PEAKS, SITES & CYCLES

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Up and down with ecology— the "issue-attention cycle"

ANTHONY DOWNS

AMERICAN public attention rarely remains sharply focused upon any one domestic issue for very long—even if it involves a continuing problem of crucial importance to society. Instead, a systematic "issue-attention cycle" seems strongly to influence public attitudes and behavior concerning most key domestic problems. Each of these problems suddenly leaps into prominence, remains there for a short time, and then—though still largely unresolved—gradually fades from the center of public attention. A study of the way this cycle operates provides insights into how long public attention is likely to remain sufficiently focused upon any given issue to generate enough political pressure to cause effective change.

The shaping of American attitudes toward improving the quality of our environment provides both an example and a potential test of this "issue-attention cycle." In the past few years, there has been a remarkably widespread upsurge of interest in the quality of our environment. This change in public attitudes has been much faster than any changes in the environment itself. What has caused this shift in public attention? Why did this issue suddenly assume so high a priority among our domestic concerns? And how long will the American public sustain high-intensity interest in ecological mat-

ters? I believe that answers to these questions can be derived from analyzing the "issue-attention cycle."

The dynamics of the "issue-attention cycle"

Public perception of most "crises" in American domestic life does not reflect changes in real conditions as much as it reflects the operation of a systematic cycle of heightening public interest and then increasing boredom with major issues. This "issue-attention cycle" is rooted both in the nature of certain domestic problems and in the way major communications media interact with the public. The cycle itself has five stages, which may vary in duration depending upon the particular issue involved, but which almost always occur in the following sequence:

1. **The pre-problem stage.** This prevails when some highly undesirable social condition exists but has not yet captured much public attention, even though some experts or interest groups may already be alarmed by it. *Usually, objective conditions regarding the problem are far worse during the pre-problem stage than they are by the time the public becomes interested in it.* For example, this was true of racism, poverty, and malnutrition in the United States.

2. **Alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm.** As a result of some dramatic series of events (like the ghetto riots in 1965 to 1967), or for other reasons, the public suddenly becomes both aware of and alarmed about the evils of a particular problem. This alarmed discovery is invariably accompanied by euphoric enthusiasm about society's ability to "solve this problem" or "do something effective" within a relatively short time. The combination of alarm and confidence results in part from the strong public pressure in America for political leaders to claim that every problem can be "solved." This outlook is rooted in the great American tradition of optimistically viewing most obstacles to social progress as *external* to the structure of society itself. The implication is that every obstacle can be eliminated and every problem solved *without any fundamental reordering of society itself,* if only we devote sufficient effort to it. In older and perhaps wiser cultures, there is an underlying sense of irony or even pessimism which springs from a widespread and often confirmed belief that many problems cannot be "solved" *at all* in any complete sense. Only recently has this more pessimistic view begun to develop in our culture.

3. **Realizing the cost of significant progress.** The third stage consists of a gradually spreading realization that the cost of "solving" the

problem is very high indeed. Really doing so would not only take a great deal of money but would also require major sacrifices by large groups in the population. The public thus begins to realize that part of the problem results from arrangements that are providing significant benefits to someone—often to millions. For example, traffic congestion and a great deal of smog are caused by increasing automobile usage. Yet this also enhances the mobility of millions of Americans who continue to purchase more vehicles to obtain these advantages.

In certain cases, technological progress can eliminate some of the undesirable results of a problem without causing any major restructuring of society or any loss of present benefits by others (except for higher money costs). In the optimistic American tradition, such a technological solution is initially assumed to be possible in the case of nearly every problem. Our most pressing social problems, however, usually involve either deliberate or unconscious exploitation of one group in society by another, or the prevention of one group from enjoying something that others want to keep for themselves. For example, most upper-middle-class whites value geographic separation from poor people and blacks. Hence any equality of access to the advantages of suburban living for the poor and for blacks cannot be achieved without some sacrifice by middle-class whites of the "benefits" of separation. The increasing recognition that there is this type of relationship between the problem and its "solution" constitutes a key part of the third stage.

4. **Gradual decline of intense public interest.** The previous stage becomes almost imperceptibly transformed into the fourth stage: a gradual decline in the intensity of public interest in the problem. As more and more people realize how difficult, and how costly to themselves, a solution to the problem would be, three reactions set in. Some people just get discouraged. Others feel positively threatened by thinking about the problem; so they suppress such thoughts. Still others become bored by the issue. Most people experience some combination of these feelings. Consequently, public desire to keep attention focused on the issue wanes. And by this time, some other issue is usually entering Stage Two; so it exerts a more novel and thus more powerful claim upon public attention.

5. **The post-problem stage.** In the final stage, an issue that has been replaced at the center of public concern moves into a prolonged limbo—a twilight realm of lesser attention or spasmodic recurrences of interest. However, the issue now has a different relation to public attention than that which prevailed in the "pre-problem" stage. For

one thing, during the time that interest was sharply focused on this problem, new institutions, programs, and policies may have been created to help solve it. These entities almost always persist and often have some impact even after public attention has shifted elsewhere. For example, during the early stages of the "War on Poverty," the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was established, and it initiated many new programs. Although poverty has now faded as a central public issue, OEO still exists. Moreover, many of its programs have experienced significant success, even though funded at a far lower level than would be necessary to reduce poverty decisively.

Any major problem that once was elevated to national prominence may sporadically recapture public interest; or important aspects of it may become attached to some other problem that subsequently dominates center stage. Therefore, problems that have gone through the cycle almost always receive a higher average level of attention, public effort, and general concern than those still in the pre-discovery stage.

Which problems are likely to go through the cycle?

Not all major social problems go through this "issue-attention cycle." Those which do generally possess to some degree three specific characteristics. First, the majority of persons in society are not suffering from the problem nearly as much as some minority (a *numerical* minority, not necessarily an *ethnic* one). This is true of many pressing social problems in America today—poverty, racism, poor public transportation, low-quality education, crime, drug addiction, and unemployment, among others. The number of persons suffering from each of these ills is very large *absolutely*—in the millions. But the numbers are small *relatively*—usually less than 15 per cent of the entire population. Therefore, most people do not suffer directly enough from such problems to keep their attention riveted on them.

Second, the sufferings caused by the problem are generated by social arrangements that provide significant benefits to a majority or a powerful minority of the population. For example, Americans who own cars—plus the powerful automobile and highway lobbies—receive short-run benefits from the prohibition of using motor-fuel tax revenues for financing public transportation systems, even though such systems are desperately needed by the urban poor.

Third, the problem has no intrinsically exciting qualities—or no longer has them. When big-city racial riots were being shown nightly on the nation's television screens, public attention naturally focused

upon their causes and consequences. But when they ceased (or at least the media stopped reporting them so intensively), public interest in the problems related to them declined sharply. Similarly, as long as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was able to stage a series of ever more thrilling space shots, culminating in the worldwide television spectacular of Americans walking on the moon, it generated sufficient public support to sustain high-level Congressional appropriations. But NASA had nothing half so dramatic for an encore, and repetition of the same feat proved less and less exciting (though a near disaster on the third try did revive audience interest). So NASA's Congressional appropriations plummeted.

A problem must be dramatic and exciting to maintain public interest because news is "consumed" by much of the American public (and by publics everywhere) largely as a form of entertainment. As such, it competes with other types of entertainment for a share of each person's time. Every day, there is a fierce struggle for space in the highly limited universe of newsprint and television viewing time. Each issue vies not only with all other social problems and public events, but also with a multitude of "non-news" items that are often far more pleasant to contemplate. These include sporting news, weather reports, crossword puzzles, fashion accounts, comics, and daily horoscopes. In fact, the amount of television time and newspaper space devoted to sports coverage, as compared to international events, is a striking commentary on the relative value that the public places on knowing about these two subjects.

When all three of the above conditions exist concerning a given problem that has somehow captured public attention, the odds are great that it will soon move through the entire "issue-attention cycle" —and therefore will gradually fade from the center of the stage. The first condition means that most people will not be continually reminded of the problem by their own suffering from it. The second condition means that solving the problem requires sustained attention and effort, plus fundamental changes in social institutions or behavior. This in turn means that significant attempts to solve it are threatening to important groups in society. The third condition means that the media's sustained focus on this problem soon bores a majority of the public. As soon as the media realize that their emphasis on this problem is threatening many people and boring even more, they will shift their focus to some "new" problem. This is particularly likely in America because nearly all the media are run for profit, and they make the most money by appealing to the largest

possible audiences. Thus, as Marshall McLuhan has pointed out, it is largely the audience itself—the American public—that "manages the news" by maintaining or losing interest in a given subject. As long as this pattern persists, we will continue to be confronted by a stream of "crises" involving particular social problems. Each will rise into public view, capture center stage for a while, and then gradually fade away as it is replaced by more fashionable issues moving into their "crisis" phases.

The rise of environmental concern

Public interest in the quality of the environment now appears to be about midway through the "issue-attention cycle." Gradually, more and more people are beginning to realize the immensity of the social and financial costs of cleaning up our air and water and of preserving and restoring open spaces. Hence much of the enthusiasm about prompt, dramatic improvement in the environment is fading. There is still a great deal of public interest, however, so it cannot be said that the "post-problem stage" has been reached. In fact, as will be discussed later, the environmental issue may well retain more attention than social problems that affect smaller proportions of the population. Before evaluating the prospects of long-term interest in the environment, though, it is helpful to analyze how environmental concern passed through the earlier stages in the "issue-attention cycle."

The most obvious reason for the initial rise in concern about the environment is the recent deterioration of certain easily perceived environmental conditions. A whole catalogue of symptoms can be arrayed, including ubiquitous urban smog, greater proliferation of solid waste, oceanic oil spills, greater pollution of water supplies by DDT and other poisons, the threatened disappearance of many wildlife species, and the overcrowding of a variety of facilities from commuter expressways to National Parks. Millions of citizens observing these worsening conditions became convinced that *someone* ought to "do something" about them. But "doing something" to reduce environmental deterioration is not easy. For many of our environmental problems have been caused by developments which are highly valued by most Americans.

The very abundance of our production and consumption of material goods is responsible for an immense amount of environmental pollution. For example, electric power generation, if based on fossil fuels, creates smoke and air pollution or, if based on nuclear fuels, causes

rising water temperatures. Yet a key foundation for rising living standards in the United States during this century has been the doubling of electric power consumption every 10 years. So more pollution is the price we have paid for the tremendous advantages of being able to use more and more electricity. Similarly, much of the litter blighting even our remotest landscapes stems from the convenience of using "throw-away packages." Thus, to regard environmental pollution as a purely external negative factor would be to ignore its direct linkage with material advantages most citizens enjoy.

Another otherwise favorable development that has led to rising environmental pollution is what I would call the democratization of privilege. Many more Americans are now able to participate in certain activities that were formerly available only to a small, wealthy minority. Some members of that minority are incensed by the consequences of having their formerly esoteric advantages spread to "the common man." The most frequent irritant caused by the democratization of privilege is congestion. Rising highway congestion, for example, is denounced almost everywhere. Yet its main cause is the rapid spread of automobile ownership and usage. In 1950, about 59 per cent of all families had at least one automobile, and seven per cent owned two or more. By 1968, the proportion of families owning at least one automobile had climbed to 79 per cent, and 26 per cent had two or more cars. In the 10 years from 1960 to 1970, the total number of registered automotive vehicles rose by 35 million (or 47 per cent), as compared to a rise in human population of 23 million (or only 13 per cent). Moreover, it has been estimated that motor vehicles cause approximately 60 per cent of all air pollution. So the tremendous increase in smog does not result primarily from larger population, but rather from the democratization of automobile ownership.

The democratization of privilege also causes crowding in National Parks, rising suburban housing density, the expansion of new subdivisions into formerly picturesque farms and orchards, and the transformation of once tranquil resort areas like Waikiki Beach into forests of high-rise buildings. It is now difficult for the wealthy to flee from busy urban areas to places of quiet seclusion, because so many more people can afford to go with them. *The elite's environmental deterioration is often the common man's improved standard of living.*

Our soaring aspirations

A somewhat different factor which has contributed to greater concern with environmental quality is a marked increase in our aspira-

tions and standards concerning what our environment ought to be like. In my opinion, rising dissatisfaction with the "system" in the United States does not result primarily from poorer performance by that system. Rather, it stems mainly from a rapid escalation of our aspirations as to what the system's performance ought to be. Nowhere is this phenomenon more striking than in regard to the quality of the environment. One hundred years ago, white Americans were eliminating whole Indian tribes without a qualm. Today, many serious-minded citizens seek to make important issues out of the potential disappearance of the whooping crane, the timber wolf, and other exotic creatures. Meanwhile, thousands of Indians in Brazil are still being murdered each year—but American conservationists are not focusing on that human massacre. Similarly, some aesthetes decry "galloping sprawl" in metropolitan fringe areas, while they ignore acres of rat-infested housing a few miles away. Hence the escalation of our environmental aspirations is more selective than might at first appear.

Yet regarding many forms of pollution, we are now rightly upset over practices and conditions that have largely been ignored for decades. An example is our alarm about the dumping of industrial wastes and sewage into rivers and lakes. This increase in our environmental aspirations is part of a general cultural phenomenon stimulated both by our success in raising living standards and by the recent emphases of the communications media. Another cause of the rapid rise in interest in environmental pollution is the "explosion" of alarmist rhetoric on this subject. According to some well-publicized experts, all life on earth is threatened by an "environmental crisis." Some claim human life will end within three decades or less if we do not do something drastic about current behavior patterns.

Are things really that bad? Frankly, I am not enough of an ecological expert to know. But I am skeptical concerning all highly alarmist views because so many previous prophets of doom and disaster have been so wrong concerning many other so-called "crises" in our society.

There are two reasonable definitions of "crisis." One kind of crisis consists of a rapidly deteriorating situation moving towards a single disastrous event at some future moment. The second kind consists of a more gradually deteriorating situation that will eventually pass some subtle "point of no return." At present, I do not believe either of these definitions applies to most American domestic problems. Although many social critics hate to admit it, the American "system" actually serves the majority of citizens rather well in terms of most indicators of well-being. Concerning such things as real income, per-

sonal mobility, variety and choice of consumption patterns, longevity, health, leisure time, and quality of housing, most Americans are better off today than they have ever been and extraordinarily better off than most of mankind. What is *not* improving is the gap between society's performance and what most people—or at least highly vocal minorities—believe society *ought* to be doing to solve these problems. Our aspirations and standards have risen far faster than the beneficial outputs of our social system. Therefore, although most Americans, including most of the poor, are receiving more now, they are enjoying it less.

This conclusion should not be confused with the complacency of some super-patriots. It would be unrealistic to deny certain important negative trends in American life. Some conditions are indeed getting worse for nearly everyone. Examples are air quality and freedom from thievery. Moreover, congestion and environmental deterioration might forever destroy certain valuable national amenities if they are not checked. Finally, there has probably been a general rise in personal and social anxiety in recent years. I believe this is due to increased tensions caused by our rapid rate of technical and social change, plus the increase in worldwide communication through the media. These developments rightly cause serious and genuine concern among millions of Americans.

The future of the environmental issue

Concern about the environment has passed through the first two stages of the "issue-attention cycle" and is by now well into the third. In fact, we have already begun to move toward the fourth stage, in which the intensity of public interest in environmental improvement must inexorably decline. And this raises an interesting question: Will the issue of environmental quality then move on into the "post-problem" stage of the cycle?

My answer to this question is: Yes, but not soon, because certain characteristics of this issue will protect it from the rapid decline in public interest typical of many other recent issues. First of all, many kinds of environmental pollution are much more visible and more clearly threatening than most other social problems. This is particularly true of air pollution. The greater the apparent threat from visible forms of pollution and the more vividly this can be dramatized, the more public support environmental improvement will receive and the longer it will sustain public interest. Ironically, the cause of ecologists would therefore benefit from an environmental disaster like a "killer

smog" that would choke thousands to death in a few days. Actually, this is nothing new; every cause from early Christianity to the Black Panthers has benefited from martyrs. Yet even the most powerful symbols lose their impact if they are constantly repeated. The piteous sight of an oil-soaked seagull or a dead soldier pales after it has been viewed even a dozen times. Moreover, some of the worst environmental threats come from forms of pollution that are invisible. Thus, our propensity to focus attention on what is most visible may cause us to clean up the pollution we can easily perceive while ignoring even more dangerous but hidden threats.

Pollution is also likely to be kept in the public eye because it is an issue that threatens almost everyone, not just a small percentage of the population. Since it is not politically divisive, politicians can safely pursue it without fearing adverse repercussions. Attacking environmental pollution is therefore much safer than attacking racism or poverty. For an attack upon the latter antagonizes important blocs of voters who benefit from the sufferings of others or at least are not threatened enough by such suffering to favor spending substantial amounts of their money to reduce it.

A third strength of the environmental issue is that much of the "blame" for pollution can be attributed to a small group of "villains" whose wealth and power make them excellent scapegoats. Environmental defenders can therefore "courageously" attack these scapegoats without antagonizing most citizens. Moreover, at least in regard to air pollution, that small group actually has enough power greatly to reduce pollution if it really tries. If leaders of the nation's top auto-producing, power-generating, and fuel-supplying firms would change their behavior significantly, a drastic decline in air pollution could be achieved very quickly. This has been demonstrated at many locations already.

Gathering support for attacking any problem is always easier if its ills can be blamed on a small number of "public enemies"—as is shown by the success of Ralph Nader. This tactic is especially effective if the "enemies" exhibit extreme wealth and power, eccentric dress and manners, obscene language, or some other uncommon traits. Then society can aim its outrage at a small, alien group without having to face up to the need to alter its own behavior. It is easier to find such scapegoats for almost all forms of pollution than for other major problems like poverty, poor housing, or racism. Solutions to those problems would require millions of Americans to change their own behavior patterns, to accept higher taxes, or both.

The possibility that technological solutions can be devised for most

pollution problems may also lengthen the public prominence of this issue. To the extent that pollution can be reduced through technological change, most people's basic attitudes, expectations, and behavior patterns will not have to be altered. The traumatic difficulties of achieving major institutional change could thus be escaped through the "magic" of purely technical improvements in automobile engines, water purification devices, fuel composition, and sewage treatment facilities.

Financing the fight against pollution

Another aspect of anti-pollution efforts that will strengthen their political support is that most of the costs can be passed on to the public through higher product prices rather than higher taxes. Therefore, politicians can demand enforcement of costly environmental quality standards without paying the high political price of raising the required funds through taxes. True, water pollution is caused mainly by the actions of public bodies, especially municipal sewer systems, and effective remedies for this form of pollution require higher taxes or at least higher prices for public services. But the major costs of reducing most kinds of pollution can be added to product prices and thereby quietly shifted to the ultimate consumers of the outputs concerned. This is a politically painless way to pay for attacking a major social problem. In contrast, effectively combatting most social problems requires large-scale income redistribution attainable only through both higher taxes and higher transfer payments or subsidies. Examples of such politically costly problems are poverty, slum housing, low-quality health care for the poor, and inadequate public transportation.

Many ecologists oppose paying for a cleaner environment through higher product prices. They would rather force the polluting firms to bear the required costs through lower profits. In a few oligopolistic industries, like petroleum and automobile production, this might work. But in the long run, not much of the total cost could be paid this way without driving capital out of the industries concerned and thereby eventually forcing product prices upwards. Furthermore, it is just that those who use any given product should pay the full cost of making it—including the cost of avoiding excessive pollution in its production. Such payment is best made through higher product prices. In my opinion, it would be unwise in most cases to try to pay these costs by means of government subsidies in order to avoid shifting the load onto consumers. We need to conserve our politically

limited taxing capabilities to attack those problems that cannot be dealt with in any other way.

Still another reason why the cleaner-environment issue may last a long time is that it could generate a large private industry with strong vested interests in continued spending against pollution. Already dozens of firms with "eco-" or "environ-" in their names have sprung up to exploit supposedly burgeoning anti-pollution markets. In time, we might even generate an "environmental-industrial complex" about which some future President could vainly warn us in his retirement speech! Any issue gains longevity if its sources of political support and the programs related to it can be institutionalized in large bureaucracies. Such organizations have a powerful desire to keep public attention focused on the problems that support them. However, it is doubtful that the anti-pollution industry will ever come close to the defense industry in size and power. Effective anti-pollution activities cannot be carried out separately from society as a whole because they require changes in behavior by millions of people. In contrast, weapons are produced by an industry that imposes no behavioral changes (other than higher taxes) on the average citizen.

Finally, environmental issues may remain at center stage longer than most domestic issues because of their very ambiguity. "Improving the environment" is a tremendously broad and all-encompassing objective. Almost everyone can plausibly claim that his or her particular cause is another way to upgrade the quality of our life. This ambiguity will make it easier to form a majority-sized coalition favoring a variety of social changes associated with improving the environment. The inability to form such a coalition regarding problems that adversely affect only minority-sized groups usually hastens the exit of such problems from the center of public attention.

All the factors set forth above indicate that circumstances are unusually favorable for launching and sustaining major efforts to improve the quality of our environment. Yet we should not underestimate the American public's capacity to become bored—especially with something that does not immediately threaten them, or promise huge benefits for a majority, or strongly appeal to their sense of injustice. In the present mood of the nation, I believe most citizens do not want to confront the need for major social changes on any issues except those that seem directly to threaten them—such as crime and other urban violence. And even in regard to crime, the public does not yet wish to support really effective changes in our basic system of justice. The present Administration has apparently concluded that a relatively "low-profile" government—one that does not try to lead the

public into accepting truly significant institutional changes—will most please the majority of Americans at this point. Regardless of the accuracy of this view, if it remains dominant within the federal government, then no major environmental programs are likely to receive long-sustained public attention or support.

Some proponents of improving the environment are relying on the support of students and other young people to keep this issue at the center of public attention. Such support, however, is not adequate as a long-term foundation. Young people form a highly unstable base for the support of any policy because they have such short-lived "staying power." For one thing, they do not long enjoy the large amount of free time they possess while in college. Also, as new individuals enter the category of "young people" and older ones leave it, different issues are stressed and accumulated skills in marshaling opinion are dissipated. Moreover, the radicalism of the young has been immensely exaggerated by the media's tendency to focus attention upon those with extremist views. In their attitudes toward political issues, most young people are not very different from their parents.

There is good reason, then, to believe that the bundle of issues called "improving the environment" will also suffer the gradual loss of public attention characteristic of the later stages of the "issue-attention cycle." However, it will be eclipsed at a much slower rate than other recent domestic issues. So it may be possible to accomplish some significant improvements in environmental quality—if those seeking them work fast.

Chapter 3
Seen from the Window

(No! this title belongs to Colette. – I write: 'Seen from my windows, overlooking a junction in Paris, therefore overlooking the road.')[1]

Noise. Noises. Murmurs. When lives are lived and hence mixed together, they distinguish themselves badly from one another. Noise, chaotic, has no rhythm. However, the attentive ear begins to separate out, to distinguish the sources, to bring them back together by perceiving interactions. If we cease to listen to sounds and noises and instead listen to our bodies (the importance of which cannot be stressed too greatly), we normally grasp (hear, understand) neither the rhythms nor their associations, which nonetheless constitute us. It is only in suffering that a particular rhythm breaks apart, modified by illness. The analysis comes closer to pathology than habitual arrhythmia.

In order to grasp and analyse rhythms, it is necessary to get outside them, but not completely: be it through illness or a technique. A certain exteriority enables the analytic intellect to function. However, to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been ***grasped*** by it; one must *let oneself go*, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration. Like in music and the learning of a language (in which one only really understands the meanings and connections when one comes to *produce* them, which is to say, to produce spoken rhythms).

In order to *grasp* this fleeting object, which is not exactly an *object*, it is therefore necessary to situate oneself simultaneously inside and outside. A balcony does the job admirably, in relation to the street, and it is to this putting into perspective (of the street) that we owe the marvellous invention of balconies, and that of the terrace from which

one dominates the road and passers-by. In the absence of which you could content yourself with a window, on the condition that it does not overlook a sombre corner or a gloomy internal courtyard. Or a perennially deserted lawn.

From the window opening onto rue R. facing the famous P. Centre, there is no need to lean much to see into the distance.[2] To the right, the palace-centre P., the Forum, up as far as the (central) Bank of France. To the left up as far as the Archives. Perpendicular to this direction, the *Hôtel de Ville* and, on the other side, the *Arts et Métiers*. The whole of Paris, ancient and modern, traditional and creative, active and lazy.

He who walks down the street, over there, is immersed in the multiplicity of noises, murmurs, rhythms (including those of the body, but does he pay attention, except at the moment of crossing the street, when he has to calculate roughly the number of his steps?). By contrast, from the window, the noises distinguish themselves, the flows separate out, rhythms respond to one another. Towards the right, below, a traffic light. On red, cars at a standstill, the pedestrians cross, feeble murmurings, footsteps, confused voices. One does not chatter while crossing a dangerous junction under the threat of wild cats and elephants ready to charge forward, taxis, buses, lorries, various cars. Hence the relative silence in this crowd. A kind of soft murmuring, sometimes a cry, a call.

Therefore the people produce completely different noises when the cars stop: feet and words. From right to left and back again. And on the pavements along the perpendicular street. At the green light, steps and words stop. A second of silence and then it's the rush, the starting up of tens of cars, the rhythms of the old bangers speeding up as quickly as possible. At some risk: passers-by to the left, buses cutting across, other vehicles. Whereby a slowing down and restart (stage one: starting up – stage two: slowing down for the turn – stage three: brutal restart, foot down, top speed, excluding traffic jams . . .). The harmony between what one sees and what one hears (from the window) is remarkable. Strict concordance. Perhaps because the other side of the road is taken up by the immense shopping centre, nicknamed Beaubourg after the name that immortalised a president. On this side, people walking back and forth, numerous and in silence, tourists and those from the outskirts, a mix of young and old, alone and in couples, but no cars alongside culture. After the red light, all of a sudden it's the bellowing

charge of wild cats, big or small, monstrous lorries turning towards Bastille, the majority of small vehicles hurtling towards the *Hôtel de Ville*. The noise grows, grows in intensity and strength, at its peak becomes unbearable, though quite well borne by the stench of fumes. Then stop. Let's do it again, with more pedestrians. Two-minute intervals. Amidst the fury of the cars, the pedestrians cluster together, a clot here, a lump over there; grey dominates, with multicoloured flecks, and these heaps break apart for the race ahead. Sometimes, the old cars stall in the middle of the road and the pedestrians move around them like waves around a rock, though not without condemning the drivers of the badly placed vehicles with withering looks. Hard rhythms: alternations of silence and outburst, time both broken and accentuated, striking he who takes to listening from his window, which astonishes him more than the disparate movements of the crowds.

Disparate crowds, yes, tourists from faraway countries, Finland, Sweden, Portugal, whose cars but with difficulty find places to park, shoppers come from afar, wholesalers, lovers of art or novelties, people from the outskirts who stream in between the so-called peak hours, in such a way that *everybody*, the *world*, *is* always there around the huge metallic trinkets; boys and girls often go forth hand in hand, as if to support each other in this test of modernity, in the exploration of these meteorites fallen on old Paris, come from a planet several centuries ahead of our own, and on top of that a complete failure on the market! . . . Many among these young people walk, walk, without a break, do the tour of the sights, of Beaubourg, of the Forum: one sees them again and again, grouped or solitary; they walk indefatigably, chewing on gum or a sandwich. They only stop to stretch themselves out, no doubt exhausted, on the square itself, in the arcades of the Chiraqian Forum, or on the steps of the Fountain of the Innocent, which now serves only this purpose. The noise that pierces the ear comes not from passers-by, but from the engines pushed to the limit when starting up. No ear, no piece of apparatus could grasp this whole, this flux of metallic and carnal bodies. In order to grasp the rhythms, a bit of time, a sort of meditation on time, the city, people, is required.

Other, less lively, slower rhythms superimpose themselves on this inexorable rhythm, which hardly dies down at night: children leaving for school, some very noisy, even piercing screams of morning recognition. Then towards half past nine it's the arrival of the shoppers, followed

shortly by the tourists, in accordance, with exceptions (storms or advertising promotions), with a timetable that is almost always the same; the flows and conglomerations succeed one another: they get fatter or thinner but always agglomerate at the corners in order subsequently to clear a path, tangle and disentangle themselves amongst the cars.

These last rhythms (schoolchildren, shoppers, tourists) would be more **cyclical**, of large and simple intervals, at the heart of livelier, **alternating** rhythms, at brief intervals, cars, regulars, employees, bistro clients. The interaction of diverse, repetitive and different rhythms animates, as one says, the street and the neighbourhood. The linear, which is to say, in short, succession, consists of journeys to and fro: it combines with the cyclical, the movements of long intervals. The cyclical is social organisation manifesting itself. The linear is the daily grind, the routine, therefore the perpetual, made up of chance and encounters.

The night does not interrupt the diurnal rhythms but modifies them, and above all slows them down. However, even at three or four o'clock in the morning, there are always a few cars at the red light. Sometimes one of them, whose driver is coming back from a late night, goes straight through it. Other times, there is no-one at the lights, with their alternating flashes (red, amber, green), and the signal continues to function in the void, a despairing social mechanism marching inexorably through the desert, before the facades that dramatically proclaim their vocation as ruins.

Should a window suddenly light up, or on the contrary go dark, the solitary dreamer might ask himself – in vain – if it concerns a scene of illness or of love, if it is the movement [*geste*] of a child who gets up too early or of an insomniac. Never does a head, a face appear in the dozens and dozens of windows. Except if there is something going on in the street, an explosion, a fire engine that hurtles without stopping towards a call for help. In short, arrhythmia reigns, except for rare moments and circumstances.

From my window overlooking courtyards and gardens, the view and the supply of space are very different. Overlooking the gardens, the differences between habitual (daily, therefore linked to night and day) rhythms blur; they seem to disappear into a sculptural immobility. Except, of course, the sun and the shadows, the well lit and the gloomy corners, quite cursory contrasts. But look at those trees, those lawns and those groves. To your eyes they situate themselves in a permanence,

in a spatial simultaneity, in a coexistence. But look harder and longer. This simultaneity, up to a certain point, is only apparent: a surface, a spectacle. Go deeper, dig beneath the surface, listen attentively instead of simply looking, of reflecting the effects of a mirror. You thus perceive that each plant, each tree, has its rhythm, made up of several: the trees, the flowers, the seeds and fruits, each have their time. The plum tree? The flowers were born in the spring, before the leaves, the tree was white before turning green. But on this cherry tree, on the other hand, there are flowers that opened before the leaves, which will survive the fruits and fall late in the autumn and not all at once. Continue and you will see this garden and the *objects* (which are in no way things) **polyrhythmically**, or if you prefer *symphonically*. In place of a collection of fixed things, you will follow each *being*, each *body*, as having its own time above the whole. Each one therefore having its place, its rhythm, with its recent past, a foreseeable and a distant future.

Are the simultaneous and the immobile deceptive? Are the synchronous, the background and the spectacle abusive? No and yes. No: they constitute, they are, the **present**. Modernity curiously enlarged, deepened and at the same time dilapidated the present. The quasi-suppression of distances and waiting periods (by the media) amplifies the present, but these media give only reflections and shadows. You attend the incessant fêtes or massacres, you see the dead bodies, you contemplate the explosions; missiles are fired before your eyes. You are there! . . . but no, you are not there; your present is composed of simulacra; the image before you simulates the real, drives it out, is not there, and the simulation of the drama, the moment, has nothing dramatic about it, except in the verbal.

