1998: 23). Emphasizing that high culture and mass culture are products of "antithetical formal reactions" to a "common social situation," Jameson argues that both have the same content which is transformed in two distinctly different ways. He writes:
Both modernism and mass culture entertain relations of repression with the fundamental social anxieties and concerns, hopes and blind spots, ideological antinomies and fantasies of disaster, which are their raw material; only where modernism tends to handle this material by producing compensatory structures of various kinds, mass culture represses them by narrative construction of imaginary resolutions and by the projection of an optical illusion of social harmony. (1992a: 25-6)

Ideologically, Jameson says, it could be said that mass cultural artifacts project “a ‘solution’ to social contradictions” (1992a: 32).

Their Utopian function projects a fantasy message, as is seen in a movie like The Godfather where “the disintegration of the dominant communities” is explained in terms of a “deterioration of the family, the growth of permissiveness, and the loss of the authority of the father” and it is suggested that social reintegration can be achieved “by way of the patriarchal and authoritarian family of the past” (1992a: 33). Thus the ideological narrative impulse reverses the utopian one:

the ideological myth of the Mafia ends up generating the authentically Utopian vision of revolutionary liberation; while the degraded Utopian content of the family paradigm ultimately unmask[s] itself as the survival of more archaic forms of repression and sexism and violence. (1992a: 34)

Thus, in Jameson’s view, mass culture articulates social conflicts and tensions, contemporary fears and anxieties and Utopian hopes, and, attempts containment and
reassurance at the ideological level. Douglas Kellner says that Jameson’s analysis of the mass cultural artifacts shows that they contain “implicit and even explicit critiques” of capitalism and its social formations and their problems, or “visions of freedom, and happiness which can provide critical perspectives on the unhappiness and unfreedom” in contemporary society (1989b: 110).

The high modernist concept of elite culture is also to be redefined in the context of postmodernism, observes Jameson. The Frankfurt School’s idea that the traditional modernist art is the “locus of some genuinely critical and subversive ‘autonomous’ aesthetic production” is dubbed “unsatisfactory” by Jameson (1992a: 14). As mentioned above, Jameson regards mass culture and high culture as different responses to the same historical conjuncture that produced them. But it is true that modernism “proposed an alternative, oppositional, and Utopian culture whose class base was problematic” and that it never was “hegemonic” or “dominant” (Jameson 1991a: 318). Such an analysis which takes into consideration the historical conditions of the two modes suggests that Angela McRobbie’s complaint that Jameson does not “include” in his analysis “the historical conditions of modern production which also marked out the long moment of modernism” is unfounded (1995: 30). It also proves that Thomas Huhn’s allegation that “Jameson is unwilling to distinguish reified from non-reified form” and because of this “he cannot... substantively distinguish modernism from mass culture” is baseless (1989: 237). Historically, Jameson argues, modernism is distinct from postmodernism. In postmodernism, he says, there is “an increasing interpenetration of high and mass cultures” that erases the boundaries that separated the two forms of aesthetic production.
in the earlier period (1992a: 14). Today, as Clint Burnham remarks, "almost everyone is a member of the masses," a position that is to be viewed "dialectically." That "we are all in the masses" is an objective characteristic of postmodernism means that our "interpellation as consumers of mass culture is a serious one." It also means that "the fate of pre-capitalist 'folk culture' is extremely uncertain." The reason is, Burnham says, one cannot decide if it belongs to urban museums, or if it is "an oppositional reterritorialization by diasporic ethnicities, or an atrophied, or absent, member of commodified social Body without Organs?" (1995: 202-03). It is this undecidability that characterizes postmodernism. Unlike modernism, as has already been mentioned, postmodernism is the cultural dominant of the late capitalist period. And, in Jameson's theory, this is what distinguishes it from modernism. His theory of the cultural logic is "sensitive to historical discontinuities and attempts to break up abstract, monolithic periods" into their "differentiated stages," and, while mapping the specific aspects of each it registers the "extreme eclecticism and heterogeneity" of the latest stage (Best 1989: 353-4).

It has been mentioned above that in periodizing the concept of postmodernism Jameson makes use of the Marxian category of the mode of production. He acknowledges that "a structural examination and positioning of the superstructural levels of a given social formation" and the analysis of "the function and space assigned to culture" within it is an imperative implied by the concept (1984e: xv). He writes:

The concept of mode of production ... sets us the task to come to grips ... with our own modern or postmodern world, and in particular to consider the possibility of a changing status of culture or the
superstructures within it, something that would also alter the conceptions we hold of hegemony, of cultural politics and resistance, and of possible forms of revolutionary transformation. (1982e: 7)

The above discussion would have made it clear that the different status mass culture and high culture had in the modern period has been eroded in late capitalism and that in postmodernism there is no such distinction. What we have, on the contrary, is a situation where everything is cultural, but neither high nor low. The acculturation of domains considered distinct and autonomous in modernity has created a situation in which culture has become so “profoundly economic or commodity oriented” that any consideration of the postmodern situation can be taken as “statements about late capitalism or about the politics of globalization” (Jameson 1998a: 73). Jameson’s analysis of the postmodern has shown that the colonization and subsumption of the various spheres of the social by capital has generated a new historical situation which demands new types of political approaches and new forms of political praxis. In this sense his critique is an exploration of the possibilities of a cultural politics potent enough to resist the repressive and reifying powers of late capitalism and posits a utopian vision contrary to the dystopian powers that are hegemonic in postmodern culture. This radical political potential of Jameson’s theory becomes more apparent when it is placed in the context of, and discussed in relation to, two other important theories of postmodernism, namely that of Jean Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. The next chapter attempts a comparative study of their theories of the postmodern.