Would it be the *feeling* of the spectacle that appears *spectacular*, that the open window overlooking one of the liveliest streets in Paris shows? To attribute this slightly pejorative character to this *vision* (as the dominant trait) would be unjust and would bypass the *real*, that is to say, its meaning. The characteristic traits are truly temporal and rhythmic, not visual. To release and listen to rhythms demands attention and a certain time. In other words, it serves only as a *glimpse* for entering into the *murmur*, noises, cries.[3] The classic term in philosophy, 'the object', is not appropriate to rhythm. 'Objective'? Yes, but exceeding the narrow framework of objectivity, by bringing to it a multiplicity of (sensorial and significant) **meanings.**[4]

The succession of alternations, of differential repetitions, suggests that there is somewhere in this present an order, which comes from elsewhere. Which reveals itself. Where? In the monuments, the palaces, from the *Archives* to the Bank of France, meteorites fallen from another planet into the popular centre, for so long abandoned, the *Cour des Miracles*, a place of rogues. Therefore, beside the present, a sort of presence–absence, badly localised and strong: the State, which is not seen from the window, but which looms over this present, the omnipresent State.

Just as beyond the horizon, other horizons loom without being present, so beyond the sensible and visible order, which reveals political power, other orders suggest themselves: a logic, a division of labour, *leisure activities* are also **produced** (and productive), although they are proclaimed *free* and even 'free time'. Isn't this freedom also a *product?*

Secret objects also speak, in their own way, sending out a message. The Palace screams, yells, louder than the cars. It screams, 'Down with the past! Long live the modern! Down with history, I've swallowed it, digested it and brought it back up [*restituée*] . . .'. It has as perpetual witness and proof the cop at the junction, Law and Order, and if someone goes too far, he knows he will be arrested, whistled at, trapped, in such a way that the solitary cop induces the discourse of Order, more and better than the façades of the Square and the junction. Unless he also induces an anarchistic discourse, for he is always there, and of little use; the fear of an accident maintains the order of the junctions more efficiently than the police. Whose presence arouses no protestation anyway, everyone knowing its uselessness in advance.

Could it be that the lessons of the street are exhausted, outdated, and likewise the teachings of the window? Certainly not. They perpetuate themselves by renewing themselves. The window overlooking the street is not a mental place, where the inner gaze follows abstract perspectives: a practical space, private and concrete, the window offers views that are more than spectacles; mentally prolonged spaces. In such a way that the implication in the spectacle entails the explication of this spectacle. Familiarity preserves it; it disappears and is reborn, with the everydayness of both the inside and the outside world. Opacity and horizons, obstacles and perspectives implicate one another because they complicate one another, imbricate one another to the point of

allowing the Unknown, the giant city, to be glimpsed or guessed at. With its diverse spaces affected by diverse times: rhythms.

Once the interactions are determined, the analysis continues. Is there a hierarchy in this tangled mess, this scaffolding? A determining rhythm? A primordial and coordinating aspect?

The window suggests several hypotheses, which wandering and the street will confirm or invalidate. Wouldn't the bodies (human, living, plus those of a few dogs) that move about down there, in the car-wrecked swarming whole, impose a law? Which one? An order of grandeur. The windows, doors, streets and façades are measured in proportion to human size. The hands that move about, the limbs, do not amount to signs, even though they throw out multiple messages. But is there a relation between these physical flows of movements and gestures and the culture that shows itself (and yells) in the enormous murmur of the junction? The little bistros on the *rue R.*, the boutiques, are on a human scale, like the passers-by. Opposite, the constructions wanted to *transcend* this scale, to leave known dimensions and also all models past and possible behind; leading to the exhibition of metal and frozen guts, in the form of solidified piping, and the harshest reflections. And it's a meteorite fallen from another planet, where technocracy reigns untrammelled.

Absurd? Or super-rational? What do these strange contrasts say? What does the proximity between a certain archaism attached to history and the exhibited supra-modernity whisper? Has it a secret – or secrets? Does the State-political order write across this scene, with the signature of the author? Without doubt, but the time and the age that inscribe themselves in the performance of this spectacle, that give it meaning, should not be forgotten. And why the *rue de la Truanderie* and the *passage des Menestriers*,[5] preserved throughout the upheavals?

The essential? The determining factor? Money. But money no longer renders itself sensible as such, even on the facade of the bank. This centre of Paris bears the imprint of what it hides, but it hides it. Money passes through circulation. Not long ago, this *capital* centre retained something of the provincial, of the mediaeval: historic and crumbling. So many discussions and projects for these predestined or abandoned places! One such amiable and charming project – very 18th century – authored by Ricardo Bofill – was set aside after its adoption.[6] Another such project, which made the centre of Paris the administrative centre

(for the ministries) of the country, seduced, it would appear, the Chief; his disappearance entailed that of the project. And a compromise between the powers – the State, money, culture – was attempted. Windows for all products, including intellectual ones, correcting the drabness with images most *belle époque*.

How is it that **people** (as one says, since certain phrases like 'the people' and 'workers' have lost some of their prestige) accept this display? That they come in crowds, in perpetual flows? In such a way that the rhythms of their passing weaken or are reinforced, but link up with and follow on from one another, and never disappear (even at night!).

What is it that attracts them to this extent? Do they come simply *to see?* But what? The big building that was conceived not in order to be seen, but in order *to give sight?* Yet, we come to see it, and we cast a distracted eye over that which it *exposes*. We go around this void [*ce vide*], which fills itself up with things and people in order to empty itself [*se vider*], and so on. Wouldn't these people come above all to see and meet one another? Would this crowd unconsciously give itself the consciousness of a crowd?

The window replies. First, the spectacle of the junction and the perpendicular streets which, not long ago, formed a neighbourhood of the city, peopled by a sort of native, with many artisans and small shopkeepers. In short, people of the neighbourhood. Those who remain live under the roofs, in the attics, with Chinese or Arabic neighbours. Production has left these places, even those businesses that require storage depots, warehouses, stocks and vast offices. Nothing to say about these most well-known facts other than their consequences. For example: the crowds, the masses on the square at Beaubourg, around mediaeval Saint-Merri, or on the *Place des Innocents*, of which it would be too easy to say that it has lost all its innocence. The squares have re-found their ancient function, for a long time imperilled, of gathering, of setting the scene and staging spontaneous popular theatre.

Here on the square, between Saint-Merri and Modernism erupts a mediaeval-looking festival: fire-eaters, jugglers, snake charmers, but also preachers and sit-in discussions. Openness and adventure next to dogmatic armour-plating. All possible games, material and spiritual. Impossible to classify, to count. Without doubt many deviant wanderers that seek, knowing not what for – themselves! But many who seek

only to forget, neither town nor country, but their own corners. And for hours and hours they walk, find themselves back at the junctions, circle the places that are closed and enclosed. They almost never stop, eating some hot-dog or other as they walk (rapid Americanisation). On the square, they occasionally stop walking, staring straight ahead of them; they no longer know what to do. Watching, half-listening to those pitching their wares, then taking up again their unrelenting march.

There on the square, there is something maritime about the rhythms. Currents traverse the masses. Streams break off, which bring or take away new participants. Some of them go towards the jaws of the monster, which gobbles them down in order quite quickly to throw them back up. The tide invades the immense square, then withdraws: flux and reflux. The agitation and the noise are so great that the residents have complained. The fateful hour: ten o'clock in the evening, noises forbidden: so the crowd becomes silent, calm but more melancholy; oh fatal ten o'clock at night! The spectacle and murmur disappeared, sadness remains.

With these places are we in the everyday or the extra-everyday? Well, the one doesn't prevent the other and the pseudo-fête emerges only apparently from the everyday. The former prolongs the latter by other means, with a perfected organisation that reunites *everything* – advertising, culture, arts, games, propaganda, rules of work, urban life . . . And the police keep vigil, watch over.

Rhythms. Rhythms. They reveal and they hide. Much more diverse than in music, or the so-called civil code of successions, relatively simple texts in relation to the City. Rhythms: the music of the City, a scene that listens to itself, an image in the present of a discontinuous sum. Rhythms perceived from the invisible window, pierced into the wall of the façade . . . But next to the other windows, it *is* also within a rhythm that escapes it . . .

No camera, no image or series of images can show these rhythms. It requires equally attentive eyes and ears, a head and a memory and a heart. A memory? Yes, in order to grasp this present otherwise than in an instantaneous moment, to restore it in its moments, in the movement of diverse rhythms. The recollection of other moments and of all hours is indispensable, not as a simple point of reference, but in order not to isolate this present and in order to *live* it in all its diversity, made up of *subjects* and *objects*, subjective states and objective figures. Here the

old philosophical question (of subject, object and their relations) is found posed in non-speculative terms, close to practice. The observer in the window knows that he takes **his time** as first reference, but that the first impression displaces itself and includes the most diverse rhythms, on the condition that they remain *to scale*. The passage from *subject* to *object* requires neither a leap over an abyss, nor the crossing of a desert. Rhythms always need a reference; the initial moment persists through other perceived givens. The philosophical tradition has raised half-real, half-fictitious, problems that are badly resolved by remaining within speculative ambiguity. Observation [*le regard*] and meditation follow the lines of force that come from the past, from the present and from the possible, and which rejoin one another in the observer, simultaneously centre and periphery.

Here as elsewhere, opposites re-find each other, recognise one other, in a reality that is at the same time more *real* and more ideal, more complicated than its elements that are already accounted for. This clarifies and actualises the concept of *dialectical thought* that does not cease to fill these pages with so many questions and but a few answers!

Part *One*
Setting the scene

I've been thinking about 'space' for a long time. But usually I've come at it indirectly, through some other kind of engagement. The battles over globalisation, the politics of place, the question of regional inequality, the engagements with 'nature' as I walk the hills, the complexities of cities. Picking away at things that don't seem quite right. Losing political arguments because the terms don't fit what it is you're struggling to say. Finding myself in quandaries of apparently contradictory feelings. It is through these persistent ruminations – that sometimes don't seem to go anywhere and then sometimes do – that I have become convinced both that the implicit assumptions we make about space are important and that, maybe, it could be productive to think about space differenly.

Three ruminations

1 The armies were approaching the city from the quarter named the reed or crocodile – the direction in which the sun rises. Much was known about them already. Tales had come back from outlying provinces. Tax gatherers from the city, collecting tribute from conquered territories, had met up with them. Envoys had been despatched, to engage in talks, to find out more. And now neighbouring groups, chafing against their long subordination to the Aztec city, had thrown in their lot with the strange invaders. Yet in spite of all these prior contacts, the constant flow of messages, rumours, interpretations reaching the city, the approaching army was still a mystery. ('The strangers sat on "deer as high as the rooftops". Their bodies were completely covered, "only their faces can be seen. They are white, as if made of lime. They have yellow hair, although some have black. Long are their beards."'[1]) And they were arriving from the geographical direction which, in these time-spaces, was held to be that of authority.

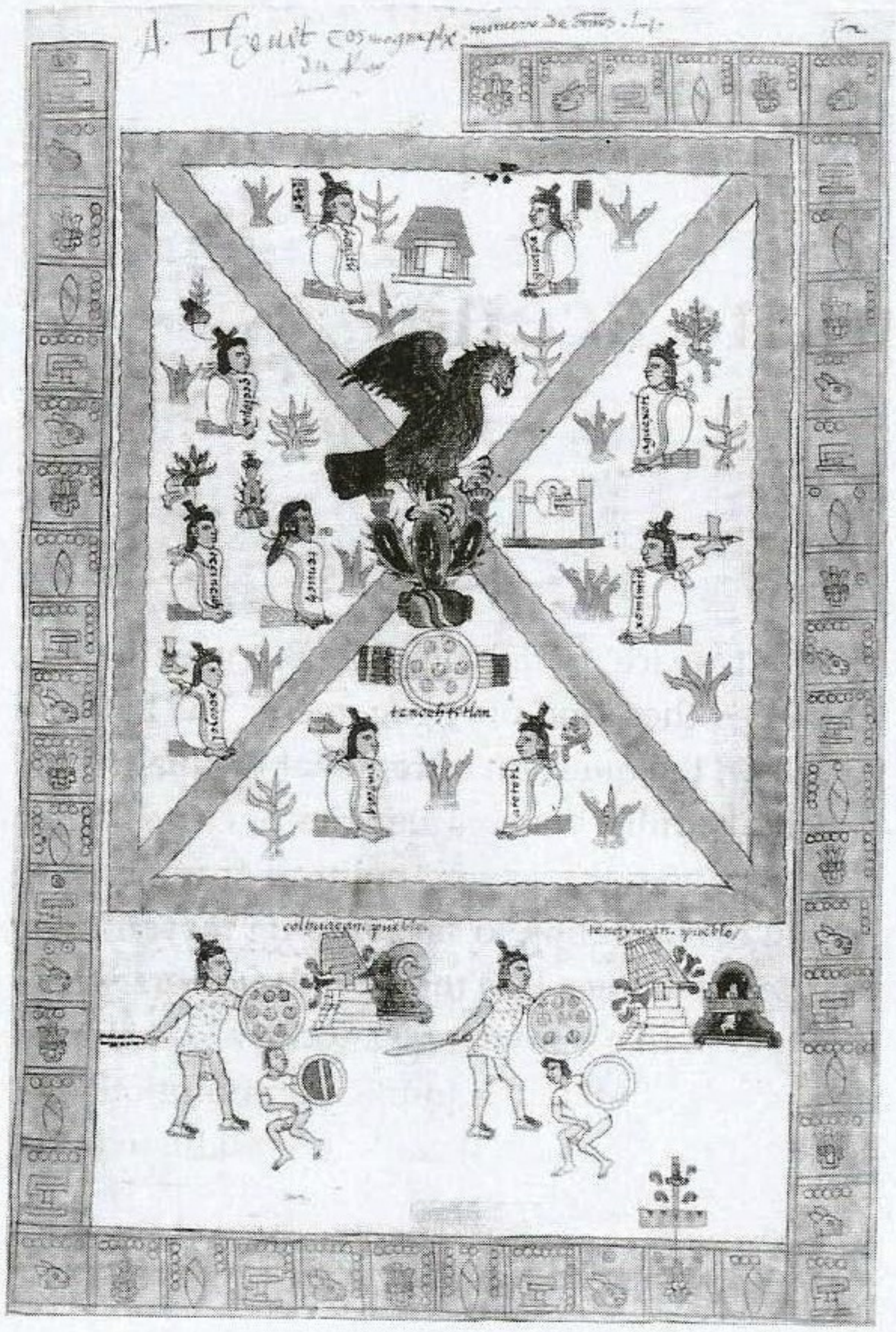

figure 1.1a *Tenochtitlán – Aztec depiction*
Source: The Bodleian Library

It was also the Year One Reed, a year of both historical and cosmological significance: a particular point in the cycle of years. Over past cycles the city had become mightily successful. It was only a few cycles ago that the Mexica/Aztecs had first set up in this huge high valley. They had arrived from the direction of the flint and after long wanderings; an uncultivated people in the eyes of the cities already established around the lake. But since their arrival, and the founding of this city Tenochtitlán, the Aztecs had piled success upon success. The city was now the biggest in the world. Its empire now stretched, through conquest and continual violent subordination, to the ocean in two directions.

Thus far the Aztecs had conquered all before them. But these armies approaching now are ominous. Empires do not last for ever. Only recently Azcapotzalco, on the edge of the lake, had been brought down after a brief blaze of glory. And Tula, seat of

the revered Toltecs, now lies deserted, as do the ruins of Teotihuacan. All these are reminders of previous splendours, and of their fragility. And now these strange invaders are coming from the direction of acatl; and it is the Year One Reed.

Such things are important. Coincidences of events form the structures of time-space. For Moctezuma they add to the whole wretched conundrum of how to respond. It could be a moment of crisis for the Empire.[2]

The men in the approaching army could hardly believe their eyes when they first looked down upon the city. They had heard that it was splendid but this was five times the size of Madrid, in the changing Europe which they had left behind just a few years ago. And these voyages, originally, had set out towards the west in the hope of finding the east. When, some years before, Cristobal Colón had 'headed across the great emptiness west of Christendom, he had accepted the challenge of legend. Terrible storms would play with his ships as if they were nutshells and hurl them into the jaws of monsters; the sea serpent, hungry for human flesh, would be lying in wait in the murky depths. … navigators spoke of strange corpses and curiously carved pieces of wood that floated in on the west wind …'[3] It was now the Year of Our Lord 1519.[4] This small army, with Hernán Cortés at its head and its few horses and its armour, had sailed from what their leaders had decided to call Cuba at the beginning of the year, and now it was November. The

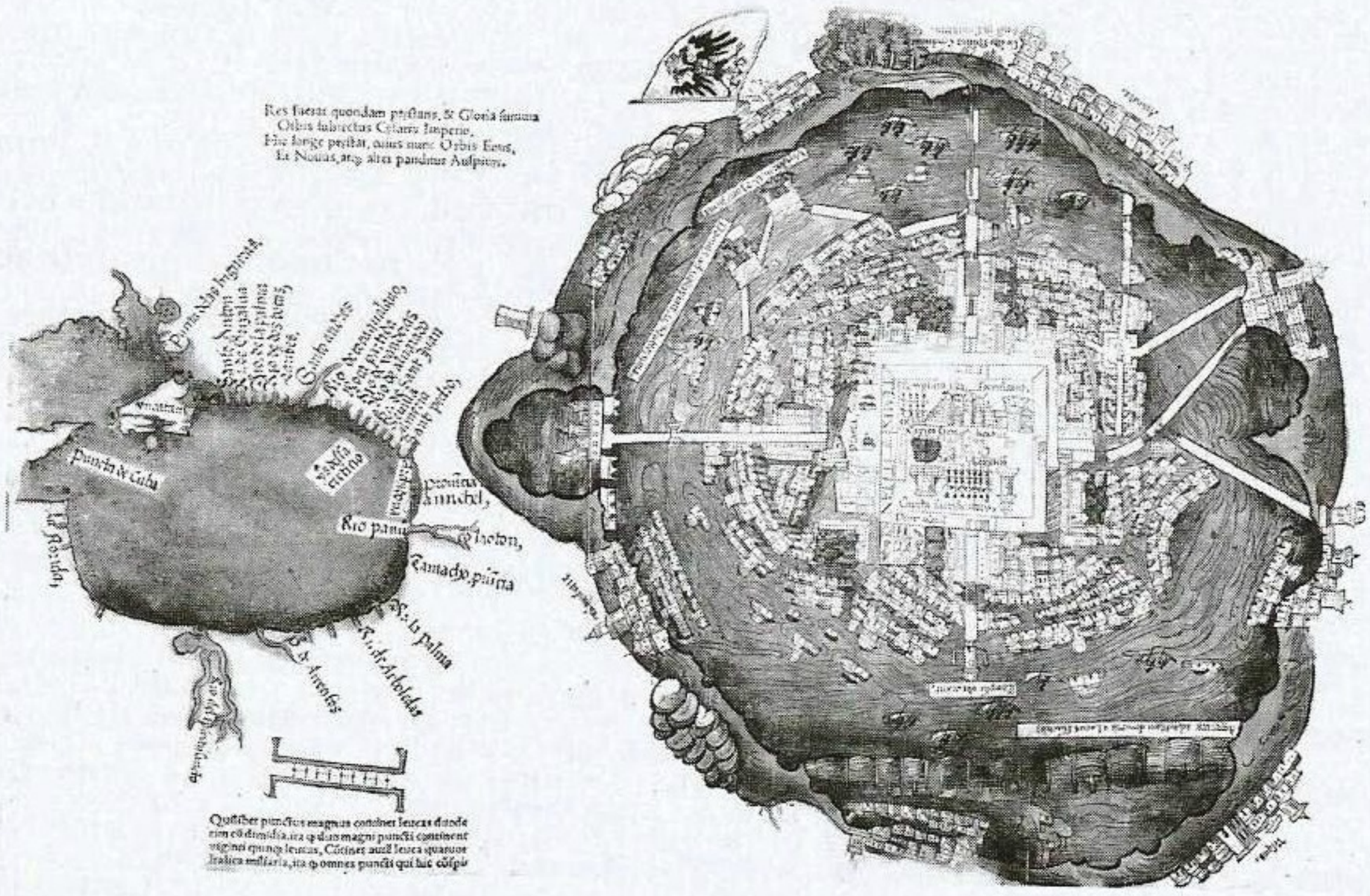

figure 1.1b *Tenochtitlán – Spanish depiction*

Source: The Newberry Library

journey from the coast had been hard and violent, with battles and the making of alliances. Finally, now, they had heaved to the top of this pass between two snow-capped volcanoes. To Cortés' left and high above him, Popocatepetl steamed endlessly. And below him, in the distance, lay this incredible city, like nothing he had ever seen before.

There were to be two years of duplicitous negotiation, miscalculation, bloodshed, rout, retreat and readvance before Hernán Cortés, Spanish conquistador, conquered the city of the Aztecs, Tenochtitlán, which today we call la ciudad de México, Mexico City, Distrito Federal.

The way, today, we often tell that story, or any of the tales of 'voyages of discovery', is in terms of crossing and conquering space. Cortés voyaged across space, found Tenochtitlán, and took it. 'Space', in this way of telling things, is an expanse we travel across. It seems perhaps all very obvious.

But the way we imagine space has effects – as it did, each in different ways, for Moctezuma and Cortés. Conceiving of space as in the voyages of discovery, as something to be crossed and maybe conquered, has particular ramifications. Implicitly, it equates space with the land and sea, with the earth which stretches out around us. It also makes space seem like a surface; continuous and given. It differentiates: Hernán, active, a maker of history, journeys across this surface and finds Tenochtitlán upon it. It is an unthought cosmology, in the gentlest sense of that term, but it carries with it social and political effects. So easily this way of imagining space can lead us to conceive of other places, peoples, cultures simply as phenomena 'on' this surface. It is not an innocent manoeuvre, for by this means they are deprived of histories. Immobilised, they await Cortés' (or our, or global capital's) arrival. They lie there, on space, in place, without their own trajectories. Such a space makes it more difficult to see in our mind's eye the histories the Aztecs too have been living and producing. What might it mean to reorientate this imagination, to question that habit of thinking of space as a surface? If, instead, we conceive of a meeting-up of histories, what happens to our implicit imaginations of time and space?

2 The current governments in the UK and the USA (and plenty of other current governments besides) tell us a story of the inevitability of globalisation. (Or rather, although they do not of course make this distinction, they tell us a story of the inevitability of that particular form of neoliberal capitalist globalisation which we are experiencing at the moment – that duplicitous combination of the glorification of the (unequally) free movement of capital on the one hand with the firm control over the movement of labour on the other. Anyhow, they tell us it's inevitable.) And if you

point to differences around the globe, to Moçambique or Mali or Nicaragua, they will tell you such countries are just 'behind'; that eventually they will follow the path along which the capitalist West has led. In 1998 Bill Clinton delivered himself of the reflection that 'we' can no more resist the current forces of globalisation than we can resist the force of gravity. Let us pass over the possibilities of resisting the force of gravity, noting merely that this is a man who spends a good deal of his life flying about in aeroplanes .... More seriously, this proposition was delivered unto us by a man who had spent much of his recent career precisely trying to protect and promote (through GATT, the WTO, the speeding-up of NAFTA/TLC) this supposedly implacable force of nature. We know the counter argument: 'globalisation' in its current form is not the result of a law of nature (itself a phenomenon under dispute). It is a project. What statements such as Clinton's are doing is attempting to persuade us that there is no alternative. This is not a description of the world as it is so much as an image in which the world is being made.

This much is now well established in critiques of today's globalisation. But it is perhaps less often made explicit that one of the crucial manoeuvres at work within it, to convince us of the ineluctability of this globalisation, is a sleight of hand in terms of the conceptualisation of space and time. The proposition turns geography into history, space into time. And this again has social and political effects. It says that Moçambique and Nicaragua are not really different from 'us'. We are not to imagine them as having their own trajectories, their own particular histories, and the potential for their own, perhaps different, futures. They are not recognised as coeval others. They are merely at an earlier stage in the one and only narrative it is possible to tell. That cosmology of 'only one narrative' obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue.

And so again: what if? What if we refuse to convene space into time? What if we open up the imagination of the single narrative to give space (literally) for a multiplicity of trajectories? What kinds of conceptualisation of time and space, and of their relation, might that give on to?

3 And then there is 'place'. In the context of a world which is, indeed, increasingly interconnected the notion of place (usually evoked as 'local place') has come to have totemic resonance. Its symbolic value is endlessly mobilised in political argument. For some it is the sphere of the everyday, of real and valued practices, the geographical source of meaning, vital to hold on to as 'the global' spins its ever more powerful and alienating webs. For others, a 'retreat to place' represents a protective pulling-up of drawbridges and a building of walls against the new invasions. Place, on this reading, is the locus of denial, of attempted withdrawal from

invasion/difference. It is a politically conservative haven, an essentialising (and in the end unviable) basis for a response; one that fails to address the real forces at work. It has, undoubtedly, been the background imagination for some of the worst of recent conflicts. The upheavals in 1989 in various parts of old communist Europe brought a resurgence, on a new scale and with a new intensity, of nationalisms and territorial parochialisms characterised by claims to exclusivity, by assertions of the home-grown rooted authenticity of local specificity and by a hostility to at least some designated others. But then what of the defence of place by working-class communities in the teeth of globalisation, or by aboriginal groups clinging to a last bit of land?

Place plays an ambiguous role in all of this. Horror at local exclusivities sits uneasily against support for the vulnerable struggling to defend their patch. While place is claimed, or rejected, in these arguments in a startling variety of ways, there are often shared undergirding assumptions: of place as closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as 'home', a secure retreat; of space as somehow originarily regionalised, as always-already divided up.[5] And more than that again, they institute, implicitly but held within the very discourses that they mobilise, a counterposition, sometimes even a hostility, certainly an implicit imagination of different theoretical 'levels' (of the abstract versus the everyday, and so forth), between space on the one hand and place on the other.

What then if we refuse this imagination? What then not only of the nationalisms and parochialisms which we might gladly see thereby undermined, but also of the notion of local struggles or of the defence of place more generally? And what if we refuse that distinction, all too appealing it seems, between place (as meaningful, lived and everyday) and space (as what? the outside? the abstract? the meaning*less*)?

It is in the context of worrying away at questions such as these that the arguments here have evolved. Some of the moments that generated the thinking here I have written about before – 1989, the conflicts of class and ethnicity in east London, the elusive Frenchness of sitting in a Parisian café – but they have persisted, and crop up again here pushed a little further. Encounters with the apparently familiar but where something continues to trouble, and unexpected lines of thought slowly unwind. Most of all, the arguments which follow took shape, theoretically and politically, in the context of the perniciousness of exclusivist localisms and the grim inequalities of today's hegemonic form of globalisation; and in the face of the difficulties, too, of responding. It was wrestling with the formulation of these political issues that led to the prising open of their, often hidden, ways of conceiving of space.

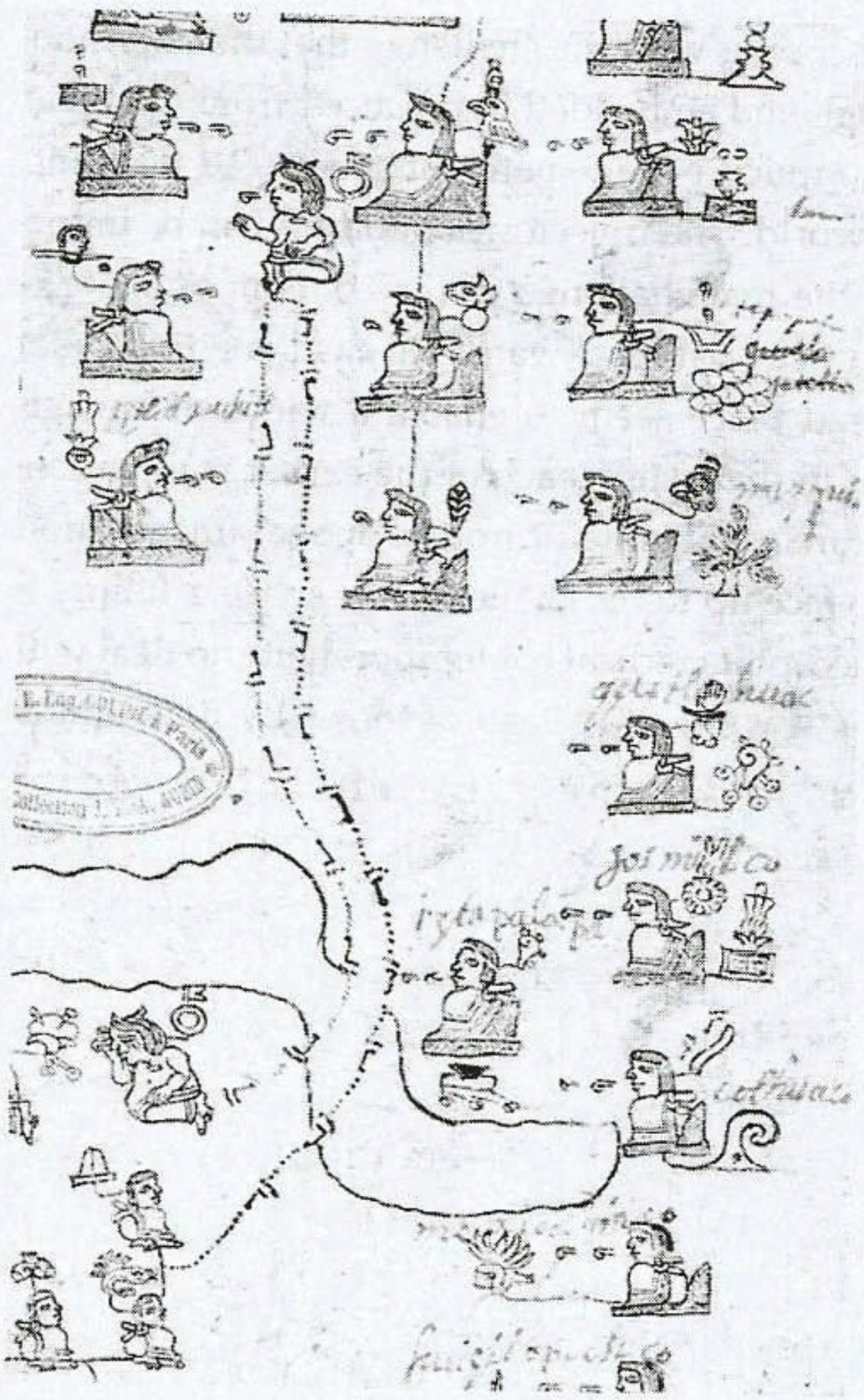

figure 1.2 *Aztec footsteps in the Codex Xolotl*

Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France

In the Year One Reed/Year of Our Lord 1519, among the many aspects of radical otherness that came face-to-face in the Valley of Mexico was the manner of imagining 'space'. Cortés carried with him aspects of an incipient version of present Western imaginations at the beginning of their triumphal progress; but imaginations still embedded in myth and emotion. For the Aztecs, too, though very differently, gods, time and space were inextricably linked. A 'basic aspect of the Aztec world view' was 'a tendency to focus on things in the process of becoming another' (Townsend, 1992, p. 122) and 'Mexica thought did not recognise an abstract space and time, separate and homogeneous dimensions, but rather concrete complexes of space and time, heterogeneous and singular sites and events. … "place-moments" ["lugares momentos"]' (Soustelle, 1956, p. 120; my translation).

The Codex Xolotl, a hybrid construction, tells stories. Events are linked by footsteps and dotted lines between places. 'The manuscript is read by locating the origin of the footprints and deciphering the place signs as they occur on these itineraries' (Harley, 1990, p. 101). Whereas the general assumption about Western maps today is that they are representations of space, these maps, as were the European mappae mundi, were representations of time and space together.

The imagination of space as a surface on which we are placed, the turning of space into time, the sharp separation of local place from the space out there; these are all ways of taming the challenge that the inherent spatiality of the world presents. Most often, they are unthought. Those who argue that Moçambique is just 'behind' do not (presumably) do so as a consequence of much deep pondering upon the nature of, and the relationship between, space and time. Their conceptualisation of space, its reduction to a dimension for the display/representation of different moments in time, is one assumes, implicit. In that they are not alone. One of the recurring motifs in what follows is just how *little*, actually, space is thought about explicitly. None the less, the persistent

associations leave a residue of effects. We develop ways of incorporating a spatiality into our ways of being in the world, modes of coping with the challenge that the enormous reality of space throws up. Produced through and embedded in practices, from quotidian negotiations to global strategising, these implicit engagements of space feed back into and sustain wider understandings of the world. The trajectories of others can be immobilised while we proceed with our own; the real challenge of the contemporaneity of others can be deflected by their relegation to a past (backward, old-fashioned, archaic); the defensive enclosures of an essentialised place seem to enable a wider disengagement, and to provide a secure foundation. In that sense, each of the earlier ruminations provides an example of some kind of failure (deliberate or not) of spatial imagination. Failure in the sense of being inadequate to face up to the challenges of space; a failure to take on board its coeval multiplicities, to accept its radical contemporaneity, to deal with its constitutive complexity. What happens if we try to let go of those, by now almost intuitive, understandings?

1
opening propositions

This book makes the case for an alternative approach to space. It has both the virtue, and all the disadvantages, of appearing obvious. Yet the ruminations above, and much that is to come, imply that it still needs elaborating.

It is easiest to begin by boiling it down to a few propositions. They are the following. *First*, that we recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny. (This is a proposition which will come as no surprise at all to those who have been reading recent anglophone geographical literature.) *Second*, that we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space. If space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality. Multiplicity and space as co-constitutive. *Third*, that we recognise space as always under construction. Precisely because space on this reading is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.

Now, these propositions resonate with recent shifts in certain quarters in the way in which progressive politics can also be imagined. Indeed it is part of my argument, not just that the spatial is political (which, after many years and much writing thereupon, can be taken as given), but rather that thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, can contribute to political arguments already under way, and – most deeply – can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political. Some of these possibilities can already be drawn out from the brief statement of propositions. Thus, although it would be incorrect, and too rigidly constraining, to propose any simple one-to-one mapping, it is possible to elucidate

Part *Two*
Unpromising associations

Henri Lefebvre points out in the opening arguments of *The production of space* (1991) that we often use that word 'space', in popular discourse or in academic, without being fully conscious of what we mean by it. We have inherited an imagination so deeply ingrained that it is often not actively thought. Based on assumptions no longer recognised as such, it is an imagination with the implacable force of the patently obvious. That is the trouble.

That implicit imagination is fed by all kinds of influences. In many cases they are, I want to argue, unpromising associations which connotationally deprive space of its most challenging characteristics. The influences to be addressed in this Part derive from philosophical writings in the broadest sense of that term. Part *Three* will take up more practical-popular and social-theoretical understandings of space, particularly in the context of the politics of modernity and capitalist globalisation. The aim of both Parts is to unearth some of the influences on hegemonic imaginations of 'space'. What follows immediately, then, is an attempt to draw out some particular threads of argument which exemplify ways in which space can come, through significant philosophical discourses, to have associated with it characteristics which, to my mind at least, disable its full insertion into the political. This is not a book about philosophy; the arguments here are particular and focus solely on how some commonly accepted positions, even if not directly concerned with space, have reverberations none the less for the way in which we imagine it. The particular philosophical strands addressed here serve as exemplars. They revolve around Henri Bergson, structuralism and deconstruction: a selection made both because of their significance as strands of thought and because in their wider arguments they have, in different ways, much to offer the kind of project this book is engaged in. In other words, they are engaged with because of their promise rather than their problems.

None of these philosophers has the reconceptualisation of space as their objective. Most often, and in the context of wider debates, temporality is a more pressing concern. Over and again space is conceptualised as (or, rather, assumed to be) simply the negative opposite of time. It is indeed, I want to argue, in part that

lacuna in relation to thinking actively about space, and the contradictions which thereby arise, that can provide a hint of how to breach the apparent limits of some of the arguments as they now stand. One theme is that time and space must be thought together: that this is not some mere rhetorical flourish, but that it influences how we think of both terms; that thinking of time and space together does not mean they are identical (for instance in some undifferentiated four-dimensionality), rather it means that the imagination of one will have repercussions (not always followed through) for the imagination of the other and that space and time are implicated in each other; that it opens up some problems which have heretofore seemed (logically, intractably) insoluble; and that it has reverberations for thinking about politics and the spatial. Thinking about history and temporality necessarily has implications (whether we recognise them or not) for how we imagine the spatial. The counterpositional labelling of phenomena as temporal or spatial, and entailing all the baggage of the reduction of space to the a-political sphere of causal closure or the reactionary redoubts of established power, continues to this day.

The prime aims of the philosophies explored here were largely in tune with the arguments presented in this book. I cheer on Bergson in his arguments about time, approve of structuralism's determination not to let geography be turned into history, applaud Laclau's insistence on the intimate connection between dislocation and the possibility of politics … It's just when they get to talking about space that I find myself rebuffed. Puzzled by the lack of explicit attention they give, irritated by their assumptions, confused by a kind of double usage (where space is both the great 'out there' and the term of choice for characterisations of representation, or of ideological closure), and, finally, pleased sometimes to find the loose ends (their own internal dislocations) which make possible the unravelling of those assumptions and double usages and which, in turn, provokes a reimagination of space which might be not just more to my liking, but also more in tune with the spirit of their own enquiries.

There is one distinction which ought to be made from the outset. It has been argued that, at least in recent centuries, space has been held in less esteem, and has been accorded less attention, than has time (within geography, Ed Soja (1989) has made this argument with force). It is often termed the 'prioritisation of time over space' and it has been remarked on and taken to task by many. It is not, however, my concern here. What I am concerned with is the *way* we imagine space. Sometimes the problematical character of this imagination does indeed perhaps result from deprioritisation – the conceptualisation of space as an afterthought, as a residual of time. Yet the early structuralist thinkers can by no means be said to have prioritised time and still, or so I shall argue, the effect of their approach was a highly problematical imagination of space.

Moreover, the excavation of these problematical conceptualisations of space (as static, closed, immobile, as the opposite of time) brings to light other sets of connections, to science, writing and representation, to issues of subjectivity and its

conception, in all of which implicit imaginations of space have played an important role. And these entwinings are in turn related to the fact that space has so often been excluded from, or inadequately conceptualised in relation to, and has thereby debilitated our conceptions of, politics and the political.

What follows is an engagement with some of those debilitating associations. Each of these strands of philosophy has developed in particular historico-geographical conjunctures. They themselves have been interventions in something already moving. Sometimes what is at issue is disentangling them in some measure from the orientations provoked by their moments, the debates of which they were a part. Reorienting them to my own concerns can produce new lines of thought from them. Sometimes what is at issue is pushing them further. The effect in the end, I hope, is to liberate 'space' from some chains of meaning (which embed it with *closure* and *stasis*, or with *science*, *writing* and *representation*) and which have all but choked it to death, in order to set it into other chains (in this chapter alongside *openness*, and *heterogeneity*, and *liveliness*) where it can have a new and more productive life.

11
slices through space

Falling through the map

I love maps – they are one of the reasons I became 'a geographer'. They carry you away; they set you dreaming. Yet it may well be none the less that our usual notion of maps has helped to pacify, to take the life out of, how most of us most commonly think about space. Maybe our current, 'normal' Western maps have been one more element in that long effort at the taming of the spatial.

Faced with a need to know (just where exactly is Uzbekistan? What is the layout of this town? How *do* I get from here to Ardwick?) you reach for the map and lay it out upon the table. Here is 'space' as a flat surface, a continuous surface. Space as the completed product. As a coherent closed system. Here space is completely and instantaneously interconnected; space you can walk across. The map works in the manner of the synchronies of the structuralists. It tells of an order in things. With the map we can locate ourselves and find our way. And we know where others are as well. So yes, this map can set me dreaming, let my imagination run. But it also offers me order; lets me get a handle on the world.

Are maps an archetype of representation? We 'map things out' to get a feeling for their structure, we call for 'cognitive maps',[1] 'we' (or so I read in reliable sources) are currently 'mapping' DNA. Maps as a presentation of an essential structure. The ordering representation.

But our notion of the root meaning of 'map', the term map in its most common current Western usage, has to do with geography and hence with space. So all the conflations get run together, are conflated in their turn. Maps are about space; they are forms of representation, indeed iconic forms; representation is understood as spatialisation. But a map of a geography is no more that geography – or that space – than a painting of a pipe is a pipe.

Obviously maps are 'representations'. And they are so in the sophisticated, creative, sense in which we have learned to mean that word. Obviously, and inevitably too, they are selective (as is any form of re-presentation). This is Borges' old point. Moreover, through their codes and conventions and their taxonomic and ordering procedures, maps operate as a 'technology of power'

(Harley, 1988, 1992). But it is not those things that are important to me here. It is not even – as we lay the map (the country we shall visit, the town, the region to be conquered) out on the table before us – the much-maligned notion of 'the view from above'. Not all views from above are problematical – they are just another way of looking at the world (see the disagreement with de Certeau in Chapter 3). The problem only comes if you fall into thinking that that vertical distance lends you truth. The dominant form of mapping, though, does position the observer, themselves unobserved, outside and above the object of the gaze. None the less, what worries me here is another and less-recognised aspect of this technology of power: that maps (current Western-type maps) give the impression that space is a surface – that it is the sphere of a completed horizontality.

But what if – recalling the arguments of Part *Two* – the assumption is abandoned that space and time are mutually excluding opposites? What if space is the sphere not of a discrete multiplicity of inert *things*, even one which is thoroughly interrelated? What if, instead, it presents us with a heterogeneity of practices and *processes*? Then it will be not an already-interconnected whole but an ongoing product of interconnections and not. Then it will be always unfinished and open. This arena of space is not firm ground on which to stand. In no way is it a surface.

This is space as the sphere of a dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined) by the construction of new relations. It is always being made and always therefore, in a sense, unfinished (except that 'finishing' is not on the agenda). If you really were to take a slice through time it would be full of holes, of disconnections, of tentative half-formed first encounters. 'Everything is connected to everything else' can be a salutary political reminder that whatever we do has wider implications than perhaps we commonly recognise. But it is unhelpful if it leads to a vision of an always already constituted holism. The 'always' is rather that there are always connections *yet to be* made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction, or not, potential links which may never be established. Loose ends and ongoing stories. 'Space', then, can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, in which everywhere is already (and at that moment unchangingly) linked to everywhere else.

Loose ends and ongoing stories are real challenges to cartography. Maps vary of course. On both sides of the Atlantic before the Columbian encounter maps integrated time and space. They told stories. While presenting a kind of picture of the world 'at one moment' (supposedly) they also told the story of its origins. *Mappae mundi* advertised the world as having Christian routes, and produced a cartography which told the Christian story. On the other side of the Atlantic, in what was to become the Americas, Toltecs, Mixteca-Puebla and other groups designed cartographies which accounted for the origins of their cosmos. In the Codex Xolotl, mentioned in Part *One*, 'Events are choreographed' (Harley, 1990, p. 101). These are maps which recount histories, which integrate

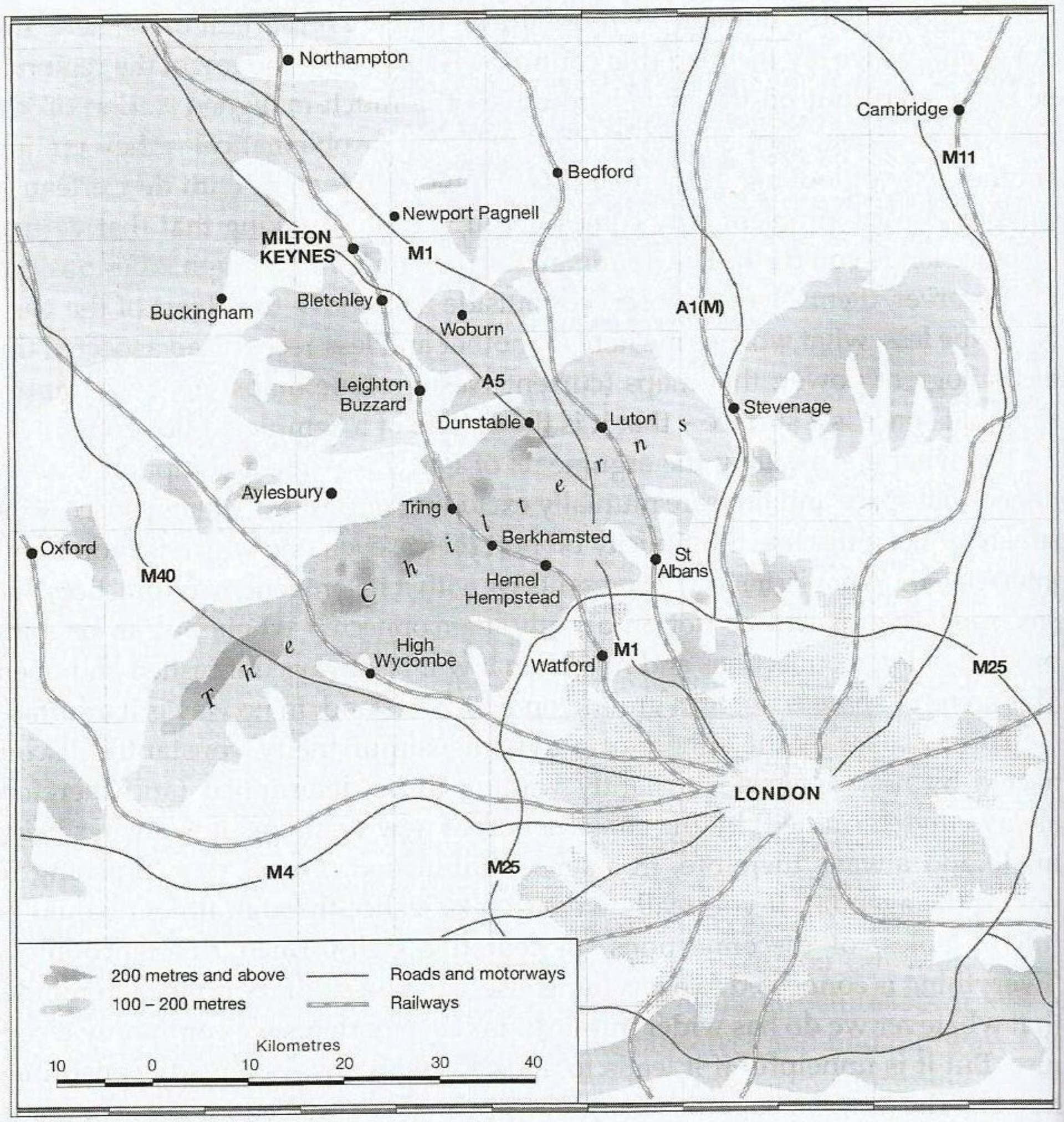

figure 11.1 *Ceci n'est pas l'espace*

time and space. There is an irony here. This turning of a migration into a line on a map, the line of footsteps on the Codex Xolotl, is one of the many routes by which representation has come to be called spatialisation. A movement is turned into a static line. Chapters 2 and 3 explored this, though it is nice to add here that part of de Certeau's argument, concerning his decision not to use the term trajectory, is neatly countered by the Codex map – the directionality of the footsteps makes it clear that there is no reversibility here: you can't go back in space-time. However these maps recall a further point from Part *Two*. These are 'representations' of space *and* time. It is not the spatial which is fixing the temporal but the map (the representation) which is stabilising time-space.

And stabilisation, or at least getting (being given) one's bearings in a universe, and in many cases making a claim on it, was what these maps were all about. They were the hegemonic cognitive mappings of five hundred years ago. They were attempts to grasp, to invent, a vision of the whole; to tame confusion and complexity.

Some mappings, on the other hand, work to do the opposite, to disrupt the sense of coherence and of totality. Situationist cartographies, while still attempting to picture the universe, map that universe as one which is not a single order. On the one hand, situationist cartographies sought to *dis*orient, to defamiliarise, to provoke a view from an unaccustomed angle. On the other hand, and more significant to the argument here, they sought to expose the incoherences and fragmentations of the spatial itself (in their case primarily the space of the city). This is the opposite of the synchronies of the structuralists: a representation of geographical space, not an a-spatial conceptual structure. Here there is exposure rather than occlusion of the disruptions inherent in the spatial. Here the spatial is an arena of possibility. Such a cartography attempts what Levin has called a mimesis of incoherence (Levin, 1989, cited in Pinder, 1994). It is a map (and a space) which leaves openings for something new.

So, most certainly, space is not a map and a map is not space, but even maps do not have to pretend to entail coherent synchronies.

More recently there have been other experiments. 'The figure of cartography recurs in contemporary cultural theory', writes Elizabeth Ferrier (1990, p. 35); '… [m]apping seems to be crucial to postmodernity'. The figure of the map has been taken up in some postcolonial and feminist literature as a form that can on the one hand stand for past rigidities but that can also, on the other hand, be reworked from within (Huggan, 1989). In these projects, maps can be both deconstructed and then reconstructed in a form which challenges the claims to singularity, stability and closure which characterise our usual notion of (and indeed in most cases the intentions of) cartographic representation.

Here, the Derridean opening up of representation is brought to bear on the classic form of the Western, modern map. The production of such maps is an 'exemplary structuralist activity', writes Huggan (1989, p. 119). They are conceptual and a-temporal – but ironically, given that these are maps, they are not spatial – structures. Huggan draws on Derrida's notion of contradictory coherence to argue that maps of this sort necessarily trace 'back to a "point of presence" whose stability cannot be guaranteed' (p. 119). The 'synchronic essentialism' of such maps may thus be opened up, and thereby the closure to which they – and their makers – aspire may be challenged from within. It is a challenge which aims to unsettle 'the classic Western map' in a number of ways. On the one hand, it disputes the internal coherence, the singular uniformity, to which the classic map lays claim – it points to the 'blind spots', the 'forgetfulness of antecedent spatial configurations' (Rabasa, 1993), the 'discrepancies and approximations' (Huggan, 1989) which cannot be obliterated. In

other words, the hints of multiplicity. On the other hand, the deconstructive challenge recognises a necessary provisionality and transitoriness which undermines the claims to fixity, to pinning things down, which characterise the classic Western modern map. What is going on here then – in these feminist and postcolonial reimaginings of the possibilities of cartography – is a pushing further of the critique of maps as 'technologies of power' to lever open our understanding of the form of the map itself.

And yet … 'blind spots', the 'forgetfulness of antecedent spatial configurations' and, from Spivak, the coloniser's 'necessary yet contradictory assumptions of an uninscribed earth' (1985, p. 133) all draw, in the postcolonial context, on the notion of the colonial text as writing over a thereby obliterated other. They figure multiplicity through the form of a palimpsest. This can capture the strategy of domination as well as hinting at the possibility of disruption. Thus Rabasa: 'the image of the palimpsest becomes an illuminative metaphor for understanding geography as a series of erasures and overwritings that have transformed the world. The imperfect erasures are, in turn, a source of hope for the reconstitution or reinvention of the world from native and non-Eurocentric points of view' (1993, p. 181). It is this imperfect erasure which can be 'perhaps also a means of delineating a series of blind spots from which counter-discourses to Eurocentrism may take form' (p. 183). Yes; but while this deconstructive strategy may enable critique of colonial discourses and a pointing towards other voices, other stories for the moment suppressed, its imagery is not one which easily provides resources for bringing those voices to life. This is one of the reservations of Rajchman (1998) in his retrospective critique of collage and superposition (Part *Two*, Chapter 4). For while being critical of the layer of apparent coherence laid over alternative voices by the dominant power (in postcolonial terms the power of Europe; in more general terms the power of the maker of maps of this form), it continues to imagine the heterogeneous multiplicity in terms of layers. Yet 'layers' (as in 'the accretion of layers') would seem rather to refer to the history of a space than to its radical contemporaneity. Coevalness may be pointed to, but it is not established, through the metaphor of palimpsest. Palimpsest is too archaeological. In this story, the things that are missing (erased) from the map are somehow always things from 'before'. The gaps in representation (the erasures, the blind spots) are not the same as the discontinuities of the multiplicity in contemporaneous space; the latter are the mark of the coexistence of the coeval. Deconstruction in this guise seems hampered by its primary focus on 'text', however broadly imagined. To picture this argument through the figure of the palimpsest is to stay within the imagination of surfaces – it fails to bring alive the trajectories which co-form this space. Thus Rabasa writes of 'the strata of palimpsests underlying cartography' (p. 182). But this is to imagine the space being mapped – which is a space as one simultaneity – as the product of superimposed horizontal structures rather than full contemporaneous coexistence and becoming.

Situationist cartographies, more recent deconstructions, attempts to think in rhizomatic terms, all are wrestling to open up the order of the map. Deleuze and Guattari, in combat against the pretensions both to representation and to self-enclosure, distinguish between a tracing (an attempt at both) and 'the map' which 'is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. … It is itself a part of the rhizome' (1987, p. 12). But within the dominant understanding of the space of the 'ordinary' map in the West today the assumption is precisely that there is no room for surprises. Just as when space is understood *as* (closed/stable) representation (the 'spatialization' through which 'surprises are averted', de Certeau, 1984, p. 89), so in this representation *of* space you never lose your way, are never surprised by an encounter with something unexpected, never face the unknown (as when stout Cortés and all his men, through Keats, in wild surmise gazed upon the Pacific).[2] In his discussion of Mercator's *Atlas* (1636), José Rabasa points out that although '[r]egions corresponding to *terra incognita* may lack precise contours' they are none the less presented in this book of maps within a framework already understood (in this case, on Rabasa's reading, a complex palimpsest of allegories): 'The *Atlas* thus constitutes a world where all possible "surprises" have been precodified' (1993, p. 194).[3] We do not feel the disruptions of space, the coming upon difference. On the road map you won't drive off the edge of your known world. In space as I want to imagine it, you just might.

The chance of space

For such a space entails the unexpected. The specifically spatial within time-space is produced by that – sometimes happenstance, sometimes not – arrangement-in-relation-to-each-other that is the result of there being a multiplicity of trajectories. In spatial configurations, otherwise unconnected narratives may be brought into contact, or previously connected ones may be wrenched apart. There is always an element of 'chaos'. This is the chance of space; the accidental neighbour is one figure for it. Space as the closed system of the essential section presupposes (guarantees) the singular universal. But in this other spatiality different temporalities and different voices must work out means of accommodation. The chance of space must be responded to.

So an argument for an element of chance in space chimes with the current *Zeitgeist*. That itself, however, may be more problematical than illuminating. It is popular today to revel in the glorious random mixity of it all. It is taken to be a form of rebellion against over-rationalisation and the dominance of closed structures. A reaction against some of the excesses and the one-sidednesses of 'the modern'. Too often, though, it is a weak and confused rebellion. For one thing, what may look to you like randomness and chaos may be someone else's order. The street market and the council estate are classic figures of contrast

van Eyck's labyrinthine clarity, while like the situationists rejecting fixity and deterministic closure, was no collapse into total indeterminacy. Sadler aptly captures it as 'a more multifarious order' (p. 30). (And to take up again the iconic – if problematic – figure of the *flâneur*, Sadler records that, for all their rejection of the universalism of rationalist claims, for situationists and Team 10ers it was still 'Not that the drift of the pedestrian confounded all logic' (1998, p. 30).) Nor indeed are chance and indeterminacy the sole foci of any new science. Rather, there is the mutuality of chance and necesssity, and the Holy Grail for which many of the most ardent proponents of complexity are currently searching is 'deep order' (Lewin, 1993); order and disorder as folded into each other (Hayles, 1990; see also Watson, 1998).

Travelling imaginations

What is it to travel? How can we best think it in terms of time and space? Hernán Cortés trudging across the neck of (what was to become) Mexico. The 'voyagers of discovery' setting out across the oceans. My own, regular, journey to work: sitting in the train from London to Milton Keynes looking out of the window at the landscape we are crossing – out of the London basin, through the sharp gash carved in the chalk hills, emerging finally into the expanse of the clay of the East Midlands. Travelling across space? Is it? Thought of this way the very surface, of land or ocean, becomes equated with space itself.

Unlike time, it seems, you can see space spread out around you. Time is either past or to come or so minutely instantaneously *now* that it is impossible to grasp. Space, on the other hand, is *there*.

One immediate and evident effect of this is that space comes to seem so very much more *material* than time. Temporality seems easy to imagine in the abstract, as a dimension, as the dimension of change. Space, in contrast, has been equated with 'extension', and through that with the material. It is a distinction that resonates too (as was seen in Chapter 5) with that understanding of time as interior, as a product of (human) experience, in contrast to space as material *in opposition to* time's incorporeality: it is the landscape outside the window, the surface of the earth, a given.

There are many who have tried to puncture that smooth surface. The art events of Clive van den Berg (1997) aim to disrupt the complacent surface of white South Africa with reminders of the history on which it is based. Iain Sinclair's (1997) *dérives* through eastern London evoke, through the surface, pasts (and presents) not usually noticed. Anne McClintock's provocative notion of 'anachronistic space' – a permanently anterior time within the space of the modern – is catching at something similar (McClintock, 1995). On the way between London and Milton Keynes we go through Berkhamsted. Right by the station stand the remains of a Norman castle: the motte and bailey and

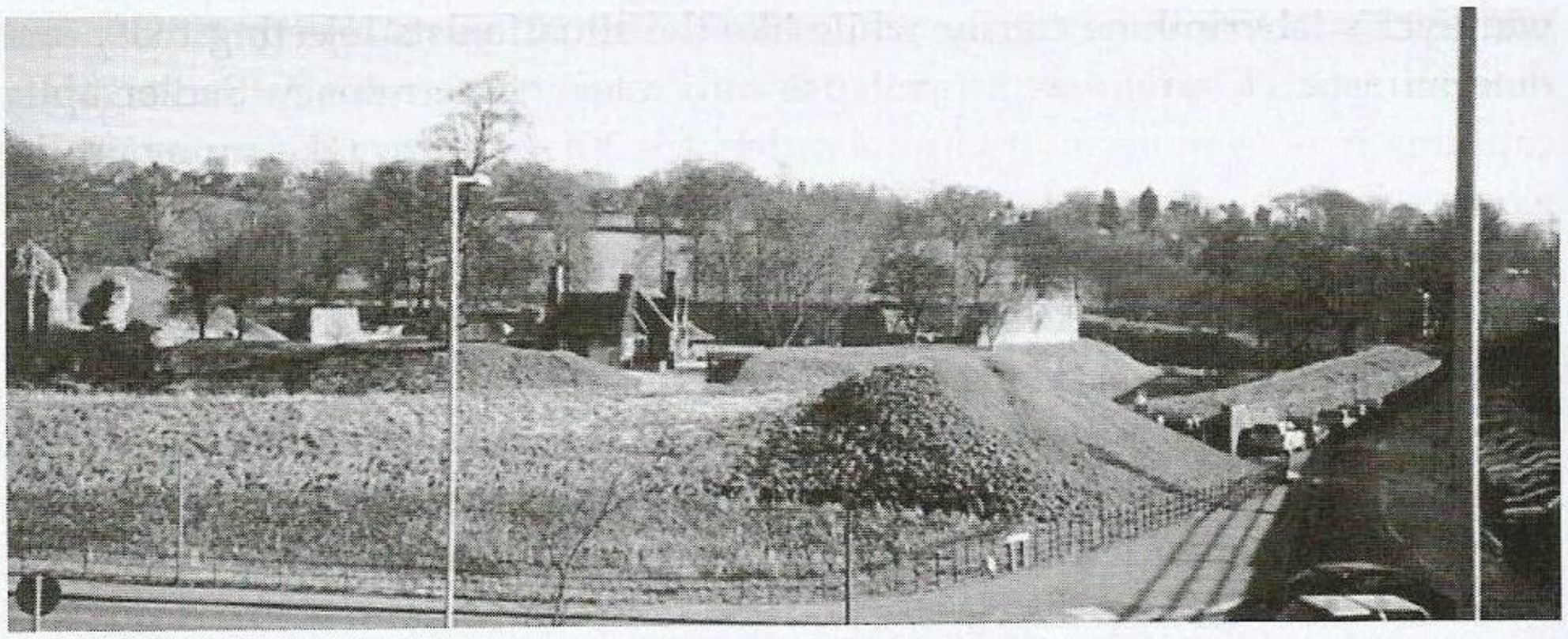

figure 11.2 *Berkhamsted Castle: past or present? (the ridge on the right is the railway embankment)* © Tim Parfitt

the moats around them still clearly defined, the grey stone walls now fallen and discontinuous, with the air of old grey teeth. We know then that the 'present-ness' of the horizontality of space is a product of a multitude of histories whose resonances are still there, if we would but see them, and which sometimes catch us with full force unawares.

However, it is not just buried histories at issue here, but histories still being made, now. Something more mobile than is implied by an archaeological dig down through the surfaces of the space of today. Something more temporal than the notion of space as a collage of historical periods (eleventh-century castle abutting nineteenth-century railway station).

So take the train, again, from London to Milton Keynes.[7] But this time you are not just travelling through space or across it (from one place – London – to another – Milton Keynes). Since space is the product of social relations you are also helping, although in this case in a fairly minor way, to *alter* space, to participate in its continuing production. You are part of the constant process of the making and breaking of links which is an element in the constitution of you yourself, of London (which will not have the pleasure of your company for the day), of Milton Keynes (which will; and whose existence as an independent node of commuting is reinforced as a result), and thus of space itself. You are not just travelling *through* space or across it, you are altering it a little. Space and place emerge through active material practices. Moreover, this movement of yours is not just spatial, it is also temporal. The London you left just a half an hour ago (as you speed through Cheddington) is not the London of now. It has already moved on. Lives have pushed ahead, investments and disinvestments have been made in the City, it has begun to rain quite heavily (they said it would); a crucial meeting has broken up acrimoniously; someone has caught a

fish in the Grand Union canal. And you are on your way to meet up with a Milton Keynes which is also moving on. Arriving in a new place means joining up with, somehow linking into, the collection of interwoven stories of which that place is made. Arriving at the office, collecting the post, picking up the thread of discussions, remembering to ask how that meeting went last night, noticing gratefully that your room's been cleaned. Picking up the threads and weaving them into a more or less coherent feeling of being 'here', 'now'. Linking up again with trajectories you encountered the last time you were in the office. Movement, and the making of relations, take/make time.

At either end of your journey, then, a town or city (a place) which itself consists of a bundle of trajectories. And likewise with the places in between. You are, on that train, travelling not across space-as-a-surface (this would be the landscape – and anyway what to humans may be a surface is not so to the rain and may not be so either to a million micro-bugs which weave their way through it – this 'surface' is a specific relational production), you are travelling *across trajectories*. That tree which blows now in the wind out there beyond the train window was once an acorn on another tree, will one day hence be gone. That field of yellow oil-seed flower, product of fertiliser and European subsidy, is a moment – significant but passing – in a chain of industrialised agricultural production.

There is a famous passage, I think from Raymond Williams … He too is on a train and he catches a picture, a woman in her pinny bending over to clear the back drain with a stick. For the passenger on the train she will forever be doing this. She is held in that instant, almost immobilised. Perhaps she's doing it ('I really *must* clear out that drain before I go away') just as she locks up the house to leave to visit her sister, half the world away, and whom she hasn't seen for years. From the train she is going nowhere; she is trapped in the timeless instant.

Thinking space as the sphere of a multiplicity of trajectories, imagining a train journey (for example) as a speeding across on-going stories, means bringing the woman in the pinny to life, acknowledging her as another on-going life. Likewise with Berkhamsted Castle. The train does not, as some argue, speed across different time-zones, from Norman times to twentieth century. That would be to work with a form of theatre of memory which understands space as a kind of composite of instants of different times, an angle of the imagination which is a-historical, working in opposition to a sense of temporal development. Space as a collage of the static. Yet both the castle and the station continue their histories as I pass through (I may contribute to those histories). From Norman stronghold, the castle became a palace, was passed between kings and other royalty, served as a prison and was subsequently cannibalised for the building of a mansion. Today its story continues as a significant tourist attraction. (However much the heritage industries might wish on

occasions to preserve things in aspic they cannot actually ever hold them still. The depthless commodified present which Jameson so effectively points to precisely denies all this. But it does so not only, as is usually argued, by commodifying 'the past', but also by refusing to recognise the histories which are ongoing through the present.) 'The only adequate image is one that includes a sense of motion in itself' (Rodowick, 1997, p. 88). The train transects the castle's on-going history.

As Jameson argued (Chapter 7), recognising all this is impossible. Every train journey (and that would be the least of it) would become a nightmare of guilty admission of all the stories the fullness of whose coeval existence you did not manage to recognise … as the train sped on. What is at issue is not this but the change in perspective … the imaginative opening up of space. It is to refuse that flipping of the imaginative eye from modernist singular temporality to postmodern depthlessness; to retain at least some sense of contemporaneous multiple becomings.

When Hernán Cortés heaved to the top of the pass between the snow-covered volcanoes and looked down upon the incredible island city of pyramids and causeways, the immense central valley between the mountain ranges stretching away into the heat, he wasn't just 'crossing space'. What was about to happen, as he and his army, and the discontented locals they had recruited along the way, marched down upon Tenochtitlán, was the meeting-up of two stories, each already with its own spaces and geographies, two imperial histories: the Aztec and the Spanish. We read so often of the conquest of space, but what was/is at issue is also the meeting up with others who are also journeying, also making histories. And also making geographies and imagining space: for the coeval look back, ignore you, stand in a different relation to your 'here and now'. Conquest, exploration, voyages of discovery are about the meeting-up of histories, not merely a pushing-out 'across space'. The shift in naming, from *la conquista* to *el encuentro,* speaks also of a more active imagination of the engagement between space and time. As Eric Wolf (1982) has so well reminded us, to think otherwise is to imagine 'a people without history'. It is to immobilise – suspended awaiting our arrival – the place at the other end of the journey; and it is to conceive of the journey itself as a movement simply across some imagined static surface.

Wolf's arguments, and the writings of others in a similar vein, are now well recognised and widely cited. Yet their implications are rarely taken on board; and this failure has political effects. José Rabasa's appreciative but critical engagement with the work of Michel de Certeau provides a lovely illustration both of how a contrary way of thinking (that 'others' 'out there' have no history) is still deeply embedded in the way we imagine the world and of why this matters. Rabasa (1993) analyses in particular de Certeau's treatment of Jean de Léry's *Histoire* of his journey in Brazil (de Certeau, 1988; de Léry, 1578), and

> childishness; masculinity/feminity; science/art; high culture/mass culture; critique/affect; politics/aesthetics etc.) and of modern subjectivity itself. (p. 96)

This is an important argument, and one which in a number of ways links up with the theses in this book.[10] Postmodern nostalgia, on this reading, is at least partly explicable as a kind of return of the repressed of modernity. Moreover, it can take a number of forms, and one potential political project is precisely to articulate a politically progressive form. The title of Wendy Wheeler's article is 'Nostalgia isn't nasty'.

Now, nostalgia constitutively plays with notions of space and time. And what I would like to argue, I think in sympathy with Wheeler's thesis at its broadest level, is that when nostalgia articulates space and time in such a way that it robs others of their histories (their stories), then indeed we need to rework nostalgia. Maybe in *those* cases it is indeed 'nasty'.

My point is that the imagination of going home (and I am by no means sure that, as Wheeler implies, this is only a postmodern phenomenon) so frequently means going 'back' in both space and time. Back to the old familiar things, to the way things used to be. (Indeed as I look out the window after Congleton the things I pick out are so often the things I remember from before. Signs of Mancunian specificity, which so often too get entangled (given modernity's *and* postmodernity's tendencies to sameness) with signs inherited from the past – one thinks wryly of Borges' (1970) 'The Argentine writer and tradition'.)

One moment haunts me in this regard. My sister and I had gone 'back home' and were sitting with our parents in the front room having tea. The treat on such occasions was the chocolate cake. It was a speciality: heavy and with some kind of mixture of butter, syrup and cocoa powder in the middle. A wartime recipe I think, invented out of necessity, and a triumph. I loved it. On this occasion, though, Mum went out to the kitchen and came back holding a chocolate cake that was altogether different. All light-textured and fluffy, and a paler brown. Not the good old stodgy sweetness we loved so well. She was so pleased; a new recipe she'd found. But with one voice my sister and I sent up a wail of complaint – 'Oh *Mum* … but we like the *old* chocolate cake'.

I've often re-lived and regretted that moment, though I think she understood. For me, without thinking then of its implications, part of the point of going home was to do things as we'd always done them. Going home, in the way I was carrying it at that moment, did not mean joining up with ongoing Mancunian lives. Certainly it was time travel as well as space travel, but I lived it in that moment as a journey to the past. But places change; they go on without you. Mother invents new recipes. A nostalgia which denies that, is certainly in need of re-working.

For the truth is that you can never simply 'go back', to home or to anywhere else. When you get 'there' the place will have moved on just as you yourself will have changed. And this of course is the point. For to open up 'space' to this

kind of imagination means thinking time and space as mutually imbricated and thinking both of them as the product of interrelations. You can't go back in space-time. To think that you can is to deprive others of their ongoing independent stories. It may be 'going back home', or imagining regions and countries as backward, as needing to catch up, or just taking that holiday in some 'unspoilt, timeless' spot. The point is the same. You can't go back. (De Certeau's trajectories are not, in fact, reversible. That you can trace backwards on a page/map does not mean you can in space-time. The indigenous Mexicans might re-trace their footsteps, but their place of origin will no longer be the same.) You can't hold places still. What you *can* do is meet up with others, catch up with where another's history has got to 'now', but where that 'now' (more rigorously, that 'here and now', that *hic et nunc*) is itself constituted by nothing more than – precisely – that meeting-up (again).

DEMAND Centre Pieces of Thought #3 7 February 2014

Pieces of thought are written discussions that we have internally in The DEMAND Centre. The two initial contributions (from Gordon Walker and Frank Trentmann) were circulated to all DEMAND Centre members and responses collected. Though not intended for broader circulation, all the authors have agreed that the work can be included in the reading pack for the 2015 DEMAND Summer School. It is for summer school participants only, ***PLEASE DO NOT CIRCULATE****.*

Guidelines for citation
Given the thought and effort that has gone into the pieces of thought, we have put together the following referencing guidelines. If you wish to refer to a piece of thought in your written work, we suggest the following steps:

i. *Contact the author of the particular contribution that you want to reference. It might be that the idea has already been discussed in a published paper/book/book chapter, in which case they can provide an appropriate reference.*

ii. *If there is no published reference, then we ask that you include an acknowledgement (either as footnote or in an acknowledgements section) e.g. The idea of conceptualising energy as need was outlined by [author name] in an internal DEMAND centre discussion.*

iii. *If the Piece of Thought in its entirety inspires more general thinking that plays an important part in a publishable output, then consider including all the contributors in your acknowledgements. E.g. My thanks to Gordon Walker, Frank Trentmann etc… whose contributions to an internal DEMAND discussion provided inspiration for this paper.*

How does synchronicity matter to energy demand? Gordon Walker

Rhythms of various forms pervade everyday life, providing temporal structures that organise and order repetitions within the complex, ongoing flow of the social world. Lefebreve (2004), in developing his account of the analysis of social rhythms, argues that '*everywhere there is interaction between a place, a time, and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm*'. Whilst his sense of 'energy' is not necessarily the resource-focused meaning that we are taking in DEMAND, his statement still suggests the close relationship between the timing of instances of energy use and the timing of practice performances. Shove (2009), goes as far as to argue that *'practices make time'* (p17), such that the observable social patterns of repetition that we classify as rhythms are essentially patterns in the routinized or habituated doing of practices at similar times (eating, sleeping, washing, for example), and/or a functional coordination of different practices into connected sequences (waking, then dressing, then eating, then travelling, then working and so on) (Southerton, 2012). The rhythms of society as a whole can thus be observed at an aggregate level, but they are made up or constituted by the many practices of people and organisations reproducing, over time, similar patterns of coordinated activity.

Notions of rhythm and synchronisation are closely related and are typically worked with at similar temporal scales (daily, weekly, seasonally). Synchronicity however is concerned with the relationships between rhythms, how they are matched or free running, locked together or disconnected, synchronous or asynchronous. As with rhythm, questions of synchronicity have been seen as fundamental to the relation between time, everyday life and the reproduction of social order. Adams (1990) notes that "*all social life is timed. It has a time-based order. Synchronisation and 'time structuring' are fundamental to any collective order*" (p 108) and as with rhythm synchronisation emerges through practices, and crucially their social sharing "*the rhythmic structure of the day is not merely individual but collective and relies upon the synchronisation of practices that become part of how 'we' get things done*" (Edensor, 2010) p8.

Such forms of social synchronization are important to the time profiles of energy demand, but the synchronisations between natural and social rhythms are also increasingly significant to the reworking of energy systems. Both will therefore be considered in this piece of thought.

Social synchronisation

Social synchronisation is about practice rhythms that are to some degree happening together in time, within and across their dispersal over space. Classic examples of such synchronization would be meal times, where the combination of people eating together in the same space together with shared conventions of when breakfast, lunch or dinner happen during the day, mean that eating is to some degree synchronised across society (Warde et al., 2007). Time use studies have shown how such patterns of synchronisation vary internationally, being stronger and weaker and/or taking on a different character for particular practices from society to society, and also how they have been shifting over time. In relation to meals and eating for example, Southerton et al (2012) compare eating practices in the UK and Spain, finding clear differences between the two countries in the temporal patterns of food consumption, relating these to '*the relationship between personal and institutional timings of daily activity*'. Internationally they also note that temporal patterns of eating practices have changed significantly over time, but with much continued differentiation between countries and cultural groups (Warde et al., 2007).

In energy terms patterns of synchronization matter because of the way that they generate aggregate patterns of rhythmic load on grid infrastructures and in particular peaks in energy demand. The classic aggregate temporal pattern of electricity demand over a typical weekday, has a morning peak and an evening peak. These recurrent peaks are produced through the social synchronisation of energy demanding practices (across multiple spaces) into the same time periods. This might mean the synchronisation of the same practice (e.g. cooking) into the same peak time period, or the bundling of multiple interconnected practices into the same peak period. For example, cooking, watching TV, using computers, having lights on, running dishwashers, doing the hoovering all happening during the evening peak when there is much home based activity. Each separate practice is not necessarily precisely synchronised (everyone washing the dishes at the same time) but there is a shared pattern of energy consuming practices of various forms happening during the same early evening peak period – a shared pattern that might be integral to the understanding of the practice itself as well as to its temporal positioning in relation to other practices. Other classic more precisely timed energy demand peaks would include the 'everyone boiling the kettle' at key moments during socially shared patterns of TV watching.

There are energy-related research questions here that relate both to how patterns of synchronization (and therefore peak loads) are changing, and may change in the future and also to the realisation of 'peak shaving' objectives. If, as for example suggested by research on eating practices discussed earlier, temporal patterns of meal times are becoming more varied, fragmented and less synchronised what does this mean for the changing nature of energy demand related to the various practices that come together before, during and after eating a meal? For patterns of watching TV (which are not disconnected from patterns of eating) there is also much change underway in that there are now multiple options for exactly when TV programmes are watched, with '1+' channels and on-line catch-up or on-demand options. Does this mean that the specific energy demand peaks associated with social shared synchronisations of TV watching will increasingly dissipate? Also significant in relation to the peaks and troughs of demand are the changing use of battery powered devices and the specific temporalities between when batteries are charged (and electricity drawn from the grid), and then when that electricity is used to perform 'work'. It may be that laptops and tablet devices are being more used at certain times of day, or that electric car driving takes place predominantly in the morning and evening commuting rush hours, but in electricity load terms it is when they are plugged in and drawing from the grid that matters. Hence for the electrification of automobility in particular, given the

scale of energy demand that could imply, the patterns of temporal and spatial relation between use and charging that emerge from driving practices, and how these are bundled and sequenced with much else are absolutely crucial to future load profiles.

In such ways therefore patterns of synchronisation between both practices and practice performances are profoundly relevant to current and future patterns of energy demand. Synchronisations with natural rhythms are also though important.

Natural- Social Synchronisation

Adams (1990) argues that '*rhythmicity is the key to the time world of nature*', with the ever-present solar rhythms meaning that for her '*the sun is the root of all rhythmic organisation*'. Whilst through its regulation of light in particular the sun does generate an important sense of rhythmic patterning to light-demanding social practices (as well as to bio-rhythms), the use of energy has been integral to enabling the disconnection of such practices from natural solar rhythms. As Lefebvre (2004) comments '*As if daytime were not enough to carry out repetitive tasks, social practice eats bit by bit into the night*' (p74) and the generation of artificial light has been obviously essential to that progression. In relation to light, and also to warmth and cooling as energy services, it follows that the degree of synchronisation between natural and social rhythms is significant for the patterns of energy demand that are generated. Thus the notion of a 24 hour economy or city, in which the timings of practices are purposefully delinked from solar rhythms has evident implications for the 24hr demand for light and heat.

A key example here is how the embedding of daylight saving or 'summer time' into the clock-time structure of different societies has generated debate over the significance of the energy demand consequences of better synchronising daily patterns of practice with the availability of natural light (Hill et al., 2010). Summer time clock shifting it is argued better matches activity and natural light, hence reducing energy demand. Patterns of working hours and their relation to the natural air temperature at different times of the day are another example, with the siesta an illustration of a matching between the social rhythms of practice and the natural rhythm of the temperature in the middle of the day. As the siesta as a social institution has all but disappeared in countries such as Spain and Mexico in the face of the progressive international expansion and coordination of what are thought of as 'normal' siesta-less working hours, so energy intensive air conditioning has become increasingly dominant as a means of enabling working practices to be sustained through the hot middle of the day (Shove, 2003).

A second form of natural-social synchronization is also becoming increasingly integral to smart grid and smart energy system imaginaries. As electricity supply becomes progressively decarbonised (at least as it is intended to) one of the significant potential challenges of a supply system that involves any large scale dependency on renewable sources, is the intermittency of the energy that is generated and available to meet demand. Whilst not all renewable energy sources are intermittent through being dependent on natural cycles and patterns over time (biomass for example), and some have more predictable intermittency than others (tidal, for example, compared to solar), the possibility of increasingly aiming to match energy demand to the available supply at any point in time, rather than the other way round as conventionally understood, is very much on the table. Such matching has been talked about at different scales, from the household with solar PV panels which seeks to maximise its use of electricity at times when the panels are actively generating electricity; to businesses that similarly seek to regulate their use of energy from day to day and hour to hour to best utilise their own on-site generated electricity; through to system scale management at a

grid level in which forms of load shifting and regulation are applied. At each of these scales the question is again raised as to what extent there can be better synchronisation between natural and social rhythms. Which practices are more or less malleable? What are the institutional conditions under which demand response management of this form might be achieved? Some predictably information driven and individualised behavioural initiatives are underway – such as the 'WattTime' web site in California (WattTime, 2014) that aims to '*empower you to lower your carbon footprint by shifting when you use energy to time when the grid is green*'. Given much that has already been said though, the much bigger task here is to envisage forms of intervention which work at the level of practice dynamics, rather than those of individual energy consumers.

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Response – Frank Trentmann

Gordon has succinctly outlined some of the major and complex issues we should be concerned with when thinking about the temporal ordering of energy-hungry practices in everyday life. His thoughts could not be timelier, as energy providers and grid operators are now openly worrying about black-outs and temporary inability to meet demand during peak hours. My reflections are mainly meant to extend his analysis further, adding some dimensions and raising a few additional questions.

1. Gordon's focus is almost exclusively on households, that is private end-users. His main examples are eating, cooking, watching TV and using computers. While domestic energy use has come to be a significant and rising portion in rich developed societies – mainly since the 1960s --, the peak problem is really a problem that arises from its relation to industrial and commercial use. At a macro-level, then, the overarching task of synchronisation is between work/industrial consumption and domestic/private consumption. There is no single strategy by which societies have confronted this tension. Industry could be

prioritised over households – or not. Arguably, there has been a shift in the late twentieth century where temporary shortages have become politically unacceptable, at least in the rich North; interestingly it was also the case in socialist East Germany which ordered heavy energy users such as chemical industries to introduce additional night shifts and smaller industries to temporarily stop work altogether rather than interfere with citizens' domestic routines during peak hours in winters; in England today, SSE (and perhaps other energy suppliers too) charge organisations higher rates during peak hours on chosen winter day.

It might be worth asking whether the modernist dream of uninterrupted service at the flick of a switch is still worth it and viable – there are social and generational as well as environmental costs involved in the pursuit of synchronicity. There are trade-offs to consider: robustness comes at a price (both money and efficiency). There are engineering aspects to these trade-offs but it also deserves more consideration from social and democratic perspectives. If rich societies were prepared to live with temporary disruptions, the intermittent supply of energy from renewables would become less of a problem.

2. Rhythms of consumption and rhythms of work: we might want to think more about their dynamic interplay. The two peaks (morning and evening) emerged as the historical product of the industrial workday in the course of the twentieth century, when long lunch breaks (and trips home) were replaced by shorter meals in the company canteen. The lunch peak declined. What has been the effect of computerisation, flexible hours and the return in recent years of part-time and also full-time work on weekends? Laptops and smart phones are switched on at home for work as well as leisure-related practices. Conversely, the rise of mass unemployment in Greece, Italy and Spain must have had a huge impact on the temporal order of social practices. If we want to think about points of intervention, it would be useful to know more about aspects of fragmentation which are mainly endogenous to leisure and consumer culture (e.g. fitness and music crazes) and those that respond to exogenous developments, such as changing norms and routines at work. One key source for the fragmentation of social practices has been the rise of "busy" lifestyles – but this in itself is playing out the cult of busyness in professional and organisational culture discernible since the 1950s. There are class and generational dimensions here. Busyness, mobility patterns and the challenge of synchronisation are unevenly distributed across society – and this means that any intervention in the coordination of practices raises questions of social interests and fairness – who will be more affected: those with more or less fragmented lifestyles?

3. There is no reason why we should treat the challenge of rearranging energy-hungry practices across time as a new problem. Electricity companies have long played an active role in doing this. Initially, in the inter-war years and the mid-twentieth century this was about filling troughs as well as shaving peaks – with special rates encouraging households to use energy-demanding appliances like electrical ovens and hovers, to make better use of capacity – night-storage radiators were a later example. Are there lessons to be learnt from such earlier interventions? Indeed, should energy providers take some responsibility for the temporal ordering of practices that such interventions encouraged? It would also be interesting to hear from colleagues at EDF about the impact of the 35-hour week on domestic practices in France – travel data points to an increase in longer weekend trips (Friday to Monday), presumably shifting energy use to second homes to holiday regions more generally; on the other hand impressionistic evidence suggests that it led to a revival of more sustained (and less fragmented) leisure practices on Saturdays.

4. Shifting use: We might want to distinguish further between the different kinds of temporal shifts which practices undergo. In his Paris journals in 1784, Benjamin Franklin complained how wasteful the French were, getting up so late in the day only to then stay up late into the night and burn lots of candles. Gordon

alludes to the decline of the siesta in recent years – another example of the spill-over from changes at the work place, together with the diffusion of air-conditioning. There is no indication, that the shortening of the mid-time nap has made Mediterranean societies less nocturnal and finally go to bed early as Franklin would have liked. In other words, practices (sleeping in this instance) might be moved to a different time slot, but equally they might be compressed or spread out. For energy, their temporal density matters as well as their timing and sequence. Since we are dealing with synchronisation, there are presumably knock-on effects from meddling with one practice on others that affect the degree of density overall.

5. Daily life is full of practices. This raises the inevitable question whether there are some bundles of practices that should matter more to DEMAND than others. Of course, it depends on what we are after. For conceptual or theoretical purposes, it could be very interesting to follow the temporal divergence between when mobile phones are charged and used. From an applied perspective of intervention, it might be less so. I was intrigued by the list of practices highlighted by Gordon: eating, cooking, watching TV. (Eating, incidentally, has become more structured in some societies like Germany with a documented rise in the hours family eat together.[1]) These are all interesting from a practice point of view, but from an energy point of view the really intensive practices are those connected to heating space and water – washing bodies, washing up, washing clothes, and heating and cooling space. The temporal redistribution of a single one of these would probably make it unnecessary to worry about all the gadgets being constantly "on" or being charged at the same time in the evening.

6. Natural and social rhythms. I am especially glad that Gordon included this relationship in the discussion. In the light of climate change, it deserves greater attention – although it should be said that nature was not entirely pure or untouched by human activity before industrial times. The annual equivalent of the 24-hour society is the society without seasons. This means several things: that produce and seasonal services should be available at all times during the year; that formerly seasonal practices should be available on demand out of season (ice-skating in Southern California; Christmas holidaying in the sun); and that levels and expectations of comfort lose their fluctuations (raising of indoor temperatures during winter months in the Northern hemisphere). There are other indirect side-effects, however, that come from the revenge of nature. More erratic weather patterns, shifts in seasonal climates, extreme droughts and flooding – all those have a knock-on effect on social rhythms, and thus energy use. Residents in flooded Somerset currently do not need to coordinate their outdoor walks and football practice. The millions who had their flights cancelled in recent blizzards on the East Coast of America had a lot of unexpected synchronisation to do. Inevitably, the literature on rhythms has been focused on repetitive and fairly stable patterns – perhaps too much so?

7. Let me end by linking back Gordon's paper to the previous discussion of needs. Are there temporal needs of synchronicity? California has a "baseline electricity allowance", that establishes the electricity necessary to supply a significant portion (50-60%) of the "reasonable needs" of the "average" residential customer. Such an approach allows for interventions above that baseline and Southern California Edison has introduced several plans that directly tackle temporal problems of demand for peak and seasonal use. These include residential schedules in four bands (rising rates with rising use) and money-back plans for saving energy – the main advice here consists of: "Use your washing machine, dryer and dishwasher during off-peak hours. Use timers on your electric water heater. Use timers and photocells on lights and sprinklers." It also includes hands-on intervention, such as a "Summer Discount Plan" which gives qualifying customers an

[1] Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Ed.): Familie zwischen Flexibilität und Verlässlichkeit. Perspektiven für eine lebenslaufbezogene Familienpolitik. Siebter Familienbericht, Berlin 2006.

annual discount of up to $ 200, for allowing SCE to "temporarily shut off their central air conditioner compressors, without advance notice, for a limited number of hours throughout the year."[2] Such intervention might not change the collective practice of cooling the home, but it does set out to tackle the temporal strain arising from this practice. There is no reason why we could not envisage practice-oriented approaches that work with interventions such as these that target individual consumers.

What it does raise is fundamental questions about the social and environmental consequences of collectively synchronised practices. One is empirical – how much does the fragmentation of practices matter for energy use? Have Scandinavian countries, where eating happens throughout the day, less of a peak problem than Mediterranean societies where the structured social lunch and dinner remains the norm? But the question also has a normative and political aspect. Fragmentation of practices might be bad from a republican or social democratic ethos which sees the general good as acted out through shared collective action in a shared time and place. But this can also be oppressive, and perhaps it is not such a bad thing from an energy and environmental point of view, if washing, cooking and media use were to be more scattered across time. How much do we want to be in synch?

Responses from DEMAND

Mike Allen

Although I am by no means qualified to make much of a response, both pieces raised interesting issues that I had not previously considered. Gordon's point about the use of battery powered devices and their effect on the energy load stood out particularly for me as it is concerned with the effect that an already extant technology (the battery) is having now and how it may change future energy load profiles if its use is greatly expanded in the facilitation of travel. I also think that Frank Trentmann raises some very interesting points, especially that there has been a shift to the political unacceptability of temporary shortages in the late twentieth century whilst later he points to the potential problems of consistent supply associated with renewable energy. It is interesting to me that the unacceptability of supply disruption arose just before a time in which the acceptability of disruption to the energy supply would have been politically beneficial for securing a greener energy supply.

Matt Watson

Unsurprisingly, the combined intellectual powers of Gordon and Frank mean so much pertinent to this topic is already covered. This response is therefore tentative, and reflecting first, my role in project 3.1, focusing on the relation of (supply) infrastructures with (demand) practices; second, my work on a project with PV (photovoltaic) scientists; and, finally, my domestic life in a property lacking particular common infrastructures, notably mains gas, and the endless labour of coordination and synchronisation which follows from trying to find a economic and environmentally responsible mix of technologies, skills and routines, of keeping it adequately warm.

The focus of Gordon's and Frank's pieces of thought are centred around the synchronisation between demand and supply. This is understandable, this being where the challenges of peak load and the purposes of peak shaving and trough filling, the issues with the intermittency of renewables, all lie. Within this the focus is properly on the synchronicity of practices in relation to how they generate aggregate demand and the challenges that follow from it. This undoubtedly covers the central ground of worrying about the

[2] Southern California Edison, "Summer Discount Plan": http://on.sce.com/1g1CF8M

synchronicity of practices and energy demand, but leaves in the shadows other pertinent issues.

First, is appears to lead to some unreflectively on the extent to which both Gordon and Frank appear to be talk almost overwhelmingly about electricity, rather than energy (apart from Frank's mention of candles). This is understandable, but worth bringing to light and thinking through, as it shows the importance of the specificities of the materialities of the particular 'vectors' through which primary energy ends up as the useful energy that end up being part of practices. Electricity (around 20% of UK final consumption) is unique in the specificity of its synchronicity between supply and demand. Essentially, most of the vectors of energy that end up coming through infrastructures to 'final consumption' are in forms that can be stored cheaply, relative to their value. Solid fuels – coal and wood – need only a dry and more or less secure volume of space: oil and gas need considerably more investment, limiting the extent to which they are stockpiled, but their 'storability' (and portability as stored energy) are part of course part of their value. The problem with electricity is that forms of storage are generally not currently cost effective unless in off-grid situations, or to enable portability. It is this that underlies the challenges energy suppliers face with situations of peak demand: whatever the temporal properties of the fuel for electricity generation, electricity demand has to be met by more or less simultaneous generation – whether that's through fission of uranium or hydro turbines turning on water pumped up hill in times of electricity surplus. The issue with peak electricity demand is providing the generation and distribution capacity for peak demand, hence the prioritisation of shaving the peaks rather than worrying about total demand. Electricity is unique in terms of the demands of synchronicity between demand and supply.

In writing this for the DEMAND centre, I am aware I am sounding dangerously supply-side oriented. But the specific temporalities of supply matter for how we think about the way demand matters. First, it means that one kWh of energy is not equivalent to another. Of course this is plain when it comes to different forms of energy – a kWh or electricity is a lot more versatile than a kWh or wood, for example. However, it also means time, as well as material, matters for comparing one kWh to another. This is implicit in topics touched on by Gordon and expanded by Frank in terms of suppliers' attempts to shave peaks and fill troughs with pricing and technological interventions. But it has implications also for the details of synchronicity between demand and supply, and who does it when and where.

In Gordon's and Frank's discussions, blunt cost interventions like Economy 7 (E7) pricing and troublesome technologies like night storage heaters appear cast as historical. For those of us living away from mains gas, E7 and night storage heating can be entirely contemporary. Indeed, without mains gas, households economics play out in such a way as to make domestic energy storage more or less necessary, as the only alternative is to pay for electricity at the rates it comes at the time the heat is needed. Electricity is hard to store but heat is easier, so as long as the useful energy you want is heat (electricity makes heat rather easier than heat makes electricity). It can be stored in night storage heaters, or a thermal store, or in the thermal mass of a solid floor with heating pipes. Or homes have other forms of energy storage for heating – in LPG or oil tanks, or coal stores or wood sheds. Such households have other forms of synchronisation to deal with – whether just ensuring the tanks or stores do not get too depleted, or the more complex and finer synchronicities of managing wood piles and the rhythms of fuelling and re-fuelling stoves, determined by the way different fuels and stoves burn and purposes of burning. For some, the rhythms extend to the weekly and seasonal patterns of cutting and carrying wood (Jalas & Rinkinen, 2013). In the absence of specific infrastructures (principally mains gas), householders typically have to do more of the work of synchronising energy supply and heat demand.

The additional costs of E7 in the UK mean it is only likely to make sense where electricity is being used for space heating through some sort of heat storage (standing charges and standard tariff are both higher on an E7 contract so it only makes sense if a household can use a large proportion of all electricity during the reduced tariff). Once committed though, the low unit price of electricity during the 7 hours of reduced tariff means it is worth the effort of intervening in other technologies and routines to better synchronise demand with the specific temporalities of the electricity supply: such as plugging through or wiring in timers to shift the energy demand of laundry, dishwashing and battery charging to the night time.

So, under current regimes, a minority of households take on a significant share of the labour of better synchronising rhythms of energy demand with those of supply (in ways echoed by more novel changes to household practices touched on by Gordon in relation to the less predictable temporalities that arise from PV panels giving free electricity when the sun is shining).

Gordon touches too on the additional challenges of synchronising demand and supply in relation to renewables. Indeed, critical attention to the dynamics at stake here is worth pursuing. The rhythmicity of renewables is not entirely given by the flows of energy that renewable technologies convert: the details of the technology matter too. With the rapid growth of PV, the mismatch between the scientific and economic conditions of technology development and the routines of demand are telling. PV development, whether in labs, in technology development or in roll out to maximise returns on state incentive structures (the feed in tariff) lead towards maximising total electricity production – technological progress is measured principally in total efficiency of converting sunlight to kWh of electricity: and incentives reward based on (theoretical) total kWh of electricity produced. The problem, especially in higher latitude countries like the UK where energy is used far more for keeping warm than keeping cool, is that maximising electricity generation from PV means PV produces most electricity almost exactly when it is needed least – on sunny summer days. If PV was developed and installed to maximise *useful* electricity generation under cloudy skies and when the sun is low in the skies, it could be developed to convert different parts of the light spectrum and be installed at different orientations, in ways that better synchronise supply and demand, reducing the *total* kWh generated but maximising the *useful* kWh provided.

So many contemporary dynamics of supply as well as consumption could play out in radically different ways for future patterns of synchronicity – whether in coping with the load shedding (planned power cuts) already characteristic of many electricity grids around the world, or enjoying the benefits of available electricity storage. When it comes to considering synchronisation, the inseparability of demand from the technologies, infrastructures and economic and political structuring of supply is, once again, clear.

Jacopo Torriti – Industrial vs Residential in demand response management

Gordon asks under which institutional conditions demand response management might be achieved. There is a size issue which has traditionally led demand response management to focus on industrial rather than residential demand. Interruptible programmes have been applied to large industry for decades following the rationale that high synchronisation within this group (large energy consumers) counts more to the grid than small (energy consuming) residential users. It might be that, in addition to the size rationale, an assumption that activities are more planned and predictably sequenced in industrial buildings than in residential ones has always been made when prioritising industrial over residential demand for interruptible programmes. This observation leads to another thought associated with demand response management. Existing incentives to reduce loads for industrial and commercial demand (like the Short Term Operating Reserve in

the UK) have brought about very little power turn down and much more use of decentralised forms of energy generation (renewables but also diesel generators). This reinforces the continuous and mutual dynamics between demand and supply and the potential for policy and market arrangements to change some of the rhythms and patterns of demand.

Perhaps the distinction between residential and non-residential is not too useful here if the aim is to identify flexibility through synchronicity of practices. The solid lines which have marked the work place in terms of space and time over the past two centuries have also played a role in shaping peak demand and synchronicity. This phenomenon might have been calcified with the widespread use of fixed energy tariffs under monopolies first and regulated tariffs later on. However, the move alone to dynamic tariffs may decalcify some of peak demand, but will not *per se* bring about flexibility. For this reason, the direction taken by Gordon and Frank on synchronicity seems extremely promising.

James Faulconbridge - Synchronicity as the cause and solution to issues of demand?

Gordon and Frank do an excellent job of outlining a range of important ways that synchronicity affects demand. In this response I want to consider through some very speculative thoughts (!) how, through their review, Gordon and Frank highlight but perhaps don't fully reflect upon the inherent contradictions that exist as far as synchronicity and demand creation/management/reduction are concerned.

Cutting across the discussion is recognition that the synchronisation of practices can be problematic, for instance if it creates excessive peak loads, but potentially also a solution to energy demand management, for example if we can resynchronise certain practices so that they occur at 'off-peak' times or in line with 'natural' rhythms such as daylight. And this is the contradiction I want to explore further: should we see synchronisation as something to encourage or discourage? I suggest this is a contradiction because there are numerous examples of how synchronisation has both benefits and costs for energy demand. Issues associated with the synchronisation of work are interesting in this regard.

The commute and rush hours are problematic because they create peaks in demand that transports systems have to be engineered to handle, but are also beneficial in that they minimise the per capita use of energy (a full bus/train is most efficient). The 9-5 working day is similarly problematic because of the spikes in energy demand created (both for commuting and in terms of use of electricity in offices), but again is also beneficial as it means homes do not need to be heated in this period (assuming all occupants work) and lighting and heating energy consumption in offices can be restricted to a set period. So is synchronisation to be encouraged or not? It seems to depend if you are concerned with peak load or overall energy use.

One way of addressing this apparent contradiction is to reframe questions of synchronicity by focussing not on the timing of individual practices, such as working, but on the temporal relationships between several synchronised practices. As such, the question becomes 'how does the *synchronicity of multiple synchronised practices* affect demand'? We see, however, similar contradictions in relation to this form of synchronicity.

Continuing with the example of working, the synchronisation or not of work hours in relation to other practices, such as schooling, socialising, shopping etc affects energy demand.[3] This is particularly pertinent in relation to questions of mobility. For instance, it could be argued that de-synchronised work practices can

[3] It is probably misleading to refer to schooling, socialising, shopping etc as practices themselves, but for analytical convenience this simplification is used here.

help reduce energy demand for mobility because flexibility of start/end times allow people to use lower carbon modes such as walking or catching the bus thanks to the greater freedom created to arrive/depart around bus timetables or take extra time to get to work after, for example, dropping the kids at school. However, such low carbon commuting is probably only possible if other practices are de-synchronised around flexible working times. If we all start work at different times, schools, social clubs, healthcare providers and others must desynchronise the timing of the delivery of their services, as we all need to 'consume' at slightly different times. To some extent this has happened, although less so in terms of public services likes schools and healthcare.

One answer might be, then, that we should desynchronise all of our practices, this potentially removing the peak load dilemma. But, doesn't that then create the 24 hour on demand society Frank notes is so energy intensive? So, maybe the answer is the opposite: to re-synchronise everything in a more regimented way; no flexible working, school times setup around the predictability of parents' working hours, shops that are open after work hours but not indefinitely as other practices are synchronised to occur after shops close, etc etc. Such regimented synchronisation of synchronicity would allow more effective coordination of collective mobility (by bus, train etc) as we would all need to be at similar places at the same time (so mass transit organised by employers becomes possible, shared rides to social activities etc), and energy to run the buildings used for certain practices might be reduced due to limited hours of operation. Such regimented synchronisation of synchronicity might also help address disconnects between natural rhythms (work can be synchronised around daylight and/or cooler hours). But, does this mean closing-down night time industry that offsets peak loads but uses a lot of energy for lighting? Synchronisation of synchronicity would also create severe peak load issues. So the same dilemma returns.

The above are just some speculative thoughts and underdeveloped examples. But I do think they highlight a fundamental dilemma, which Dale Southerton's work on the timing of everyday life brings into clear view: in many ways de-synchronisation underlies many of the energy intensive practices such as driving and heating/cooling we now recognise as problematic. But simply synchronising existing practices would create such significant peaks in energy demand that infrastructures could not cope. So maybe the discussion needs to be about the intersection of practice dynamics and synchronicity: changing practices that are less energy intensive might co-evolve with forms of resynchronisation, addressing peak load issues to some extent through the emergence of less demanding ways of achieving everyday life?

Ben Anderson – Synchronicity, Storage and the Flexibility of Demand

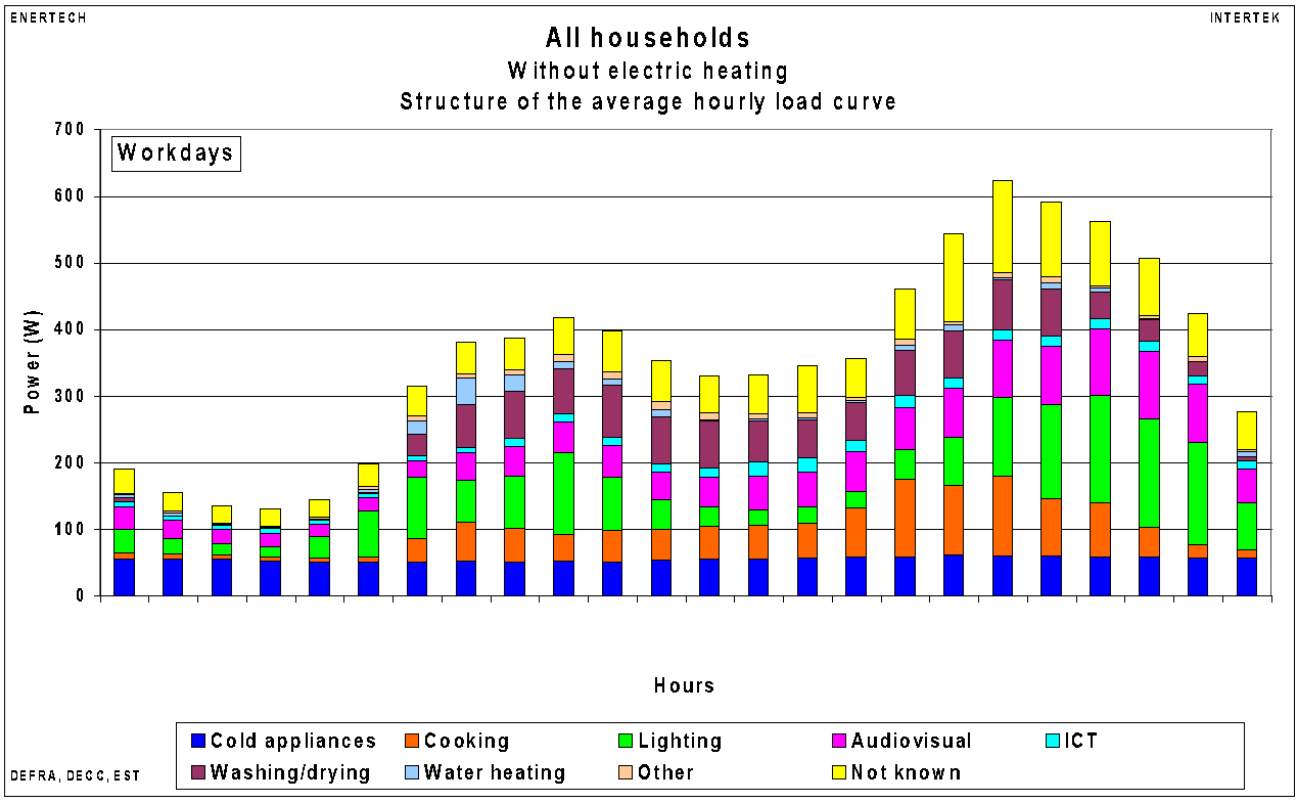
In responding to both Gordon's piece and Frank's response it is worth noting that 'peak demand' for energy in the UK domestic context is essentially an electricity problem due in large part to the inability to store electrical power and the non-switchable nature of most generation methods. Gas on the other hand can be stored 'in the network' and overall system management is largely driven by forecast fluctuations in temperature due to its predominant use for space (and water) heating. That said the increasing use of electricity as a primary source of heat via heat pumps and the realisation that a substantial part of current electricity usage is to generate 'additional heat' (or cooling) complicates the picture. We do not yet know how people's heating practices (if I may) will evolve. Currently storage heaters, as Frank notes, generally go together with lower priced night-time electricity and may have a structuring effect on practices carried out in a home that is warmest in the morning. However it is unclear if this approach holds for heat pumps either from a 'technical efficiency' point of view or from a 'habits and practices' point of view – 'peak heat' like 'peak cool' in other locations may yet become an issue in UK homes.

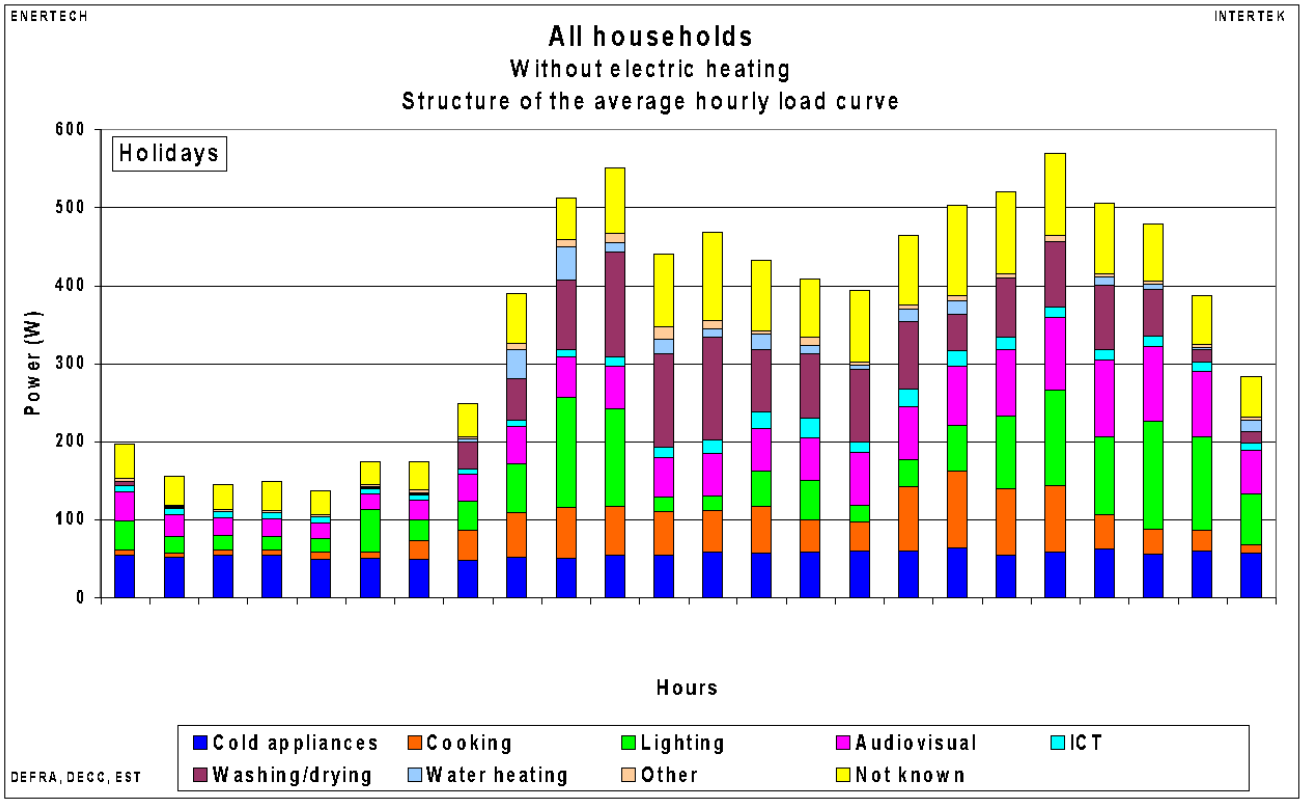
However the 'smoothing' of demand to enable overall system balancing in the face of near-zero storage is not the only reason to think about the synchronisation of domestic practices that demand electrical energy. Electricity distribution networks were designed to distribute power from central sources in radial fashion with sufficient 'headroom' at each level to allow for assumed temporal peaks in demand. Emerging loads at the edges of this network (such as domestic generation through photovoltaic cells) are forcing the distribution network operators to think about investing to upgrade their infrastructures precisely because as Gordon notes, local peak generation (around mid-day on sunny days) is generally not matched to local consumption (morning and especially evening peaks). Conversely whilst the overall system effects of overnight charging of electric vehicles might help to smooth demand at the national level, and indeed to store energy for use at other times, local street level distribution networks are not engineered to deliver the kinds of simultaneous loads envisaged with potentially dire consequences for local power delivery.[4] Thus the *spatial distribution* of synchronised practices is also of critical interest. Since spending money upgrading local networks is a highly capital intensive task, the prospect of shifting demand through flexing practices to better match demand and supply, is extremely attractive and is a microcosm of the larger problem of balancing a system with near zero storage when synchronised temporal demand and fixed level and/or intermittent supply are major features.

What then are the practices that constitute such demand and can they be shifted? Whilst part of the work of Theme 1 is to pursue these questions we do already have some indicators of the temporality of appliance-level electricity demand. As an example the DECC/DEFRA/EST 'Powering the Nation' study[5] revealed much about the composition of electricity loads, if less about the practices which generate them, in the home. Thus (Figure 1) we can see how lighting at each end of the working day (directly reflecting comments about the extension of the 'day' through the use of artificial light) together with early evening cooking and audio-visual use contribute to 'peak' demand. Figure 2 ('holidays' – i.e. weekends) shows a marked contrast with two distinct peaks. The morning peak appears to be generated by additional washing/drying loads and additional lighting driven, perhaps, by higher active occupancy of the home in contrast to work/school days. These charts therefore give us a first view of the practice and thus demand 'structuring' nature of weekday work/school constraints. Were we to be able to select only those households with 100% full time (day) workers and school children the effects may be even more apparent. As both Frank and Gordon note, these meso level structures are to a large extent outside the scope of action of energy users but clearly point the way towards non-energy energy policies. Indeed they are right to raise empirical questions about the extent and degree of change in demand due to the flexible timing of activities such as work, eating and leisure as well as the ability to work from various locations – including the home.

[4] Neaimeh, M., Hill, G., Blythe, P., Wardle, R., & Taylor, P. (2013). Integrating smart meter and electric vehicle charging data to predict distribution network impacts. In IEEE PES ISGT Europe 2013 (pp. 1–5). IEEE. doi:10.1109/ISGTEurope.2013.6695238

[5] Zimmermann et al (2012) Household Electricity Survey: A study of domestic electrical product usage. http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=10043_R66141HouseholdElectricitySurveyFinalReportissue4.pdf The report provides further breakdowns by 'household type' and also for those who use electricity as a primary heat source.





Perhaps as interesting however are the patterns of 'not known' demands during weekdays which appear to concentrate and further heighten the evening peak. The study report speculates that this may represent the charging of a range of battery-powered devices. We can of course profer plausible explanations – these devices may be taken out of the home during the day and thus require re-charging on return. At weekends by contrast these 'not known' demands are more evenly spread throughout the day.

The question remains therefore: what are the practices that (appear to) prevent the time-shifting shifting of the practices that create these patterns demand and how then to engineer flexibility?

Recent experiments in Ofgem's Low Carbon Network Fund projects have found that even very large price 'signals' have a fairly moderate average effect on evening peak demand and may have the unintended consequence of sharply increasing load at the end of the high priced period[6]. Further analysis suggested that participants were avoiding 'laundry, chores, dish washing and in some cases are cooking differently within and around the 4-8 period' (p53)[7]. 'Price' is of course not the only game in town and a fascinating Danish study[8] designed to test the ability to flex demand in the extreme situation of a zero-wind week produced notable reduction in and shifting of demand but in the context of a 'state emergency' where normal service would resume a week later.

Given that the ability to flex one's demand is likely to be some function of the extent of one's commitment to tightly interlocking systems of practices, one's circumstances and one's motivation it may be that that some people (or groups of people) are more able to flex than others. In a recent paper, Gareth Powells[9] suggested that we view such flexibility as a capital that could be deployed through market or non-market exchange. Not unlike a carbon trading system, redistributable milk quota or time-banking approach Powells et al point to the potential to invert 'normal' distributions of advantage. Thus those who are most economically advantaged may in fact, and partly as a consequence, have the least 'flexibility' capital. Conversely those with the most flexibility capital may tend to be the least economically advantaged. In Gordon's future imaginaries, they may therefore be the most able to progress to a 'directly solar' way of life. Whilst this in turn provokes intriguing possibilities for the development of a 'flexibility exchange' system that speaks to Franks' normative and political aspects, it also leaves open a number of empirical questions about the extent and distribution of flexibility, questions that DEMAND is an excellent position to address.

Mike Hazas

Distinguishing from rhythm and synchronisation, Gordon helpfully explains that "Synchronicity however is concerned with the *relationships* between rhythms…" [emphasis added]. Spurred by Gordon and Frank's examples of watching TV and charging mobile phones, this got me thinking a little more about how rhythms of digital media and IT are bound up and implicated with other rhythms (like cooking or travelling; see Røpke et al. (2010)), and what bearing the timing and repetition of media and IT-reliant practices have on energy

[6] A doubling of the price of electricity from 16:00 – 20:00 together with a 31% reduction after 20:00 produced a 14% reduction in electricity during this period and a noticeable spike after 20:00. See 'Initial Time of Use Trial Analysis', http://www.networkrevolution.co.uk/industryzone/projectlibrary

[7] CLNR-L037 CLNR Social Science Interim Report 2, http://www.networkrevolution.co.uk/industryzone/projectlibrary

[8] Sara Bell, Personal com. I am trying to access the research report.

[9] Powells, G et al (2014) *Prospecting for Flexibility? Socio-Technical Capital and Smart Electricity Demand Management*. Paper presented at 'Spatial Variation in Energy Use, Attitudes and Behaviours: Implications for Smart Grids and Energy Demand', Policy Studies Institute, Friday, 7 February 2014, London, United Kingdom

demand. I'm afraid I don't have many answers here, but as someone on Theme 2.1 "Domestic IT", I'd be remiss if I didn't offer what little I do have.

1. *What aspects of IT's demand should we care about?* Frank points out that from "an applied perspective of intervention", following the use and charging of mobile phones is perhaps less impactful than following practices involving hot air and hot water. In empirical work with a small number of undergraduates, one of my PhD students has found that the energy demands of things like mobile phones, tablets and even laptops can be vanishingly small compared to other digital media and IT devices (desktop computers, monitors, televisions, games consoles, "home cinema"), let alone things like space heating or showering. Taking into account devices' "embodied" energies for manufacturing and transport, there is also strong indication (from the life cycle assessment literature) that mobile phones and tablets are not such a big deal, e.g. replacing a laptop every four years is about five times as energy intensive as replacing a smartphone every year.

But, we should certainly not abandon smartphones and tablets altogether. These things are quite ready-to-hand for practitioners, and have an astonishing capacity to spew and suck data. For me, an outstanding issue is to understand the energies marshalled to maintain these always-on, high-speed networks, and to keep digital content "in the cloud" forever safe and available. And more crucially, to identify the ways of being and doing that tend to rely more heavily on such connectivity, delivery, and storage. Can we envision rich societies prepared to live with temporary disruptions, as Frank suggested? (Triad warning: Between 8 and 10pm today, *Sherlock* and *House of Cards* cannot be streamed in high definition. Standard definition will simply have to do.)

Finally, however small IT's direct or embodied energy, we should also look closely at how IT's support of, enhancement, and displacement of other practices may be in turn increasing/shifting/reducing the demands of those practices.

2. *What use is it to understand charging as a practice?* I recall this being raised in past discussions with at least a few DEMANDers, and I wanted to flag it briefly here, borrowing on Matt's rephrasing of the question on mobility in Pieces of Thought #1. Gordon brought up the temporalities of electric car driving and charging as being particularly relevant to load profiles. While it's hard to say if tablet and laptop charging would ever have significant effects on peak load (effect on "trough" load may be more relevant), I do wonder if there are any parallels between how IT devices are charged, and how other things like electric cars are charged. Perhaps not. Certainly at the moment, electric vehicles can only be charged at specific places. There is arguably more temporal and spatial flexibility for charging phones and laptops, because of the infrastructures in place and the speed at which the small batteries in these devices can charge. And where there are parallels, is it even useful to understand "charging" as practice-as-entity, across such diverse infrastructures and appliances? In some exploratory work, we've observed diversity in how smartphones are charged. As a rule, some participants have only charged their phones by plugging in at the bedside table before going to sleep; the phone lasts throughout the next day. Others carry a charging cable with them, and plug into the nearest computer or mains socket when they notice the battery is low. But in all cases, charging was made to nestle in and amongst existing practice, and was malleable enough to withstand fast changes to match the dynamics of other practices, rather than disrupting those practices. Instances of complete smartphone discharge, on the other hand, were quite disruptive.

Giulio Mattioli

Gordon's piece highlights key issues about synchronisation and, as such, it is very useful to frame our work for Theme 1, where we are trying to approach similar questions from a quantitative empirical perspective. However, as Frank noticed, the piece refers mostly to domestic practices such as eating, cooking and watching TV. In my response, I try to develop some reflections on how these issues might apply to (passenger) transport.

Also, in both Gordon's piece and Frank's response the emphasis is predominantly on the "realisation of 'peak shaving' objectives", based on the realization that renewable energy sources, partly because of their reliance on natural rhythms, have an "inability to meet demand during peak hours". In a nutshell, it looks like peaks are the problem, and *less social* synchronisation – but *more natural-social* synchronisation – is the solution. Coming from a transport studies background, this did not sound quite right to me. What follows is an attempt to clarify, to myself as well as to you, why that is the case.

My impression from transport literature is that, all other factors being equal, it is easier to provide public transport alternatives to (more energy- and carbon-intensive) car use for practices that are *more* socially synchronised. A typical example is frequent public transport services during peak commuting hours, which can usually be quite competitive. A high modal share of public transport for this travel purpose & time of day means less energy consumption and carbon emissions. Therefore, in this case, more social synchronisation is positive for energy/carbon reduction.

It is instructive to think about why public transport results in less energy consumption. The question is one of *occupancy rates*. A single public transport vehicle is generally more energy consuming than a single car on a given trip, but it carries around more people. In turn, high occupancy rates for a public transport journey are possible if practices are relatively synchronised in time (as well as concentrated in space). In a nutshell: the more social synchronisation, the higher the occupancy rate, the better the energy efficiency.

Also, from an economic perspective, public transport is less economically viable when occupancy rates are low. To be competitive with the car in terms of travelling time, i.e. to attract users, public transport must provide a frequent service. In off-peak times, however, frequent service results in low occupancy rates and lower economic return. This is one of the reasons why in England, where local bus service is deregulated (outside London), bus operators tend to concentrate services on major commuting routes and peak hours, while off-peak services are the first to be cut when budgets are tight.

Overall, I expect public transport to struggle coping with a scenario where practices are significantly less synchronised than today (but still rather dispersed in space[10]) and travel peaks are 'shaved'. Even if it was able to maintain the same modal share, its operation would probably be more energy intensive, thus reducing its environmental advantage over the car.

The same arguments apply to recent developments in car-based mobility. Car-pooling / car-sharing is widely promoted as an environmentally beneficially solution because it increases occupancy rates. However, ride-sharing clearly also requires a certain synchronisation of practices to be viable. One of the main findings of a

[10] Of course, the considerations made here make sense for public transport, but not for walking and cycling, which are individual transport modes. Active travel modes, however, are considerably less competitive over longer distances.

recent French research project on sustainable mobility in rural areas[11] is that "non-traditional hours (for working and leisure alike) lead to solo-driving and are a major barrier to ride-sharing". They go on to suggest that the practice of variable end of the working day (common among executives) should be contrasted, and workers should be encouraged to leave the workplace at the same time, and to continue working at home if necessary.

From a more theoretical / historical perspective, mass motorisation and increasing car dependence have probably resulted in fragmentation / disembedding of activities not only in space (a very thoroughly researched topic) but also in time – although this is probably less pronounced. In a 2003 paper (http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/staff/shove/choreography/rushingaround.pdf) Elizabeth Shove argues that the temporal flexibility of the car leads to a fragmentation of the sociotemporal order, resulting in a situation where individuals 'need' the car in order to coordinate their activities with others. She concludes that there is a "rather direct relation between individual and collective modes of sociotemporal coordination, a decline in one almost always leading to an increase in the other". The problem for the environment is that, in the transport sector, motorised individual modes are significantly more energy- and carbon-demanding than collective ones.

Overall, it seems to me that the relationship between social synchronisation and energy demand / carbon emissions is quite different for transport, as compared to domestic electric / heating appliances. Notably, questions of *mode choice*[12] and *occupancy rates* are considerably more crucial for transport. When washing or cooking at home, people do not usually have different appliances (with different energy/carbon impacts) available. When travelling, people usually do have different options, and the degree of synchronisation at different levels (household, society, etc.) has an impact on which one they end up using. For this reason, 'travel peak-shaving' would probably have undesired consequences for total energy demand.

With regard to occupancy rates, I suspect that the same issue exists for domestic energy consumption, although it is probably less important. Of course for many practices, such as showering, it is difficult to imagine energy reduction benefits arising from synchronising & sharing energy consumption between household members. However, the situation is different for example for tea-drinking: while a societally synchronised rhythm of '5 O'clock tea' might be a problem because of a 'peak kettle' in electricity demand (problematic for renewable energy supply), it might actually be a good thing for total energy demand, as the higher 'occupancy share' of the collectively used kettle means better energy efficiency.

Overall, it seems to me that there might be trade-offs between the imperatives arising from the transition to renewable and less carbon-intensive sources – for which peaks are bad and social de-synchronisation is good – and those arising from the need to reduce overall levels of energy demand – for which social de-synchronisation might have perverse consequences.

[11] Research Project MOUR (*MObilité et Urbanisme Rural*), UMR CNRS-CITERES, Université de Tours (http://citeres.univ-tours.fr/spip.php?article1812)

[12] 'Mode choice' is the standard term used in transport studies to indicate that people generally have the option to use different modes of transport. I do not mean to suggest that framing the question in terms of individual choice is inherently the best approach.

Neil Simcock

I found both Gordon and Frank's essays extremely interesting and raised lots of good points for debate. I'd like to quickly highlight some thoughts I had in relation to the concerns of project 4.1, energy and justice. I was glad that Frank raised the issue of the uneven distribution of impacts, as it seems to me that any effort to 'manage' the synchronicity of practices may well have impacts that affect some groups more than others, and so will have to confront justice issues which will shape the feasibility of implementing any such policy. I remember a few years ago when there were calls by some campaign groups to introduce 'single-double summer time' in the UK (i.e. GMT + one hour from October to March and GMT + two hours from March to October) so that there would be more daylight hours in the evening. The rationales for this change ranged from improvements people's health, boosting the economy, fewer road accidents (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-11643098), and as Gordon notes reductions in energy use and carbon emissions (Hill et al., 2010). But despite all these proposed benefits, such proposals have been consistently rejected in parliament because of concerns and claims of injustice – that it would lead to uneven impacts on the natural-social synchronization of everyday practices, and so was unfair. This uneven distribution was both by economic group (farmers would have to contend with longer morning darkness), and geographically (northern Scotland would be 'worst' affected, as many places would be dark until 9 or 10am), among others. One particular concern was that children in Scotland would end up having to walk to school in the dark, leading to claims there would end up being more cars on the road as more parents decided to give lifts, and so actually higher carbon emissions. So even in cases where the 'net' benefit of a policy is argued to be positive (overall reductions in carbon emissions), its tolerability is still very much shaped by whether it is seen to have unjust and unacceptable impacts upon a minority. In this case, the scale of the proposed intervention seems important, in that attempting to create change across the entire of the UK was difficult when the contexts of different areas, and consequently the 'natural-social synchronization' of practices, were very different.

The discussion also got me thinking about ideas of need. The normative meaning attached to particular uses of energy, e.g. as 'needed' or conversely 'wasteful', will be contextual in time. Practices that are useful and 'necessary' at one point in the day are 'wasteful' at others – leaving lights or heating on at night are typically defined as waste, even if there's a clear rationale for doing this, yet heating multiple rooms in your home to 21 degrees during the evening (when a lower temp might be fine in terms of one's health) doesn't carry the same negative connotations. It is interesting to think about how such ideas and judgments are reasoned and constructed, and how open or malleable they are to contestation and change. Noting that part of the value or 'need' of a practice comes from the time it is conducted, and how it is patterned in relation to other practices, is also significant in terms of evaluating the consequences of change and choosing areas of possible intervention. It might be less easy, or less just and fair, to try and scatter the timing of those practices that gain part of their normative value from being socially synchronized or from being conducted at certain times of day. For example, altering social patterns of cooking and eating, as Frank touches upon, might be 'bad' from the perspective of family life, social cohesion, affiliation or collectivist ethos.

Elizabeth Shove - What kinds of synchronicity matter for energy demand?

Gordon says synchronicity (in general) is an outcome of multiple rhythms, and that it is a relation between rhythms. At first sight this seems ok, but just what is it that has rhythm? E.g. does the term refer to the temporal ordering of moments of performance (a single practice rhythm); the experience of a day from an

individual's point of view, the recurrent combination of many practices in a day, week, year; or the timing of blocks of practices that are somehow linked? Lefebvre would say all of the above, and it is true they are related - but how does this conclusion help in thinking about synchronicity and energy demand?

Demand depends on which practices are synchronised, and with what, not on the fact of synchronisation alone. For example, energy demand is lower in the middle of the night when many people are simultaneously sleeping; we know that morning and evening peaks in demand are constituted of different practices, and we know that Sunday and Monday peaks are not made of the same activities. In addition, peaks in demand occur when many people are engaged in *different* energy consuming practices at roughly the same time. – see the matrix we produced as part of the presentation that Theme 1 gave at DECC).

Synchronisation high	Synchronisation low	
Many people doing the same energy-intensive activity at the same time	Many people doing different energy-intensive activities at the same time	Energy demand higher
Many people doing the same lower energy activity at the same time	Many people doing different lower energy activities at the same time	Energy demand lower

The timing of mobility is also complicated. The temporal synchronisation of journeys creates jams and (extra) energy demand, but to go back to the first piece of thought, should we see such journeying as part of doing one or more practices, or as a practice in its own right? The travel might happen at the same time but it might then enable a raft of practices – spread across the day – that are not themselves synchronised.

In this piece I suggest that more thought is needed about types of synchronicity and related concepts of coordination, timing, duration and scale. The next few points represent a step in that direction.

A first observation is that synchronisation can be a necessary feature of the conduct of specific practices: e.g. office working hours, live events, Christmas dinner.

Second, while some forms of synchronisation occur in many sites (e.g. many separate homes), others generate forms of spatial proximity –congestion is a spatially significant form of synchronicity.

Third, as Frank says, institutional schedules are crucial but again in different ways. Working hours, school days and holidays and opening hours, **coordinate** and synchronise at the same time. They reflect the fact that people do things together, and have to be simultaneously involved. Other kinds of synchronisation relate to **timing,** but not coordination – many still watch TV at peak time, or eat breakfast at 7am, and many do so alone.

Fourth, multiple forms of synchronisation co-exist. Central heating systems often come on at the same moment (October), and many are 'set' to operate for the same fixed periods during the morning and the evening; but settings also respond (en masse) to the weather. This hints at two co-existing types of

synchronisation: one with institutionally timed events (the working day) and one with natural patterns (the weather).

Some further points come from thinking about practices and sets of practices that are not synchronised. For example, do unsynchronised practices have any features in common? **Scale** is relevant (not enough people go swimming for this to be detectable as a societally synchronised activity); so is **duration** (practices that can be slotted into spare moments, - checking messages/email) are perhaps less likely to be evidently or noticeably synchronised at a societal scale. There are further issues of not only of scale but of **social distribution**. Easter, Chinese new year, Bonfire night, New Year's eve – capture different cohorts of practitioners, resulting in synchronisation for some, but not for all. Note that some people, e.g. the retired can exploit the synchronised working activities of others: moving around and doing things in the middle of the day and in 'off-peak' times. Others, like babies, force parents out of synchronised patterns of sleep and wake.

Finally, the temporal ordering of practices that are not synchronised has to fit in around those which are, meaning that the relation between synchronised and not-synchronised arrangements is important for both.

Does this exercise in differentiating forms of synchronisation help in thinking about energy demand?

Flattening options

Frank writes about the challenge and the politics of re-arranging energy hungry practices over time – which made me wonder: can we imagine a 'flat' society, that is one which has no 'peak' load at all? IF so, what would that look like?

Building on the points made above, various fanciful scenarios are possible. Flatness might occur if different individuals woke, slept, worked, ate, and watched TV, etc. at totally different times. In such a society there would be no strong distinction between week-day and week-end, or even between day and night (asynchronicity run wild). Alternatively, flatness might arise if there was some strong sociotemporal shift-arrangement: so that, say, a quarter of the population got up at a certain time, went to work etc., and then some hours later the next quarter of the population did the same (each fraction is highly synchronised but only with itself). This is already what happens if we take a global view of energy demand and temporality – e.g. Australians wake up when we go to sleep. Another pathway to flatness would be to distinguish between those energy-related practices which are already 'flat' (refrigerating/freezing) and those which are coordinated, institutionally timed, or synchronised for some other reason. Not all practices matter in the same way for synchronised energy demand (Frank's point 5). Focusing only on those that do, there might be ways of introducing more asynchronisation than is the case at present. From the points made above there might be scope for (someone, somewhere, deliberately??) modifying the type of coordination or timing involved, extending or shortening the duration of the practice/s in question, reducing the scale of participation, or increasing variation in how and therefore when that occurs. There may also be scope for reconfiguring the temporal relation between the synchronised performance of certain practices and potentially less synchronised forms of energy management (e.g. storing hot water for the shower; filling the car with petrol or electricity, storage of oil, wood etc.). Again the possibilities clearly differ from one practice to the next.

To end, I think differentiating between types (bases, scales, forms) of synchronisation is important, as is recognising the ongoing, constantly shifting relation between that which is strongly synchronised and that

which is not. I think these distinctions help specify the challenges involved in reducing peaks in different areas of social practice and in the patterning and timing of energy demand associated with them.

Nicola Spurling – Infrastructure, technology and synchronicity

Project 3.1 is, in part, about the relationship between different scales of infrastructure and technology, and their relationship to demand. So, in this context, I've been pondering: how do different scales of infrastructure and technology matter to, shape, or make possible different forms of synchronization? I've never thought about synchronisation from that particular starting point before, so what follows is a bit of a mishmash – some initial pieces of thought about how that question might be answered. As a first port of call, I looked at the issues raised by Gordon and Frank, and reflected on how infrastructure and technology are implicated in their comments.

Gordon points out how technology related time shifts, such as multiple options for when TV programmes are watched, and the changing use of battery powered devices will have implications for peak demand. These potential time shifts are similar to those enabled by the freezer and its relationship to food preparation and cooking. However, technology does not only provide the potential for de-synchronisation, it also enables more synchronisation too.

This is apparent if we think about how current patterns of synchronisation have come to be as they are. Frank points out that "The two peaks (morning and evening) emerged as the historical product of the industrial workday." That is partly the case, but it's not the whole story. The synchronisation of practices has also been made possible by technology. So for example, practices like cooking, doing the laundry (both washing and drying), doing the dishes, would once have had less synchronisation associated with them. For example, before modern washing machines existed, laundry was allocated to a particular day of the week, and multitasking – doing the laundry alongside cooking, or washing the dishes – was not possible (this was also to do with the domestic division of labour – there was only one pair of hand to do these jobs – domestic technologies made multi-tasking possible). So the point is that technology both enables de-synchronisation, but also makes more synchronisation possible.

It is not only the domestic technologies that made this multi-tasking possible, but also the change in energy provisioned to the home. So increasing the capacity of electricity provision – for example so that devices with higher energy requirements can function - also has the (possibly unintended) effect that more things can be 'switched on' at once, synchronisation of practices that were previously de-synchronised becomes technically possible. The provision of multiple fuels – such as gas and electric – to the home has a similar effect. There are others in DEMAND who will have much more to say about that than I do. The point can be useful in thinking further about the implications of domestic charging of electric vehicles. There are places (I've heard that Brisbane is one example), where making such domestic charging possible would require large scale rewiring of domestic electricity provision. Improving such provision in this way might enable the de-syncing of EV charging and use that Gordon points out, but it also might mean that the overall capacity to do things at once is increased. It might become part of a pattern of increased overall demand .

On another point, Frank highlights that historically, electricity companies have actively played a role in rearranging energy-hungry practices through charging different tariffs at different times of day. He mentions night-storage radiators, and makes the point that there is perhaps more scope for intervention by energy companies in that respect. Developing his point, what is interesting these days is that the potential for de-

syncing practices in the home perhaps exists more than it ever did (e.g. timers mean multiple activities can be delayed without a complete rearrangement of individual time-use), and yet it hasn't happened. Why is that the case? (perhaps one answer is that the potential for synchronisation is equally available).

Although Gordon talks about electric vehicles, his piece of thought is about energy, rather than mobility demand. But we might also think about mobility. This plays out a bit differently. For example Frank notes that "The two peaks (morning and evening) emerged as the historical product of the industrial workday". For mobility that is partly true, but the patterns and places of the peaks are also connected to planning and land-use, and the visions and realities of the relationship between working and non-working life.

As part of my initial research on planning I came across this advert for Welwyn Garden City – a new town built at the start of the 20th Century. I've included it here as it highlights three different conceptions of the relationship between working and non-working life, all of which have different implications for mobility, and which, when combined with the industrial work-day noted by Frank, would produce different kinds of peak demand.

Staying with the new towns, but coming back to practices in the home, one idea that was circulating around these developments was that of collective living. The first garden city of Letchworth, in Hertfordshire included the utopian development of Homesgarth. This was a collective courtyard development with no individual kitchens and all food collectively prepared. Not all synchronisation is communal like this, but it is certainly one kind of synchronisation, a form that has actually been built into the environment, at particular times and places, and which has played a part in community-led eco-housing developments. Perhaps we can say that some designs have particular forms of synchronisation (or de-synchronisation) built into them? Or at least make certain forms easier than others.

The idea of collective living was discarded from subsequent garden cities in the UK – at that time the idea

was unpopular with the public, in particular because of the parallels to the Soviet Union – the idea had been taken up in the new towns there (the Narkomfin Building - a prototype in Moscow Park is the most famous example - which provided, amongst other things, collective kitchens, laundrettes, cafes and a gymnasium for tenants).

Frank's piece ends by asking 'How much do we want to be in synch?'. With regards to the latter example I think this is an important question, and I would also supplement it by asking 'and in what ways?'. Within Demand our primary focus will be on synchronisation and energy demand, and as noted above, understanding this relationship will be challenging enough. However, it is also important that other questions about the extent of synchronisation that is desirable, and the means by which it is achieved, do not fall completely from view.

Caring Consumers: Gendered Consumption Meanings and the Juggling Lifestyle

CRAIG J. THOMPSON*

This article explores the meanings that consumption experiences hold for professional working mothers engaged in the culturally prominent lifestyle known as "juggling." A discussion is given to prior research documenting the cultural and historical processes that gave rise to this lifestyle pattern. These analyses suggest that "jugglers" of the baby boom generation have been socialized in a common system of conflicting cultural ideals, beliefs, and gender ideologies. A hermeneutic research approach is used to explicate the emic consumer meanings that arise in relation to the participants' salient life concerns and their sense of personal history. An etic framework is then derived that further analyzes these perceptions in the context of issues related to the social construction of feminine identities and cultural conceptions of motherhood. The conceptual and methodological implications of the emic and etic frameworks for consumer research are discussed.

> Sometimes I go through guilt trips because I work. I think women are getting out of this cycle, but I am still of the school that feels women's responsibilities are to be mothers and to be homemakers. I think that's changing. Unfortunately it's not changing for me. I hope that it's changing for my children . . . but I'm the generation where a lot of us still carry those guilt feelings around if your family can't come home to homemade bread and a hot meal every night. I know that's unrealistic, but, I still sort of feel like that's my responsibility. (SARAH, age 41)

Sarah's generational reference is to women born in the post–World War II baby boom era. In the immediate postwar years, middle-class American society redefined itself around traditional ideals of family life, motherhood, and femininity: a social transformation symbolized by the contrasting images of the World War II icon Rosie the Riveter and 1950's icons such as June Cleaver and Harriet Nelson (e.g., Ehrenreich and English 1979). As this generation of women reached adolescence and early adulthood, this gender ideology had become the focus of intense criticism, and feminist calls for dramatic changes in gender roles entered the mainstream of social discourse (Gerson 1985; Venkatesh 1980). As adults, these women continued to grapple with an array of conflicting social expectations, gender ideals, cultural values, and interpersonal demands (Grossman and Chester 1990; Hirschman 1990). This series of cultural conflicts, in turn, symbolized yet another cultural icon of femininity, the "supermom" who effortlessly could do it all.

Although the supermom icon has been widely criticized for being unrealistic and disillusioning (Rabiner 1990), it does call attention to an experience shared by many women of the baby boom generation who must find ways to "cobble together a compromise" between the competing cultural ideals of traditional motherhood and career-oriented professionalism (Douglas 1994). For many women, this compromise entails a demanding juxtaposition of competing life goals, responsibilities, and emotional orientations commonly described as "juggling" (Crosby 1991).

Researchers have documented that married working women retain the vast majority of "traditional" responsibilities for care of the household (which includes most forms of shopping), child care (Berg 1986; Bielby and Bielby 1988; Crosby 1991; Hochschild 1989), and routine financial activities such as paying bills and balancing financial accounts (Bobinski and Assar 1994). These studies also portray this time-pressed lifestyle as an emotionally demanding one often marked by experiences of guilt—as in the case of Sarah—frustration, and feelings of being overwhelmed. These psychosocial conditions have given rise to a vast array of advertising and product-promotion images and messages that promise to ease the demands of the juggling lifestyle (Bartos 1989; Douglas 1994).

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The function of marketing in this cultural complex, however, has not been simply to reflect and serve the existing lifestyle needs of working mothers. Historical analyses have documented that the marketing of consumer products and services has played a constructive role in shaping gender roles, conceptions of motherhood, and, consequently, the structure of contemporary family lifestyles (Cowan 1983; Fischer and Arnold 1990; Matthews 1987; Strasser 1982). This process of social construction occurred through a series of influences such as the diffusion of consumer products that increasingly "individualized" housekeeping tasks and the appropriation of home economics by marketing strategists (Cowan 1983; Jackson 1992).

Through the implicit assertion of superior knowledge and authority, expert prescriptions (and warnings over improper housekeeping behaviors) became commonplace in marketing promotions for household goods (Matthews 1987; Strasser 1982). This institutional alliance between "domestic experts" and marketers has contributed to the increasingly higher standards of household cleanliness that emerged in concert with the diffusion of household consumer technologies and cleaning products (see Cowan 1983; Ehrenreich and English 1979; Matthews 1987; Strasser 1982). Furthermore, this alliance also contributed to a long history of promotional strategies that associated the use of particular brands or products with the ideal of being a good mother, and mass media portrayals that largely paralleled advertising images of family life and motherhood (Douglas 1994).

These cultural conditions set the context for the current hermeneutic analysis of the personal meanings and symbolic values that consumption experiences hold for baby boom generation women engaged in a juggling lifestyle. Hermeneutic research focuses on the symbolic meanings and processes by which individuals construct a coherent sense of self-identity (i.e., a life narrative) under conditions of *throwness,* that is, the existential condition of living in a world of preexisting cultural meanings and social conditions (Heidegger [1927] 1960).

From a hermeneutic perspective, throwness operates on both sides of the structure/agency dialectic. It presents the social structures in which life experiences unfold and a wide range of interpretive possibilities (via existing cultural meanings, values, and ideals) for constructing a life course and narrative history of self (Ricoeur 1981). A paradigmatic assumption is that individuals interpret their experiences in a manner that creates a coherent narrative of self-identity. Accordingly, the meaning of a given experience is seen as emerging in relation to other meanings that constitute a person's life narrative (Mick and Buhl 1992; Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994; Widdershoven 1993).

For women of the baby boom generation, throwness entails a complex system of cultural meanings, many of which are related to the sociohistorical construction of gender.[1] A pivotal moment in this historical legacy is the "cult of domesticity" that flourished among middle- to upper-class households in the late 1800s (Matthews 1987). Despite the changing socioeconomic and political circumstances, this ideological system nonetheless has exerted an enduring influence on cultural conceptions of femininity and motherhood. One of the most prominent influences is the sacralization of domestic life and its fundamental association with the conception of motherhood (Strasser 1982). In this cultural nexus, the social category of motherhood has historically been rendered as the primary source of emotional labor and child care in family life (see Hochschild [1983] for a discussion on how this association has also structured conceptions of masculine and feminine occupations). As noted by Lakoff (1987), this background of meanings underlies the cultural currency given to the concept of "working mother," which denotes a blurring of well-established social distinctions, such as private versus public labor and commitment to motherhood versus full-time career pursuits.

The hermeneutic exploration of women's relationships to these cultural circumstances offers several points of contribution to research on both working mothers and the experiential and cultural dimensions of consumption. A hermeneutic orientation complements the focus on sociological influences and processes that are predominant in research on the juggling lifestyle. This research stream has placed less emphasis on phenomenological considerations such as personal meanings, life goals, and the symbolic significance that events hold in the context of one's personal history. For example, Hochschild's (1989) sociological analysis of two-career households highlights the conflicts between traditional and contemporary gender ideals that pervade the experiences (and interpersonal tensions) among informant couples. Particular emphasis is given to the interpersonal strategies and family myths used to rationalize and sustain the pattern of behaviors that composed the "second shift," in which the working mother assumed the major burden of household responsibilities (also see Crosby 1991; Shreve 1987).

Such studies provide a richer understanding of the social dynamics and gender issues involved in the juggling lifestyle (Bielby and Bielby 1988; Coltrane 1988). However, research that places more emphasis on phenomenological meanings is needed to more fully understand the experiential and symbolic dynamics that emerge between working mothers and these social structures. For example, Jackson (1992, p. 168) noted that the historical and sociological research on women's involvement in housework and domestic technology has not adequately addressed the "complex

[1]This theoretical overview has been informed by the results of the investigation. Rather than attempting to provide an exhaustive account of gender ideology, the goal is to highlight some prominent cultural narratives of gender that are particularly relevant to the consumption meanings expressed by the women who participated in this investigation.

emotional aspects of women's domestic labor" and that "the time and energy invested in housework need to be understood in relation to the nature of the work itself and the meanings it has for women." A similar point can be made in regard to women's relationships to the meanings of consumption in a juggling lifestyle.

Further, little research has focused on the meanings that consumption experiences assume in the life worlds of professional working mothers. Rather, consumption issues have been treated as background issues to other facets of the life world (e.g., Crosby 1991; Hochschild 1989; Schwartz 1994) or analyzed as a sociohistorical influence on lifestyle patterns (Cowan 1983; Jackson 1992; Matthews 1987; Strasser 1982). An explicit focus on the meanings and symbolic significance of consumption informs the literature on the juggling lifestyle by providing a different point of entry into the field of life-world relationships. To use a figure/ground analogy, the focus on consumption offers a different interpretive configuration from which to explicate the patterns of meaning and psychosocial dynamics that compose the juggling lifestyle.

From this interpretive orientation, several important research questions remain unaddressed by the existing literature: (1) What functions do products and consumption activities serve in the construction of professional working mothers' lifestyle and self-conceptions? (2) How do consumption experiences relate to other life goals and priorities? (3) What are the interpersonal contexts and meanings that meaningfully situate these consumption experiences and choices? (4) How do women who are aware of gender equity and inequity issues negotiate the cultural conditions into which they are thrown? (5) What are the personal meanings, desires, goals, and motivations for those who are engaged in a juggling lifestyle? (6) To what extent are these higher-order motivations and meanings manifest in their everyday consumer behaviors? (7) What broader theoretical implications can be derived from this hermeneutic account of consumer meanings?

As will be shown in the emically focused analysis, the exploration of these questions offers a holistic conceptualization that highlights the levels of embedded meaning implicit in key psychosocial dynamics of the juggling lifestyle and, conversely, that demonstrates important symbolic linkages between consumption and salient facets of the participants' life worlds, such as family concerns, career pursuits, and their own self-conceptions. This analysis also extends consumer research on the desire for control (Hirschman 1992; Schouten 1991; Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1990), the extended self (Belk 1988), and life themes (Mick and Buhl 1992) by showing how these phenomena coalesce in a particular life-world setting.

In the etically focused analysis,[2] consumption experiences provide a context for drawing theoretical linkages between the emic themes and a broader array of sociocultural meanings that have structured cultural conceptions of femininity and ideals of motherhood, particularly those related to interpersonal connectedness (Chodorow 1978, 1994; Gilligan 1982; Gilligan, Lyons, and Hanmer 1990). In a classic existential sense (Sartre 1956), the abstract conception of cultural meanings and ideals related to motherhood is realized concretely through everyday consumption activities. Reciprocally, the meanings of these activities emerge in relation to these broader cultural conditions. The etic conceptualization holds implications for recent proposals on the constituent relationships between emotionally charged, interpersonal meanings and consumer behaviors (Ahuvia and Adelman 1993; Belk and Coon 1993).

METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

> The term hermeneutics recently has begun to appear in a variety of discussions within psychology, psychoanalysis, and the social sciences at large where it has been given various definitions, some broad and some narrow. Our characterization of hermeneutics is that of a family of related approaches . . . that encompasses the views of thinkers who have attempted to provide philosophical or methodological alternatives to the quantification, naturalism, objectivism, ahistoricism, and technicism that have increasingly attempted come to dominate the modern *Weltanschauung*. (WOOLFOLK, SASS, AND MESSER 1990, p. 2)

The preceding commentary is quite applicable to the ways in which the term "hermeneutics" has been used in the consumer research literature; a family of meanings that encompass methodological, epistemological, and ontological implications (Fischer and Arnold 1994; Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy 1988; Thompson et al. 1994). In keeping with the metaphor of narrow-to-broad definitions, this article presents a middle-range usage that concerns a specific research tradition that has arisen from the cross-fertilization between contemporary hermeneutic philosophy—exemplified in the works of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur—and phenomenological psychology (Giorgi 1970; Valle and Halling 1989; van den Berg 1970; Van Kaam 1966).[3]

[2]The terms "emic" and "etic" are intended to capture a difference in interpretive emphasis rather than present an absolute distinction. In an emic analysis, the goal is to articulate the system of meanings that compose the worldviews of the participants, whereas etic interpretive categories seek to link these emic meanings to more global theoretical terms and/or structural patterns (Geertz 1979). The relevant hermeneutic caveat is that *all* interpretive categories, whether emically or etically focused, necessarily reflect the perspectives and interests of the researcher who formulates the interpretation.

[3]Analyses of the broader epistemological implications of hermeneutic philosophy for consumer research are offered by Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy (1988) and Arnold and Fischer (1994).

The genealogy of hermeneutic-phenomenological philosophy is a complex one that has been influenced by several currents of Continental thought (Ihde 1971). Accordingly, this research tradition has incorporated insights and theoretical constructs from a number of related philosophical schools and research programs including Husserlian phenomenology, existential philosophy, Gestalt psychology, structural semiotics, and clinical theory (particularly existential reformulations of Freudian theory; e.g., Lyotard 1991; Ricoeur 1981). Given this complexity, my background discussion can only touch upon a few of the major theoretical innovators and themes that have structured the development of this research tradition. More comprehensive discussions on this historical legacy are offered by Barrell et al. (1987), Ihde (1971), Lyotard (1991), McCall (1983), Ricoeur (1974, 1981), and Spielgelberg (1972).

A reasonable starting point to this story is the nineteenth-century philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, who argued that the methods of hermeneutic analysis should not be restricted to their then-conventional usage: attempting to reconstruct the meanings intended by the authors' of literary texts (Ormiston and Schrift 1990). Dilthey argued that hermeneutics could serve as a general methodology of the human sciences that would enable a researcher to understand the nature of another's lived experience. One of Dilthey's most enduring proposals is that lived experience is constituted in a specific sociohistorical setting. To understand the lived experience of another is then to understand his/her "expressions of life" in relation to the broader set of cultural and historical conditions in which that person exists (Dilthey [1910] 1977).

From Dilthey, the story of hermeneutic-phenomenological philosophy assumes the trappings of Russian novel, with its intricate web of philosophical and methodological dialogues, critiques, and countercritiques among theorists who differentially emphasize psychological or sociohistorical levels of analysis. My abbreviated version of this history focuses only on the aspect most relevant to the objectives of this study; the role of hermeneutic considerations in broadening the interpretive scope of existential-phenomenological (e-p) research.

Existential-phenomenological research is characterized by the goal of transcending the subjectivist-objectivist dichotomy by analyzing intentionality (i.e., the meanings a person ascribes to the world of experience) in relation to a system of intersubjective structures (Giorgi 1986). This goal is the logical outgrowth of phenomenological critiques of romanticism, which privileged the view that individuals are encapsulated in a private, subjective realm of experience, and of empiricism, which ignored the constructive, meaning-imputing qualities of human consciousness (Valle, King, and Halling 1989). Existential theorists—particularly Sartre (1956) and Merleau-Ponty (1962)—proposed that this intersubjective foundation was composed of a fundamental set of existential dilemmas and categories that structure the course of human life.

The resulting research program sought to provide a rigorous description of how individuals cope with the core questions and paradoxes of human existence (Dillon 1988; Romanyshyn 1982; Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989; van den Berg 1970; Van Kaam 1966). These theorists also held, however, that these "existentials" underdetermine the nature of lived meanings. That is, individuals have the interpretive freedom to forge unique life projects and to ascribe personally unique symbolic meanings to their daily activities. This assumption follows from the phenomenological tenet that the meanings individuals impute to the material conditions of their existence and life experiences need not correspond to typical cultural categories or conceptions (Merleau-Ponty 1962). In sum, e-p research grants primacy to the life world of the individual while also recognizing that these lived meanings exist in relation to a culturally constituted realm of language, established social conventions, and interpersonal relationships. Nonetheless, e-p interpretations remained closely aligned with a psychological interest in explicating the personal meanings and symbolic associations that individuals construct in their life-world settings (Giorgi 1970; Polkinghorne 1989; Valle et al 1989; Van Kaam 1966).

The push toward a greater hermeneutic emphasis in e-p research emerged in conjunction with the growing influence of social constructivism on psychological theorizing and the corresponding interest in exploring the sociohistorical conditions underlying psychological processes (e.g., Gergen 1991). Although e-p research has borrowed quite liberally from contemporary hermeneutic philosophy (Thompson et al. 1989), its interpretations of lived experience typically do not pursue the hermeneutical (i.e., sociohistorical) dimensions of human understanding. Rather, e-p research accounts highlight the meanings that operate in the participants' field of awareness while leaving as an unstated background the historical and cultural processes that shape not only the life world but also the frame of reference from which the socially situated person understands his/her experiences. This interpretive focus facilitates a nuanced understanding of the symbolic values and thematic meanings that specific experiences assume in the life worlds of research participants. An e-p orientation, however, remains open to the criticism that it fails to provide sufficient historical and social context to the reported lived meanings. This criticism is a particularly salient issue among feminist critiques of existentialism (e.g., Bristor and Fischer 1993; Dinnerstein 1976; Flax 1990; Hirschman 1993).

A hermeneutic direction has been embraced by a number of theorists as a means to ameliorate this ahistoric tendency and to also productively expand the theoretical scope of e-p research's life-world analyses (Dreyfus and Wakefield 1988; Faulconer and Williams

1985; Packer 1985; Sass 1988). Ricoeur (1974) originally characterized this transformation as a process of "grafting hermeneutics onto phenomenology." In these terms, the phenomenological problem of understanding the life world of the subject becomes a matter of interpreting the texts of human expression and then analyzing how these meanings are formulated in the symbolic field of language. At the center of this hermeneutic reformulation is the work of Martin Heidegger (1960), who contended that language is an embodiment of cultural history and, hence, to speak a language is to have one's life experiences fundamentally contextualized in a sociohistorical field.

Owing to its phenomenological legacy, hermeneutic-phenomenological philosophy retains a focus on describing the various conflicts, paradoxes, and symbolic relations that emerge within the life world of a given individual. Therefore, the key analytic questions are What unique personal meaning does this event hold for the person? and How is this event related to other salient experiences and lived meanings existing in his/her life world? In keeping with the hermeneutic influence, however, these lived meanings are seen as personalized narratives that express a broader system of cultural values, meanings, beliefs, and often internal conflicts that exists within this cultural network. In other words, this background of cultural narratives provides the conditions of possibility for the personalized meanings constructed by a given person (Packer 1985, 1989; Widdershoven 1993). This hermeneutic orientation imbues conventional e-p interpretations with greater historical depth by drawing on literatures that offer insights into the sociohistorical meanings, ideals, and beliefs that underlie phenomenological themes.

In this study, the interpretation of the participants' reflections on their consumer experiences emerged through a circular interplay between a developing understanding of phenomenological interviews (Thompson et al. 1989) and an ongoing immersion in several key literatures relevant to the participants' reflections: (1) consumer research related to gender dynamics and the deep meanings of consumption, (2) feminist analyses of gender ideologies, (3) sociological and historical research on the juggling lifestyle, (4) historical analysis on the evolution of consumer culture, and (5) cultural studies concerning the social construction of gender and the cultural category of motherhood. This hermeneutic logic resembles the constant comparative method in which the thematic issues identified in the textual data guide the course of the literature review (Belk and Coon 1993; Strauss and Corbin 1990). The resulting interpretation seeks to articulate a theoretical interplay between cultural analysis of sociohistorical structures that transcend the exigencies of individual lives and phenomenological descriptions of the meanings that events and experiences assume in the life worlds of particular individuals.

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

	Age	Education	Occupation	Number of children
Elsa	38	M.S.	Manages own business	3
Susan	35	B.S.	Engineer	2
Lisa	37	M.S.	Educator	3
Sarah	41	M.S.	Social worker	4
Jean	40	M.B.A.	Securities broker	3
Amy	32	B.S.N.	Nursing supervisor	2
Betty	40	M.B.A.	Corporate manager	1

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

At the outset of the investigation, a list of potential participants was developed from a membership roster of a local church group and through personal referrals made to the researcher. Purposive sampling criteria were that each participant be employed in a professional occupation, belong to the baby boom generation, and live in a two-income household. These criteria provided a specific set of social circumstances in which to situate the study's findings and, hence, respond to calls for more in-depth and localized accounts of consumption phenomena (Sherry 1991). Second, this contextualized approach has been advocated as a strategy for deriving theoretical constructs and relationships that are grounded in the social dynamics of everyday life (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Individuals were contacted by phone and asked if they would be willing to participate in a university-sponsored research project seeking to gain a better understanding of the consumer experiences of professional working mothers. All those contacted stated that the topic was personally relevant and expressed enthusiasm in regard to participating in the study. A demographic profile of the seven participants is presented in Table 1.

This particular study follows in a tradition of consumer research that emphasizes developing a more in-depth analysis of the life stories expressed by a relatively small number participants (Levy 1981; McCracken 1988; Mick and Buhl 1992; Thompson et al. 1990). The logic of this sampling strategy is well expressed by McCracken (1988, p. 17), who states, "The purpose of the qualitative interview is not to discover how many, and what kinds of people, share a certain characteristic. It is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one construes the world . . . qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it. It is, in other words, much more intensive than extensive in objectives." This rationale is particularly relevant to the aforementioned research objectives of hermeneutic-phenomenological research.

Verbatim transcripts from audiotaped depth interviews served as the primary texts on which the following

interpretive account is based. Each participant was assured of full anonymity and signed consent forms that explained the purpose and intended use of the investigation. The interview dialogues ranged from 90 minutes to two hours and generated verbatim written transcripts from 30 to 45 single-spaced pages. The majority of the interviews occurred at the participants' homes, although some were held at their places of professional work.

All interviews were conducted by the researcher and followed the conventions of phenomenological interviewing (Thompson et al. 1989, 1990). Interview questions were formulated as each participant described their experiences. As such, the course of the dialogue was largely set by each participant, with follow-up questions directed at attaining clarification and/or further elaboration of the experiences being described.

The interview sessions began with the question, "Can you tell me about a product that is important to you?" In each interview, this question inspired a far-ranging dialogue that encompassed all aspects of the participants' daily lives. Their reflections exhibited a gestalt-like quality in which experiences of product acquisition and consumption, family, and career were fundamentally interwoven.

A second set of interviews was then conducted to enrich the description of this life-world gestalt. The methodological rationale for this second series of interviews was that the first dialogues provided a point of common understanding from which meanings and issues important to each participant could be further illuminated and explicated. Furthermore, the second interview provided an opportunity for participants to express other meanings and life concerns that had remained in the background of their awareness during the first interview.

While participants set the primary course of this second dialogue, the researcher also had a list of issues from the previous interviews that required further elaboration. In many cases, these issues arose within the natural flow of the dialogue and did not require any direct elicitation. Whenever breaks occurred in the dialogue, however, the researcher would inquire about a follow-up issue that had not yet been addressed. Through the two interview dialogues, each participant's network of lived meanings were sketched with greater depth and clarity.

The interpretation proceeded by means of a hermeneutic logic (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Thompson et al. 1994). In practical terms, this logic entails an iterative process of reading, documenting, and systematizing the interview transcripts. For each interview, the transcript is closely read to gain a sense of the whole. During this initial reading, however, the interpreter begins the process of noting key phrases, metaphors, and patterns of meaning. Through each iteration, the interpretation is developed and an effort made to grasp thematic similarities and meaning-based linkages among the experiences being described.

This process is undertaken for each participant. After the researcher feels that an internal structure has been derived for one participant, attention is turned to another, where the process is repeated. In this stage of the interpretive process, an effort is made to note points of similarity to and difference from the previously interpreted interviews. As the iterative process continues, a larger pattern of thematic relationships is derived that attempts to capture essential dimensions common to all the participants' interviews. Throughout the interpretive process, the developing thematic structure is continuously challenged and modified by returning to the concrete experiences described in each interview.

A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION

As a general overview, the interviews suggest that the working mothers participating in this study are situated in a similar set of cultural circumstances, share a common set of life concerns, and have been socialized in a common set of cultural beliefs and images about gender and motherhood. Furthermore, the participants' focal awareness of cultural conceptions of motherhood seemed closely related to their perception that they—along with others of their generational cohort group—were forging new paths in their efforts to balance professional and domestic roles. Having been socialized in a traditional value system, they reached early adulthood during a time when traditional gender conceptions were being seriously critiqued and challenged by large numbers of American women. All described a life course in which they were energized by the goals of the feminist movement and then came to adapt these "idealistic" conceptions to the demands of balancing career and family.

All participants described being focally aware of the culturally typified views of motherhood from June Cleaver types to modern-day supermoms and noted specific ways in which this system of competing cultural models were relevant to their self-conceptions and everyday experiences. Throughout the interviews, for example, participants spontaneously compared themselves to these various cultural images of motherhood. They also noted being highly attuned to what may be an ideological counterpoint to the supermom icon: media analysis of whether the juggling lifestyle is detrimental to the well-being of children as well as detrimental to the psychological well-being of jugglers (see Crosby [1991] and Epstein [1988] for a discussion of the ideological implications of this news media orientation).[4]

[4]As noted by one reviewer, recent media reports have called attention to the prospect that women's participation in the workforce may have positive consequences for their psychological well-being and that of their families (Schwartz 1994). This media development,

In presenting the following hermeneutic account, my goal is to retain the holistic quality that characterized the participants' descriptions while still providing a sense of analytic clarity. To this end, I will first discuss the general structure of the thematic framework that emerged from the hermeneutic analysis of the interview transcripts. This overview is intended to provide readers with a frame of reference for better understanding the lived meanings and the pattern of interrelationships being highlighted.

Figure 1 portrays the system of thematic relations emerging from the interpretation of the interview texts. The far left of the figure presents a vertical continuum ranging from *experience near* to *conceptually abstract.* Conceptually, this continuum suggests that concrete experiences and specific behaviors manifest or embody broadly diffused, abstract sociocultural meanings and processes (Geertz 1979). Methodologically, the continuum represents the interpretive movement from different levels of emic meanings to an etic framework that situates participant perceptions in a broader system of sociocultural meanings.

The emic nomenclature was derived from the participants' own vernacular. Although these meanings are intended to characterize the frame of reference of the participants, an interpretation is necessary to identify that a specific emic term expresses an important global meaning or pattern of relationships common to all participants. The emic interpretations are structured by three levels of abstraction: (1) the participants' perception of a specific experience, (2) the reflective meanings of the experience, and (3) the meanings which emerge through interpreting larger patterns discerned across all interviews.

The emic meanings are presented in terms of two interrelated thematic dimensions. One dimension highlights consumer meanings emphasizing interpersonal issues. The other highlights consumer meanings emphasizing issues related to the experience of time. At the experience-near level, the participants' awareness of time and their relatedness to others coalesced around issues of having control (or trying to gain) control over their hectic daily routine:

> *Jean:* I use the CD player at night. I play classical music when I am trying to get the kids calmed down. There is a transition period at night when everybody wants to rip and roar and I find that music soothes everybody a little bit. I use it everyday. It is entertaining, it's mind-control I guess to a degree.

Previous consumer research has described the psychological importance that control themes assume in the context of consumption experiences (Hirschman 1992; Schouten 1991; Thompson et al. 1990). This hermeneutic interpretation extends these discussions by showing how the desire for control (and the opposing concern over being out of control) is intimately related to a broader field of life-world concerns and an anticipation of the future. That is, their ongoing actions and concerns were directed toward creating a desired future—a vision that encompassed the legacy of memories that they would leave to their children. In hermeneutic terms, this interrelationship highlights an experience-near manifestation of the *historical horizon;* a hermeneutic term that refers to the mutually supportive interplay among one's sense of the past, one's actions in the present, and the future toward which present-centered acts are directed (Gadamer 1976; Heidegger 1960).

The following sections will demonstrate how this field of lived meanings is manifested in consumption phenomena and, conversely, how consumption phenomena are meaningfully situated in the participants' historical horizon. After presenting the emic account, an etic model will be described that links these consumer perceptions to a broader system of cultural narratives and psychosocial structures. This model also offers a framework for conceptualizing a caring consumer orientation motivated by concerns over maintaining the integrity of one's social networks. It is further proposed that this orientation offers a feminized form of utilitarianism that is pervaded by feelings of interpersonal responsibility and a sense connectedness to others.[5]

Staying on Schedule

> *Lisa:* My whole life is centered around trying to stay on schedule and trying to be there for everybody and be able to do the things that I know need to be done and get those things done and still be able to do any of the things that come up unexpectedly. You know, it's a juggling act.

This theme highlights the focal meanings and experiences that participants expressed toward time. Key experiences described in relation to this theme were organizing activities to be more efficient, forming (and adhering to) routines and habits, feeling the stress of trying to fit in everything that "needs to be done," and finally, pervasive feelings of fatigue. Although participants frequently evoked the juggling metaphor to characterize these experiences, a close reading of the interviews suggest that "staying on schedule" better captures the spirit of a lifestyle premised on the control of time:

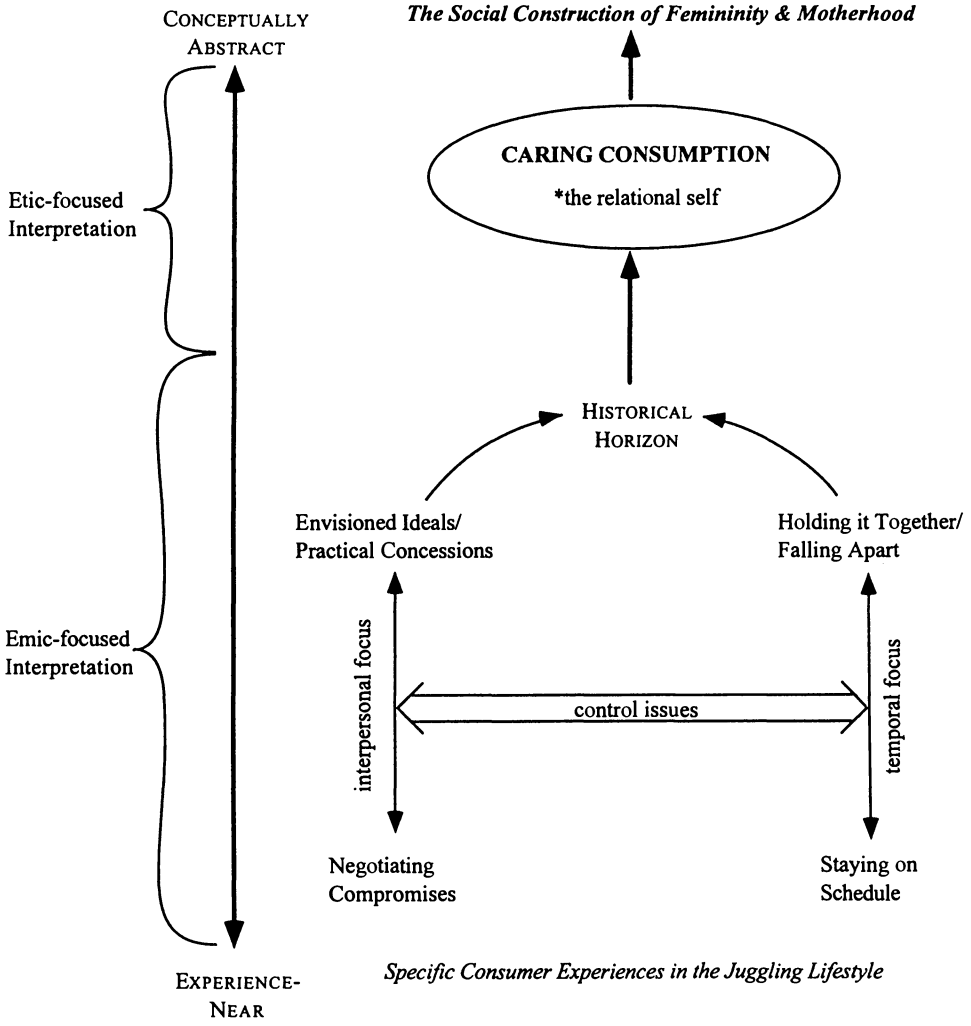
> *Jean:* I have to get in time for exercise, I'm also taking a study program through [university name] which is a

however, does not undermine the larger point that these participants expressed many strong personal concerns and anxieties over the effects that *their* commitments to a professional career had on their children and the overall level of stress in their lives.

[5]Here, the term "feminine" is being used in a socially constructed sense that refers to a system of cultural practices, roles, and interpersonal orientations that have become historically associated with cultural conceptions of the female sex (Epstein 1988).

FIGURE 1

LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCES OF PROFESSIONAL WORKING MOTHERS



home study program and I've got to carve out some time for those two activities. Then of course, there's my husband in there somewhere (*laughs*) so it's very, very scheduled. I guess every aspect of my life is that way right now. I don't necessarily enjoy that, but I know that it is temporary. I have found that being very time conscious has helped me accomplish a lot more for me and my family.

For these participants, the schedule is a prominent source of control whose major purpose is to organize the flow of their lives into a smoother and less stress-inducing routine. The following passage illustrates the significance that consumption routines acquire in a lifestyle that is ordered by the clock:

> *Betty:* Since I like to get up and have quiet time to sort of clean my brain, I get up at five-thirty because I walk for a half an hour. I've got some time just when it's quiet and the house is mine. . . . That's when I like to read the paper, assuming that the paper has come, I have a constant ongoing battle with the newspaper because I feel that my paper should be delivered before seven in the morning and they don't always think so . . . if it's not there by seven, that means that I either have to change my morning routine in terms of when I eat breakfast, when I get [daughter] up, when I make my lunch . . . and that's the time that I usually call them instantly and complain.

This passage reveals a common paradox that arose in the interviews. Attempting to reduce stress by adhering to an efficient schedule often magnifies the stressfulness of unplanned occurrences or changes in the routine:

> *Sarah:* I have no time. I have absolutely no disposable time at all. I shopped at that Kroger's for probably seven or eight years, and I know where everything is and I don't have to spend any time searching for things. In fact it's

real frustrating to me when Kroger's rearranges even small areas in their store, because I don't want to have to go hunt for things. There are certain meals that I fix a lot, and so, when I go to the grocery store, I usually pick up the things that I need for those meals. So those things I just automatically buy. After twenty-four years of grocery shopping, things just kind of jump in my basket as I go along. (*Laugh.*)

Sarah's metaphor of not having *disposable* time offers an apt expression of the participants relationship to time. Each described their routine as being motivated by a sense that no moment should be wasted. In this context, the acts of planning, organizing, preparing, and anticipating upcoming events consumed a large amount of each participant's available time. As such, the present was often experienced as being fully consumed by the ever-shifting demands of the schedule and the preparation for future ones:

Amy: It seems like human nature is hard to predict, and you feel like you got things organized but then its like there's always something that comes up that throws the schedule off. Plus I think I'm "Type A" personality because I always try to do one more thing and sometimes that makes me late doing something else. But you have a certain number of things that have to get done, so you try to get as much done before they next thing occurs.

Interviewer: When you say you're a "Type A" personality, what do you base that on?

Amy: Well, I guess because I'm always doing something, or always feel like there's something that needs to be done, even if I'm sitting there trying to relax, I'm thinking of all this stuff I need to do or should've done.

Although Amy characterizes her tendency "to always be doing something" as a personality trait, this concern over anticipating future needs and utilizing every spare moment was commonly expressed in all the interviews. The concern with speed and expediency of action was described as thoroughly interwoven into the daily experiences of these participants and, indeed, their entire way of being in the world. "Rushing," "running," "racing," and "pushing" are but a few of the metaphors of embodiment that were continuously evoked to describe the experiences of living the schedule. This sense of living at an accelerated tempo manifested itself in their physical actions and thought processes:

Amy: Like I'll leave my car and go walking into the office to get something done and they'll [coworkers] say, "Whoa, is there a fire behind you, or something?" because I'll be walking real fast and I don't really consciously think of it. It's just "got to hurry up and get there and do this and that." So, I feel like I'm in a rush most of the time, because most of the time I am. As soon as I get off from work, I rush over to get the kids, and rush over and do this.

Sarah: I never walk anywhere. I run. I mean literally. The other day I went to lunch with a friend and I bet you I was walking ten feet in front of her, she said, "Where are you going?" (*laugh*) but I get my mind on things and I just start going but I never do anything slow . . . I feel like my insides are running, even, I feel like I'm running right now, even now just sitting here talking with you, my mind is going a mile a minute thinking about the things I need to do at work today, and, what I'll have to do this afternoon, and this weekend.

For these participants, cooking was one routine consumer activity where the rushed nature of their lifestyle became particularly salient. A cogent example is offered by Elsa, who noted that she relied heavily on precooked and preprocessed foods because she did not have time to cook. This gain in time and efficiency, however, also served as a persistent source of guilt:

Elsa: The poor kids have to make do with you know, canned ravioli, or fish sticks or whatever I can round up. I run into the guilt type thing I guess. Like I should be performing what my mother did, cooking the good wholesome meal with the potatoes and the green vegetables and the meat. But if I can manage to defrost the meat and get it in the crock pot where it's doing its thing while I'm at work, then you know, we might have a decent dinner.

Over 30 years have passed since the marketing researcher/consultant Ernest Dichter (1960) identified a powerful symbolic association between cooking and women's conceptions of motherhood. Although Dichter explained this symbolical association by appeal to a psychoanalytic framework, historical and cultural studies document that cooking has been central to the social construction of motherhood in American consumer culture (Matthews 1987; Strasser 1982). In the context of this cultural framework, products such as crock pots, pressure cookers, food processors, and, most important, the microwave oven assumed a symbolic significance by enabling the task of traditional cooking to be compressed into a more bounded and accelerated time frame. For these working mothers, this symbolic meaning was quite resonant and it coalesced with a larger life meaning that pervaded the participant's descriptions: the desire to create and sustain a sense of balance between competing demands, responsibilities, personal desires, and the desires of significant others.

Negotiating Compromises

Jean: Kids are sneaky. They'll put more stuff in there [shopping cart]. Everything is up for negotiation from produce to cookies and when I have a very small, a finite amount of time, I am very much in the gear of "I've got to get this done, got to get this done." And when somebody wants to discuss something at this particular time, I tend to snap and then that just makes a bad experience for everybody so I just say "no, I don't need that extra stress." I don't have time or the temperament after work to do that, not with three kids. I'm not going to put myself through that. That adds another layer of stress to this whole thing so I just avoid that situation.

This consumer situation offers a prototypical representation of a general pattern that emerged in the par-

ticipants' perceptions; moderating between their plans (such those embodied by Jean's shopping list) and the competing desires of other family members. From their perspective, their plans—which often incorporated a series of interrelated time contingencies—were constantly being accommodated to the demands of other family members, who seldom recognized the full gamut of consequences and inconveniences posed by these unexpected demands.

For these participants, another salient experience of negotiating compromises related to their efforts to gain more assistance in running the household:

> *Susan:* I told him [husband], "I don't like the example. I don't want the boys to see mommy does the housework and daddy doesn't do it." I even told him I wanted him to cook supper at least one night a week. Not only would it give me a break from cooking supper but the kids would see daddy doing it. But he cooked spaghetti every single Saturday night for three months. I mean there wasn't even a salad with it, it was just blob. (*Laughs.*) I think he didn't like cooking and I think he didn't like me asking him to do that and this was his way of doing it but not doing it.

Each participant described processes of discussion, negotiation, compromise, and conflict by which they sought to shift the balance of these responsibilities in a more egalitarian direction. As in the case of Susan, each described a perception that this quest to create a more egalitarian balance of domestic responsibilities usually prompted interpersonal tension and, in some cases, overt acts of resistance. Further, they described a feeling that, even when they did receive assistance from spouses and children, these responsibilities remained fundamentally their own. As stated by Sarah, she was the caregiver of "last resort" whenever her spouse could or would not undertake a task of child care. Although each participant acknowledged that their actions contributed to a problematic cycle (i.e., their spouses ultimately did not have to assume more responsibility), interpersonal and psychosocial dynamics made it difficult to break this cycle. There was only so much conflict and emotional stress that they were willing to endure. As Betty noted with some resignation, "After a while it is just easier for me to do it than to have to keep nagging at him [husband]."

Consumption experiences were a prominent and recurrent context in which this experience of negotiating workable compromises was concretely manifested:

> *Lisa:* Most of the time if it's a Saturday afternoon, I usually end up doing it [going shopping] with the kids. I take the kids with me. You know as much as they hate to go shopping, they also hate for me to say, "I'm going over to the mall to go shopping." Then they want to go, it's when they get there that they hate it, and the conflict starts. But they kinda feel like we should be together. We should be doing things, or, let's all do something together, so we end up, we end up going out and having a terrible time at the mall. (*Laugh.*) No, it's not that bad, we'll eat or look at the toy store. I'm the one that really has the terrible time.
>
> *Interviewer:* What happens for you?
>
> *Lisa:* I want to go home. I just don't want to be there. I'm usually exhausted within thirty minutes of [youngest son's] wanting to go immediately to the toy store and [oldest son] doesn't want to be in the store we're in, and [daughter] will say, "Why do we have to have them with us?" After about thirty minutes, I'm about ready to go home.

In the following passage, consumption is situated in the thematic context of creating a more pleasant mother-child experience, which, somewhat paradoxically, contributes to another source of interpersonal conflict:

> *Amy:* I can clean the house up and five minutes later it looks just like it did before I started (*laugh*). But, they've just got too much junk. I think that's the problem with working mothers, you buy them stuff that they don't really need. . . . I've started throwing things away when they're not looking, and things like that.
>
> *Interviewer:* How come you think that's a problem of working mothers?
>
> *Amy:* Well, I think that they don't have a lot of time to spend with their kids, or just a lot of time for themselves, and they don't want that time that's together, being a time where there is a war in the camp. So rather than to make a confrontation, you sort of make up for it by giving them what they want. . . . Then you wind up with all this clutter.
>
> *Interviewer:* So is that true for you?
>
> *Amy:* Yeah, I've got a lot of clutter. I have a lot of storage space and shelves to hide the clutter, you know.

Implicit in this self-interpretation is a culturally pervasive assumption that a conflict exists between working outside the home and devoting time to children (Gerson 1985; Greenberger et al. 1988). In this context, the accumulation of clutter is the material symbol of her anxiety and guilt over not always being there with her children. These symbols of mollified guilt, however, further contribute to her frustrations by posing further impediments to maintaining a well-kept household. In this context, hiding (or secretly disposing of) clutter can be read as acts that symbolically dispose of the problematic feelings and practical tasks that she experiences as engulfing her free time.

The women in this study did discuss the personal rewards that came from work. However, these statements were invariably expressed in concert with references to the benefits offered to their children and the sense of satisfaction that they gained from providing their children with rewarding experiences (i.e., music lessons, private schools) that would not be affordable without their income. This narrative pattern suggests that these consumption choices functioned as symbols of maternal devotion and indicants that their juggling lifestyle provided unique benefits to their children. As such, these consumption choices symbolically trans-

formed the time devoted to career pursuits into a means of extending maternal care:

> *Susan:* My mom was home all the time which was the norm when I was growing up. Looking back I realize that we were really lucky to have that. I don't know how Daddy, how they made ends meet with all of us, without her working but they did. A lot of things that I do for my children they couldn't do for me with only Daddy working. Like gymnastics lessons and cub scouts and stuff like that, those were like luxuries that we didn't have that I am happy I can give to my kids.

This symbolic resolution intertwines two major cultural narratives of feminine identity. As noted by Shreve (1987), few concepts are more culturally sanctified than motherhood. As such, it would constitute a social taboo for a woman with children to not place motherhood at the center of her identity (Greenberger et al. 1988). Throughout the twentieth century, however, the social influences of mass marketing and advertising have drawn a close association between motherhood and consumption choices, such that being a good mother is equated with choosing the "correct" brands of household goods (see Ehrenreich and English 1979; Forty 1986; Matthews 1987). By justifying career pursuits in terms of consumer benefits to one's children, primacy is granted to the role of motherhood and the pursuit of a career outside the home is reconfigured in terms more consistent with the traditional association between motherhood and management of the family's domestic (and consumer) affairs. Thus, public work becomes a means to provide their children a more enriching consumer lifestyle.

Envisioned Ideals/Practical Concessions

> *Betty:* I feel guilty, I mean there's still that part of me that says I ought to be Super Mom, I ought to be able to do it all. I mean, you know, it's an ego blow to acknowledge to myself that I can't do it all. I've learned over the years to deal with that better. To not let it get me in depression or . . . spinning my wheels just because I can't do everything.

This emic theme highlights lived experiences where cultural ideals of motherhood, family life, and household management most explicitly had an impact on the participants' self-perceptions. During the interviews, participants described a fairly recurrent and often bothersome sense of disparity between an envisioned ideal and the actualities of their everyday experiences. The term "practical" has been incorporated into the thematic nomenclature to highlight that these were not abstract ideals or detached impersonal outcomes that were at issue. Rather, these meanings largely concerned ways of being and doing that fully engaged the participants in a nexus of social relationships and activities.

For these participants, the perpetual divergence of their practical engagements from an envisioned ideal often evoked emotionally charged meanings. Their ideal referents encompassed an array of normative commitments (i.e., deep-seated feelings of what should be done), idyllic conceptions of family life, a sense of what could be accomplished if other constraints were not in force, and finally, the desire to always be "there" whenever needed by their children. The following passage illustrates how this constellation of ideals could form an experiential gestalt and also how the social world could be interpreted as a reminder of their practical concessions:

> *Elsa:* A lot of times my mother's generation just doesn't understand. She thinks that you don't have to do this [work outside the home]. And you say, well that's my living; to provide for the dance classes, piano lessons, the house and all this kind of stuff, you've got to be at work and . . . you have to put up with this kind of schedule. If I had all day long, maybe my house would be in better shape and I'd have dinner ready with, with a little apron with lace all around it on, waiting for my husband but it's just not the way it is. Sometimes, I wish I didn't have to work. I would get this done and I would get that done, and, everything would be fine, just like when I was a kid. Mom was always there. But you deal with it the best you can and if sometimes it gets too hard you take a parenting class. (*Laugh.*)

In a more broad sense, all these participants were aware that their routines greatly differed from cultural ideals of motherhood, either the traditional stay-at-home icon or the contemporary ideal of the supermom who has the boundless energy needed to do it all:

> *Susan:* It is just impossible. You can't be (*pause*). My mother and husband's mother were full-time homemakers and if you make that your full-time job you can do a real good job at it. My husband never wore a pair of underwear that hadn't been ironed, underwear and undershirts. I mean the sheets were ironed, the baseboards were dusted. He had never eaten a cake made from a mix, they were always made from real scratch. If you make that your full-time job you can do an excellent job and it can take all of your time if you put that level of effort into it. But you can't work full-time and do that. I mean they both take time and you are just human and that's where a lot of this superwoman stuff is false. So that's why I think it is just crap. It seems to me like it is men's wishful thinking. You know, let her do everything.

In commenting on commercial portrayals of working mothers, Elsa also notes the extreme differences she perceives between her actual situation (and more generally of being a working mother) and the ideal of the well-kept, well-organized, and calm supermom:

> *Elsa:* Some of them [commercial portrayals] are pretty realistic. The one that's scurrying around in the morning, trying to get the kids off to school, and the kid doesn't want to eat breakfast. That's real. Most of them I'd say aren't very real. The woman who's all pulled together, just out of the salon, and, looking like a million dollars. I mean is her zipper never unzipped, or does she never run out the house because she's forgotten to give the kids

their lunch? [Husband] was talking about all the women that go down the highway putting on their make-up, what dangerous drivers they are. Now that's true. Why don't they portray that? The woman that is running down the interstate because that's the only time she's got to put it on. That's the way it really is.

For Elsa, "the way it really is" is characterized by being perpetually harried, unorganized, forgetful, imperfect, rushed, engaged in multiple activities, and, most of all, stressed. In these terms, her reference to putting makeup on while driving offers an interesting symbolic parallel: that is, a hectic and harried lifestyle that is always on the verge of careening out of control.

Several participants had become aware of the stress that ensued from attempting to coerce everyday experiences into a more idealized form. In moments of reflective assessment they sought to become more accepting of their practical concessions.

Lisa: I used to feel guilty but it doesn't bother me any more, because I just don't have the time or the energy or the sanity. If you come home and you've got so many things to do, and you've worked all day and you see all these things still ahead, you gotta cut back somewhere, or else I lose my patience, I end up turning into a witch with the kids. I just have to let it go somewhere. And they love pizza or Kentucky Fried Chicken, and that's a real treat. That's what they look forward to. So, it's not really a punishment for them, and it helps me out.

Interviewer: When you were feeling guilty, what were you feeling guilty about?

Lisa: That I wasn't making the home cooked meals, the nutritious meals that I grew up on. But as more children have come along there's just been less time. . . . And, when I do fix a good meal, the boys they're so picky, they don't appreciate it, not yet. I'm sure there will come a time when they'll appreciate a home cooked meal, but right now, if I fix a big home cooked meal Sunday afternoon with, roast and vegetables and all, they don't like it. They're really into the hot dogs and the hamburgers.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Lisa: Not so bad, anymore. They have green beans (*laugh*) almost every night. I open up a can of green beans, and it's the only green vegetable that they'll eat, so they can have their hot dog but they eat a vegetable too. It's just not the elaborate meal, that I might have been used to when I was growing up.

Although Lisa has a degree of emotional commitment to the idealized notion of the traditional mother, she has come to accept that *not* striving for this ideal creates a more preferable interpersonal dynamic. In this context, green beans serve as a symbolic relic of the traditional meal—and its idealized nutritional quality—that garnishes and, to some extent anoints the less ideal, but less stress-inducing, convenience foods she now routinely serves.

All participants described routinely enriching fast food meals by adding a more traditional and presumably nutritious item (typically a green vegetable). This practice resembles a holiday consumption ritual whereby the addition of special ingredients is used to transform commodified (i.e., branded or prepackaged) foods into a more homemade and hence ideal form (see Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). In a similar spirit, these working mothers used this consumption practice to negotiate a disparity between a traditional home-cooked meal and the use of commercially processed food. However, their described intentions were not to transform (or even disguise) the use of commercially produced convenience food. Rather, this supplementing practice seemed to be a manifestation of the balance metaphor that permeated their reflections. The use of fast food was a compromise that helped them balance the demand of their lifestyle and similarly the addition of a special ingredient (the vegetable their children would willingly eat) symbolically balanced the meal.

Implicit in this perception is a longstanding cultural construction of the women's identities as consumers/shoppers (Ehrenreich and English 1979; Fischer and Arnold 1990). This cultural system of meaning portrays a woman's self-worth as a function of her shopping skills and the astuteness of her consumer choices (Douglas 1994). When viewed in the context of this meaning system, redeeming coupons is much more than a financial decision; it symbolizes the traditional ideal of being totally engaged in the domestic realm. For Lisa, the act of not redeeming coupons becomes implicated in the larger issue of whether some important aspect of motherhood is being compromised and periodically emerges as a source of guilt.

In the following passage, Jean describes a series of events that have enabled her to better accept a practical concession without feelings of guilt. This event centered on a sharp disparity between her actual experience with the housekeeping service and the more idealized conceptions that motivated its employment:

Jean: Probably the one common denominator among working mothers is guilt and you think "I have got to create more time for the children." . . . Again this vision that we could all just sit around and be one big happy family and you know have poetry readings but it doesn't work out that way. I tried a maid service and . . . I am not fastidious by any means, but I just felt like they weren't cleaning like I would clean. I don't think I am overly critical either but I just felt like that for that amount of money you should get one heck of a shine on things. . . . I just didn't think I was getting my money's worth. And I had all these misconceptions. I thought if I had a maid service, they would come in for one day and it would stay clean for five days. I was so fussy with the kids, "Oh, don't touch this or that." It's their home but I kept telling myself for 40 bucks I should be able to retain this for a long time. Now housecleaning has become less important in my life. I'll clear a path from the front door to the kitchen. I don't make any apologies for it.

In this description, the explicit motivation for hiring a professional cleaning service was to create more quality time. This motivation was also intertwined with a

desire to symbolically impose a lasting sense of order on a turbulent world. Accordingly, Jean idealized the actions of the cleaning service as having a lasting effect. In trying to protect the ideal of a professionally cleaned house, Jean assumed a fastidious demeanor with her children that inspired interpersonal dynamics that further contradicted her envisioned ideal of warm and enriching family encounters. Along with abandoning the cleaning service, Jean—like Susan, Lisa, and Sarah—is also abandoning the stress-inducing ideal of an immaculate household.

Holding It Together/Falling Apart

> *Elsa:* I mean this kinda sounds cliché, but, somebody's got to hold it together. He's [spouse] got more responsibilities at work. But somebody's gotta tie it all together and I guess I feel like, "OK, you're the woman, children are your charge." You know, Dad has the number one job. And it boils down to what you've been ingrained for years and years and years. That your place is with the children and your home is your castle, and you take care of it.

The "holding it together" aspect of this theme captures a series of higher-level meanings that are manifested in the participants' experience-near concern with staying on schedule. In one sense, this theme stands as a major motivation, and in some cases justification, for tolerating the stressful nature of their juggling lifestyle. The above passage from Elsa offers a clear expression of this sentiment. Her qualifier of "I know this sounds cliché" and the reference to cultural norms of traditional motherhood suggests an awareness that her orientation is very much a product of cultural and situational factors that cannot be readily ignored. In a classic existential sense, Elsa, much like the other participants, is aware of making choices within a field of constraints (Thompson et al. 1990).

These constraints, however, are not understood as abstract or even objective conditions. Rather, they are seen as a series of interpersonal obligations and responsibilities toward which each participant was emotionally vested. As implied in the juggling metaphor, each participant had thoroughly internalized an ethos of personal responsibility, but this perceived responsibility was directed at maintaining the integrity of their social networks. Although each described specific ways that they had sought to gain more assistance from spouses and children, all described a strong sense of being ultimately responsible for holding the household together:

> *Susan:* He is in the category of very helpful husband but at the same time you have to ask for that help. . . . [Husband] is a least twice as good as most of what I hear, but you do wonder why you have to ask. Why is this your responsibility? Like if I am going to go somewhere [on a business trip] I will talk to him and make sure he knows where the kids are to be and what they will need. If he goes somewhere he just says, "Bye, I'm gone." It is an unequal kind of equality. (*Laughs.*) It's like it is the female's responsibility.
>
> *Interviewer:* Do you feel that kind of responsibility for keeping the household going?
>
> *Susan:* Yeah, that is part of my job. It goes with being a mom. It would be nice if it went with being a dad too but it definitely goes with being a mom. So I just keep trying to fight entropy. Sometimes on weekends, I try to keep things picked up and that's the way I do it in my mind. If I can pick up one thing and keep it in it's place, I have made a dent. I just try to make more and more dents and get things put back where they belong.

One explanation for this intense feeling of responsibility is the enduring influence of traditional gender conceptions that can be seen in the participants' self-conceptions and also in their descriptions of their spouses' tendencies to remain aloof from the details of running the household. This cultural explanation, while clearly relevant to their interview texts, does not fully address the phenomenological and symbolic dynamics that render these gender conceptions as experientially significant. An important phenomenological dynamic is implicit in Susan's feeling of fighting against forces of entropy. This feeling speaks to the concern that the alternative to actively holding it all together is to let things fall apart (also see Hirschman 1990). This concern arose most explicitly in regard to the organization of the routine and its concrete manifestations in the ordered (or disordered) state of the household:

> *Lisa:* I feel like I need to get myself back on a schedule again [after summer recess]. It's like I've been hibernating or hiding. I need to get myself organized again. So I'm ready when it's time to go back to work. It's a nice break but I just feel that need to stay organized. During the summer, things around here fall apart more than when I'm on a routine. Dishes don't get washed like they do during the year, and, even though I have more time, I tend to stay behind in the laundry because during the year I know it has to get done or I'll go crazy. Things stay pretty organized during the year. During the summer they don't. Getting back to work gets me organized again.

As illustrated in the following passage, the loss of order that characterized this thematic aspect was not confined to the physical conditions of the participants' household; rather, these experiences of disorder could extend to the very integrity of one's self-concept:

> *Jean:* I stayed at home for about six months after my twins were born because, well I was forced to because of the day care situation. I had to wait that long before I got a place for both of them at the same time, at the same place, as my older child. So during that six months it was 100 percent home and hearth and I felt like I lost touch with computer technology, with advances, you know, in other parts of the globe. My husband would come in off the road and I'd say "What happened out there?"
>
> *Interviewer:* What was it like for the six months you were at home?
>
> *Jean:* Oh, days and nights ran together. I never thought it would be like that. I thought if I was home all the time,

the house would be just immaculate. It would all be spic-and-span and just, you know, the model family and it wasn't like that at all. We were in the house all the time and nothing ever got done.

These passages illustrate the close association between order and vitality that pervaded the participants' reflections. The fully engaged orientation of holding together, while stressful and demanding, also evoked positive meanings of being organized, active, and in touch with the world. As described by Sarah, the salient alternatives were far less palatable:

> *Sarah:* What alternatives are there? You can't stop being a mother, I guess I could quit work, but I'm a professional person, and it would be really very difficult for me to be just, well not just, but being a homemaker, exclusively, because I enjoy the challenges of what I do. So, I just keep on trying to juggle it, and hope that nobody suffers and that my children grow up fairly well adjusted.

The sense of being the one who must hold it together also evoked strong feelings of responsibility and a pervasive concern over what might occur if they somehow failed (even momentarily) to fulfill this role. Implicit in this perception is a dialectic of autonomy and dependence. On the one side, participants saw their families as being dependent on them in several fundamental ways. While these responsibilities were seen as rewarding and meaningful, they also afforded feelings of being constrained, guilt, and anxiety.

An alternative manifestation of this dynamic was expressed by Betty, who described the experiential dilemmas posed by her explicit realization that those in her social network could carry on without her. Acknowledging the potential independence of those who had been depending on her had two major phenomenological effects. First, it undermined the unquestioned sense of personal importance afforded by the perception of being essential to the lives of others. Betty described this realization as a major "blow to her ego" that led to a serious questioning of her self-identity and overall life direction. Once she had come to terms with this existential issue, however, she attained a feeling of profound liberation:

> *Betty:* Basically it's been more of a realization that I am dispensable, not indispensable. It's a realization that I can acknowledge that to others and make them aware that they can do without me (*laugh*) and there's sort of a freedom in that. . . . At work, I had all kinds of ideas last August, when we knew I was going to be leaving in a year. I was going to have all "I's" dotted and "T's" crossed, and everything all ready and packaged up. And I've come to the realization that the job will continue when I'm gone. . . . The office is not going to fall apart just because one person leaves and hasn't left a list of where all the files are. I've realized that on a professional level and I've realized that on a personal level too. If I should be hit by a car and dead tomorrow my family will

CARING CONSUMPTION

The major emic meanings and life concerns expressed by the participants are highly consistent with theoretical proposals regarding the gendered nature of interpersonal orientations and self-conceptions. Chodorow (1978) provides one of the most influential theoretical accounts of the gendered self. She posits that at a very early age, males and females pursue fundamentally different paths of identity formation. Male identities are structured by themes of differentiation, separation, and autonomy, whereas female identities are structured by themes of identification, connectedness, and forming relationships. (For a more extensive discussion on the sociocultural conditions that contribute to the developmental differences in gender socialization see Chodorow [1978]; Epstein [1988]; Lerner [1993]; Meyers-Levy [1989].)

This model of feminine identity has served as a conceptual foundation for several theoretical accounts regarding the unique qualities of female experience, such readers' relationships to cultural texts (Press 1991; Radway [1984] 1991), the use of language in everyday and formal speech settings (Lakoff 1990), the formation of social networks (Gilligan et al. 1990), gender-based differences in information processing (Meyers-Levy 1989), approaches to interpreting and resolving moral dilemmas (Gilligan 1982), and women's decision-making experiences of birth or abortion choices (Patterson, Hill, and Maloy 1995).[6] This latter application has also provided what has become the quintessential term to characterize this relational/feminine orientation: "the ethics of care" (Gilligan 1982). This orientation describes a way of living one's life and resolving personal conflicts that is driven by feelings of responsibility for enhancing the well-being of others and a sensitivity to the interpersonal consequences of one's actions and choices. Three characteristics of this caring orientation seem particularly relevant to the consumer experiences of these participants.

First, a caring orientation reflects a relational conception of the self in which one's sense of personal identity is formed and sustained in relation to the activities and the interpersonal relationships that compose the person's social network (Crosby 1991). As noted by Meyers-Levy (1989, p. 244), a substantial body of empirical evidence supports the notion that women are more predisposed toward a communal outlook that emphasizes "interpersonal relationships, affiliation, and attachment of self and other," whereas males are predisposed toward a "self-focused and autonomy-driven

[6]Several critics have argued that Chodorow's model of feminine identity is most applicable to the experiences of women socialized in the conventions and mores of middle-class, Anglo culture (see Press 1991). For purposes of this study, however, this critique supports the relevance of this framework to this set of professional working

orientation."[7] One implication of the relational conception of the caring orientation is that the worth of one's life projects is not defined by the body of "objective" accomplishments that are accumulated but, rather, from the positive effects that these actions have on the lives of others, particularly those in one's immediate social network (Hirschman 1990).

This perspective coheres with the participants' efforts to balance career and motherhood. Several participants noted that maintaining this balance necessitated passing up opportunities for career advancement that entailed more extensive time commitments, travel obligations, and so on. To place this life narrative in perspective, an alternative logic could have been far more egocentric, such as "what is best for my career is best for my family." Preserving a balance of career and family interests, however, is the life project that most strongly resonates with a self-conception that entwines feelings of personal satisfaction and accomplishment with a desire to enhance the well-being of others.

This relational sense of self affords a highly embodied and fully engaged experience of involvement. The women in this study repeatedly described being fully engaged—in a physical, emotional, and intellectual sense—in the interpersonal responsibilities of family life. Their descriptions also suggest that this engagement was not controlled or calculated in an explicit, conscious sense. That is, the household presented an array of practical and interpersonal needs and demands toward which the participants were particularly attuned. They described being more aware of household needs than their spouses and, once recognized, they found these sites of disorder nearly impossible to ignore. This described pattern is congruent with research suggesting that a communal (e.g., feminine) orientation lends itself to a style of information processing characterized by a focus on contextual detail and the processing of multiple cues, whereas an egocentric (i.e., masculine) style of information processing tends to simplify environmental complexity through heuristic processing that "entails minimal processing of understated detail" (Meyers-Levy 1989, p. 243). These participants described this differential awareness of current and impending household responsibilities as often placing them in a de facto position for redressing the domestic need or encouraging someone else to do so. In the words of Lisa, this cycle inspires a fatiguing sense of "always being the one that has to make things happen."

This cycle also speaks to the second major characteristic of a caring orientation: a feeling of responsibility to maintain the network of relationships that composes one's social networks. As noted by Gilligan (1982), this responsibility of care inspires creative responses to constraints and potential trade-offs. Through these creative acts of adjustment, compromise, and, in some cases, personal sacrifice, the agent of care seeks to create a situation in which no one's needs are unduly compromised and conflicts are minimized. As noted by Jackson (1992), however, these acts of creative flexibility can result in the caregivers' own desires and preferences being compromised. In the flow of family life, the caring individual becomes the institutionalized source of accommodation.

The participants' relationships to consumer products and services also reflected this dynamic. For example, valued consumer goods were used to help them effectively juggle schedules, adopt to unplanned occurrences, and overcome time constraints. Second, the participants all described positive feelings of accomplishment and control that arose from these acts of accommodation. Nonetheless, they also noted that the constant press to be accommodating contributed to feelings of being overwhelmed and having no personal time.

This experience of ambivalence—which was often marked by a pernicious emotional mix of frustration and guilt over feeling frustrated—highlights the boundary problem that can ensue from the caring orientation. Whereas a more autonomous (and masculinized) self-conception readily lends itself to a sharp distinction between doing for oneself and doing for others, this dichotomy becomes much fuzzier in the context of a relational self-concept (Gilligan et al. 1990). For these participants, their understandable desire to "get away" and do something for themselves signaled a problematic conflict with their ongoing involvement in the social network of their families. As such, these acts of "self-indulgence" were often marked by feelings of guilt, whereas actions that were seen as explicitly sacrificing their own preferences to the needs of others were marked by frustration. In this symbolic context, the participants' quest for balance can be seen as an effort to find some workable compromise (through yet another act of accommodation) that would moderate this emotional tension.

The caring orientation described by these participants bears a notable resemblance to the agapic love model of gift exchange recently advanced by Belk and Coon (1993). As they note, agapic love offers a feminine orientation toward exchange that is motivated by feelings of altruism and unselfish love. Belk and Coon also suggest that agapic love is likely to be relevant to consumer experiences that fall outside the context of their original inquiry: the role of gift giving in romantic relationships. The present study supports this theoretical assertion. Most prominent, the focus of the participants' everyday consumption choices was not on the object but rather on the person (or persons) toward whom the consumption act was directed. In figure/ground terms, con-

[7] When discussing gender differences in relation to cognitive styles and generalized interpersonal orientations, a question arises as to whether the proposed differences reflect innate, genetically based characteristics or patterns of socialization beginning almost at birth (Costa 1994; Epstein 1988). Meyers-Levy's (1989) analysis suggests that these differences have a strong sociocultural component. This social constructionist account of gender differences is also consistent with the perspective adopted in this article.

sumption behaviors were background considerations to the more focal concern with maintaining the integrity of their social network. As such, their everyday consumption behaviors and choices were embedded in a field of interpersonal care.

However, the caring orientation that pervaded the participants' everyday consumer experiences harbored some noteworthy differences from the agapic love paradigm. As described by Belk and Coon (1993), this paradigm evokes several classic dualities—rational-emotional, instrumental-expressive, and pragmatic idealistic—that did not cohere with the manner in which participants expressed unselfish love through their consumption behaviors. Their rational evaluations of consumer needs and their efforts to schedule time efficiently were charged with emotions ranging from guilt to joy. While participants described themselves as planned, controlled, and utilitarian shoppers, their "utilitarianism" was grounded in feelings of care and concern and a plethora of related emotions. Further, this utilitarianism was an expression of their care and the much-valued ability to juggle effectively a wide array of competing demands. The participants' pragmatic orientation did not present an opposition to idealism so much as it offered a way to incorporate some aspects of their valued ideals into a time-pressed lifestyle. Further, their practical compromises were often directed toward the goal of creating a more ideal future.

This last point relates to a third characteristic of this caring orientation: an anticipation of future consequences. As originally discussed by Gilligan (1982), moral judgments that follow from a caring orientation are driven by an anticipatory focus on the likely consequences that different courses of action will have on relevant parties. This anticipatory orientation was a pervasive aspect of the lived experiences described by these working mothers. Their attention was continually directed toward upcoming needs, organizing for the next day, and attempting to stay ahead of impending consumption needs, such as children's need for clean (or new) clothes and food staples essential to the family's routine meals.

These experience-near forms of anticipating the future seemed grounded by a more global set of concerns and hopes. In this regard, the existential philosopher Heidegger—who also espoused a relational conception of selfhood—proposed that care toward one's historical horizon was a fundamental aspect of human existence. For these participants, memories of their own childhood were salient reference points from which they assessed the state of their current lifestyles. They were aware that their actions were creating a course for their future lives and simultaneously would serve as the basis of childhood memories for their own children. In this meaning context, their juggling lifestyle can be seen as an effort to attain a more temporally expansive form of control. Their ongoing actions and concerns were directed toward creating both a positive legacy of memories for their children and a future life that would not be marked by feelings of regret over choices that had been made.

The inverse of this desire was the participants' self-described feelings of guilt over making compromises to the demands of the juggling (e.g., not cooking, not being a thorough shopper, letting the house go). This feeling was grounded in the broader concern that their lifestyles necessitated sacrifices that would eventually become an irrevocable source of regret. In a related vein, the participant's other salient alternative—abandoning career pursuits—also held problematic implications for their conceptions of the future: unfulfilled personal potential, loss of personal satisfaction, and loss of an identity separate from the family sphere. For these participants, the life metaphors of balancing and juggling—despite their corresponding stresses and emotional demands—offered a viable means to avoid unduly sacrificing the cherished ideals of their childhoods, their feelings of family connectedness, and their sense of personal direction and fulfillment.

DISCUSSION

This article has sought to situate the meanings of specific consumption experiences for professional working mothers in relation to a field of personal and interpersonal considerations that pervade their life worlds. The background of these perceptions was composed of the common system of cultural meanings, ideals, and conceptions of motherhood in which the participants were socialized. Their metaphors of juggling, balancing, and fitting it all in expressed a broader life project of negotiating an endless array of competing demands, obligations, personal perceptions, and cultural ideals. Despite the stresses and self-doubts that it afforded, their juggling lifestyle was an invigorating one that provided feelings of accomplishment and a sense of constructing a satisfying life history. Each participant sought to interject the cherished ideals from her own childhood recollections into family life while adapting to the exigencies of contemporary society. Further, they sought to construct an acceptable balance between self-directed accomplishments and extending care to their families. The future horizon toward which these activities were directed is one that is free of personal regret and where their children have a legacy of warm familial memories.

Consumption was squarely situated within this nexus of personal and cultural meanings, and its symbolic meanings frequently paralleled the participants' self-perceptions. These women saw themselves as being the facilitators and, indeed, the connective force, that held the family together. Similarly, they desired products and services to be facilitators of their own life projects. Satisfactory products were those that remained in the background of their concerns but, nonetheless, existed as a material support system; a support that was not always forthcoming in their social networks. Con-

versely, products and services "stood out" as focal concerns when they broke the flow of the schedule and demanded attention and/or creative adaptations to the routine. Finally, many of the most salient meanings of products and services were lived in relation to interpersonal concerns, such as using consumption to create more ideal family settings.

The etic portion of the analysis expands on previous research on the relationship between consumption and the desire for control (Thompson et al. 1990). Rather than being a foundational consumer construct, this analysis suggests that "control" has a higher consumer meaning that is grounded in existential concerns, such as the historical horizon, interpersonal relations, and one's life projects (Sartre 1956). This set of textual evidence suggests that control issues can reflect a caring orientation in which one feels responsible for maintaining the integrity of social network. Finally, this analysis also suggests that the control/consumption complex is projected toward a future horizon of possibilities and the uncertainty about present-day actions will be regarded (by oneself and significant others) in the future.

This investigation also contributes to a growing stream of research on the socially embedded nature of consumption activities and meanings (Sherry 1991). For these working mothers, the meanings of consumption and the realized and unrealized goals that motivate consumer behaviors are interwoven into a field of personalized social relationships, gender ideals, cultural beliefs, and emotional ties. The consumer orientation that arises in this social context transcends the theoretical distinction between utilitarianism and emotionally driven consumer motivations (e.g., Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). For these participants, everyday consumer tasks—making purchase decisions, grocery shopping, preparing meals—often evoked emotionally charged meanings that were grounded in a historical legacy of cultural ideals pertaining to motherhood, family life, and the participants' own evolving life narratives. For these participants, a deeper meaning of utilitarian, task-oriented consumption was extending care to their families and creating a support network of reliable products and services that also served their own needs.

Limitations and Future Directions

This hermeneutic account sought to highlight certain experiential issues and meanings that were significant in the consumption activities of professional working mothers and to link these lived meanings to relevant psychosocial influences. Although these interpretations are offered as plausible and textually supportable, there is no pretense to have developed an exhaustive account. The present interpretation is attuned to the reflective and symbolic dimensions of human experience rather than characteristics that arise in situ. It also focuses on the experiences and perceptions of working mothers, situated in a particular configuration of sociohistorical and social class factors. Furthermore, it has focused on how gender issues and meanings emerge in the context of consumption behavior, rather than on the related topic of gender differences among the consumer meanings expressed by men and women.

Ethnographic methods could supplement this account by providing an action-oriented, in situ perspective on the meanings of consumption in the juggling lifestyle, particularly in regard to interpersonal dynamics and the constellation of routinized behaviors undertaken by members of the household. Related techniques such as "autodriving" (Heisley and Levy 1991) could be used to explore how specific consumption activities become sites of negotiation (and perhaps conflict and power dynamics) among family members. Finally, this research orientation also offers a means for exploring both the correspondence and differences among family member's perceptions of their participation and involvement in domestic responsibilities and the meanings of specific consumption situations.

A set of issues that transcend methodological orientations are concerned with differences that exist among individuals situated in different sociohistorical contexts. As discussed by many leading feminist theorists, the interplay of economic class and ethnic tradition construct unique cultural spaces marked by distinct narratives of feminine identity, patterns of gender socialization, and family dynamics (Costa 1994; Epstein 1988; hooks 1989). The socioeconomic conditions faced by women living in impoverished circumstances and/or by single mothers are far different from those implied by the June Cleaver archetype or the more contemporary supermom archetype (see Douglas 1994; Hochschild 1989; Press 1991). An implication is that different relationships to the aforementioned cultural narratives of motherhood, femininity, and family life would emerge across these diverse gender settings. Therefore, different systems of cultural meaning may be most relevant to women consumers' life narratives.

Men's relationships to the social conditions that underlie the juggling lifestyle represent another major constellation of issues. These changes in social conditions have also unsettled longstanding cultural conceptions of manhood and fatherhood. It seems likely that this transformation would be highly salient to men of the baby boom generation who—like the present set of participants—were socialized in a traditional gender ideology. A burgeoning field of men's studies literature is now exploring the psychosocial consequences related to transformations in cultural representations of masculinity (Craig 1992) and conceptions and experiences of manhood and fatherhood (Haddad 1993). One specific question suggested by this study is the extent to which a caring orientation—which historically has been associated with feminine identities—is relevant to fathers' perceptions of family life and the attendant con-

sumer meanings. Although "care" runs counter to traditional conceptions of masculinity (emphasizing individuality, emotional reserve, and the primary obligation of being the family "breadwinner"), it is consistent with more contemporary gender narratives concerning egalitarian marriages and the ideology of the new male (e.g., Jump and Haas 1987; Pleck 1987; Schwartz 1994). Furthermore, research is needed on the role that consumption activities play in helping men negotiate competing (and potentially conflicting) gender ideals and adjust to the changing social dynamics of family life (also see Fischer and Gainer 1994).

In closing, Bristor and Fischer (1993) have persuasively argued that in-depth research on the gendered nature of consumption phenomena can enrich understanding of the psychosocial and institutional dynamics that shape consumer practices and preferences. This study offers one set of voices and a contextually grounded interpretation that will, I hope, contribute to this emerging disciplinary conversation.

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One

Temporal Regularity

The world in which we live is a fairly structured place. Even the most casual glance at our environment would already reveal a certain degree of orderliness. One of the fundamental parameters of this orderliness is time—there are numerous temporal patterns around us.

At the basis of any structure and order there is usually some regularity. At the basis of the temporal structure of the world, we, therefore, ought to expect to find some temporal regularity. The search for such regularity is the main focus of the present chapter.

Let me first delineate the major dimensions of the temporal profile of any situation or event.[1] One fundamental parameter of situations and events is their *sequential structure,* which tells us in what order they take place. A second major parameter, their *duration,* tells us how long they last. A third parameter, their *temporal location,* tells us when they take place, whereas a fourth parameter, their *rate of recurrence,* tells us how often they do.

In my search for temporal patterns, I shall thus try to identify four major forms of temporal regularity—rigid sequential structures, fixed durations, standard temporal locations, and uniform rates of recurrence. In other words, I shall be primarily concerned with the rigidification of the sequential ordering of situations and events, their duration, their temporal location, and their rate of recurrence.

There are many forms of temporal patterns. Basically, however, they all fall into one of the following categories: physiotemporal patterns, biotemporal patterns, and sociotemporal patterns.

Physiotemporal patterns lie within the research domains

of the physicist and the astronomer. They essentially involve temporal regularities such as the following: the predictable fact that lightnings always precede thunders, rather than follow them; the predictable duration of the flight of projectiles, as calculated by ballisticians; the predictable time of day at which the sun rises on any particular day of the year; the predictable period during which a particular planet completes a revolution around the sun or a rotation on its own axis; and so on.

Whereas the physiotemporal order regulates the movement of physical bodies, it is the biotemporal order that is primarily responsible for regulating the lives and daily functioning of organisms. Biotemporal patterns lie within the research domain of the biologist and involve temporal regularities such as the following: the predictable sequential relations among the stages of being a larva, a cocoon, and a mature insect; the relatively fixed duration of pregnancy periods; the fairly predictable temporal location of puberty within the life cycle; the fairly uniform circadian rhythms that govern the body's temperature; and so on.

The present chapter revolves around the *sociotemporal order,* which regulates the structure and dynamics of social life. I am primarily concerned, therefore, with *sociotemporal patterns,* which essentially involve the temporal rigidification of *social* situations, activities, and events. Such patterns clearly lie within the research domain of the sociologist. Unfortunately, unlike the physical sciences and the life sciences, sociology has so far paid relatively little attention, if any, to the phenomenon of temporal regularity. (This is not necessarily true of the other social sciences. Consider, for example, the traditional anthropological concern with seasonal cycles or the study of business cycles in economics.) And yet, this phenomenon is probably one of the fundamental parameters of any social order. It is definitely among the main characteristics of modern social life, one of the key phenomena that provide it with an unmistakable structure. As Lewis Mumford put it, "The first characteristic of modern machine civilization is its temporal regularity."[2]

Rigid Sequential Structures

Rigid sequential structures are the most obvious and conspicuous form of temporal regularity. It is in the nature of many events, activities, and situations that they cannot all take place simultaneously and must, therefore, be temporally segregated from one another in terms of "before" and "after." The sequential order in accordance with which they are arranged may sometimes be purely random. However, it is very often the case that it is rigid, to the point of irreversibility.

As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann have pointed out, sequential rigidity is inherent to the everyday life world:

> I cannot reverse at will the sequences imposed by [the temporal structure of everyday life]—"first things first" is an essential element of my knowledge of everyday life. Thus, I cannot take a certain examination before I have passed through certain educational programs, I cannot practice my profession before I have taken this examination, and so on.[3]

Usually, sequential rigidity is a normative prescription and not a mere empirical coincidence. It is identifiable already at the level of short ceremonial events such as weddings, funerals, military parades, religious services, classical music concerts, and official banquets. However, it is also built into entire life careers. Consider, for example, the common prohibition of procreation prior to marriage or the sequential order of various rites of passage, which is hardly ever flexible and reversible! In between those two extremes, note also the rigid sequential structure of "career timetables,"[4] academic curricula, and various bureaucratic routines and procedures. I should add that sequential rigidity is by no means characteristic of formal organizational life alone. As will soon become apparent from the discussion of courtship norms, it prevails in the more informal domains of social life as well.

Some irreversibilities are determined by nature or are inevitable from a logical or technical standpoint. It is natural imperatives that force farmers, for example, to plow their fields before, rather than after, sowing, or that make it impossible for anyone to become an infant after one has already aged. It is a logical-definitional necessity that compels track-meet organizers to schedule finals after, rather than before, heats. Likewise, it is a technical constraint that forces us to eat only after—and not before—cooking.

However, it is a mere artificial convention that underlies our custom of serving soup before, rather than after, serving meat.[5] (The

Pennsylvania Dutch tradition of serving all dishes simultaneously ought to remind us that the institutionalization of temporally segregated "courses" in meals is in itself purely conventional!) Similarly, even though the sequential rigidity of many routine bureaucratic procedures is usually based upon sound organizational rationales, it is by no means natural and inevitable. Under various circumstances, the sequential structure of these procedures may very well be altered. Given the symbolic significance of temporal priority in general,[6] it is only natural that many socially based irreversibilities are purely symbolic in nature. This is quite evident in the case of the sequential rigidity that is built into weddings, commencement ceremonies, and even formal introductions and patterns of name ordering among authors of scientific papers.[7]

A cross-specific comparison of courtship rituals highlights the fundamental distinction between naturally based and socially based sequential rigidity, and serves to demonstrate where nature ends and social convention begins. The courtship ceremonies of water salamanders or sticklebacks, for example, generally consist of biologically determined "reaction chains" wherein each link in the chain functions as a necessary "releaser" of the mate's next move.[8] Ritualized fanning by the male, for instance, is indispensable for "releasing" the female's entrance to the nest and must, therefore, precede it.

A substantial amount of sequential rigidity is built into human courtship rituals as well. Consider, for example, the temporal relations among stages such as "necking," "petting," and actual sexual intercourse. There may be some variability in the duration of these stages or in their temporal location vis-à-vis the first date, the onset of "going steady," the engagement, and the wedding.[9] And yet, the irreversibility of their sequential ordering vis-à-vis one another is quite well established. In other words, there are generally agreed-upon norms regarding which stage in the courtship ritual ought to precede or follow others.[10] According to Ray Birdwhistell, it is quite easy

> to delineate some twenty-four steps between the initial tactile contact between the young male and female and the coitional act. These steps and countersteps had a coercive order. For instance, a boy taking the girl's hand must await a counterpressure on his hand before beginning the finger intertwine. The move and countermove, ideally, must take place before he "casually" and tentatively puts his arm around her shoulders. And each of these contacts should take place before the initial kiss.[11]

Those who deviate from the prescribed norm of proper sequence are commonly referred to as being "fast" or "slow." Note that, within the context of courtship, these terms refer primarily to sequential ordering, rather than to duration:

> The boy or girl is called "slow" or "fast" in terms of the appropriate ordering of the steps, not in terms of the length of time taken at each stage. Skipping steps or reversing their order is "fast." Insistence on ignoring the prompting to move to the next step is "slow."[12]

The considerable normative significance of the notions of "fast" and "slow" is quite evident from the negative sanctions that are usually attached to each of those deviations from the prescribed norm of "proper sequence." It also accounts for the overwhelming feeling of "bad taste" which often accompanies the act of deviating from that norm.

And yet, this sequential rigidity is, to a large extent, conventional and by no means inevitable. A "move" or "step" such as the initial kiss does not really *have* to be preceded by a finger intertwine in order to be carried out. Furthermore, in various sexual relationships it is omitted altogether! The "proper sequences" which underlie popular normative notions such as "too fast" or "too slow" in human courtship are of an almost purely nonbiological, symbolic significance. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they often vary not only across cultures, but also across historical periods as well as age-groups within cultures.

Fixed Durations

A second facet of the temporal regularity which prevails in modern life is the fact that numerous events are associated with relatively fixed durations on a regular basis. In a way, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, most of the timetables and schedules we use would not have been possible were it not for the durational rigidification

of so many events and activities in our daily life. As Alvin Toffler has pointed out, "In adult behavior, virtually all we do, from mailing an envelope to making love, is premised upon certain spoken or unspoken assumptions about duration."[13] Thus, most college training programs, for example, are rigidly forced into four-year periods, many therapeutic sessions are defined as fifty-minute "hours," and various warranties expire six months from the date of purchase. Even our music has been characterized, in contradistinction to non-Western music, as durationally rigid.[14]

Durational rigidity is often technologically or biologically determined. Consider, for example, the duration of a Paris-Rome flight or a pregnancy period. The durational rigidity of "determinate time tracks"[15] such as jail sentences, military service, presidential terms, vacations, classes in school, and appointments, however, is almost entirely conventional. Its conventional basis is quite evident from the fact that the durations of these "time tracks" are usually defined in terms of "rounded off" time periods, such as fifteen years (jail sentences), two weeks (vacations), or thirty minutes (appointments). They are also essentially alterable, as might be indicated by practices such as cutting down various training programs during wartime or extending an appointment by an extra couple of minutes.

And yet, despite the fairly obvious conventionality of their association to events, the fixed durations of the latter are very often commonly regarded as intrinsic to them. For example, even though it has never been stated anywhere that entertainment events ought to last about two hours, the fact that they generally do would probably lead most of us to feel cheated if a movie or a concert for which we had bought a full-price ticket lasted only ten minutes! This notion of "only" suggests that we have fairly well defined ideas of what the "proper" durations of events are, and even though these are hardly ever formally and explicitly specified, they are nevertheless regarded as normatively binding. Consider, for example, the symbolic overtones of acts such as leaving "too early" or, on the other hand, staying "too long." (The same is also true of behavior patterns such as being engaged for "too long" without getting married.) The notion of "overstaying"[16] is particularly interesting. That even very close friends are sometimes said to have stayed "too long" seems to indicate that normative notions—and, consequently, actual patterns—

of durational rigidity do exist even in the relatively unstructured realm of informal relations.

Standard Temporal Locations

Durational rigidity is closely related to a third facet of temporal regularity, namely, the standardization of the temporal location of numerous events and activities in our daily life. The fact that a particular class is to last an hour, for example, is quite inseparable from the fact that it is routinely scheduled for 2:00 P.M. and another class is routinely scheduled for 3:00 P.M. in the same room. (The standardization of the temporal location of activities and events is very often also related to the rigidification of their sequential structure. If local television news, for example, is routinely scheduled for 6:00 P.M. and national news for 6:30 P.M., the former will necessarily always precede the latter.)

The standardization of temporal location presupposes *scheduling*, a typically Western phenomenon which involves moving away "from the natural or casual sense of time toward a sense of time as schedule."[17] Unlike many non-Western civilizations, where events and activities are temporally located in a relatively spontaneous manner, we tend to "schedule" them, that is, routinely fix them at particular prearranged, and often standard, points in time—at particular hours, on particular days of the week, in particular parts of the year, or even in particular periods within one's life career. Whereas, in many non-Western civilizations, it is human activity that regulates the calendar,[18] in the modern West it is the calendar (along with the schedule) that regulates human activity!

In general, most of our routine daily activities are scheduled in a fairly rigid manner for particular times of the day and for particular days of the week. Thus, we usually eat not necessarily when we are hungry, but, rather, during officially designated eating periods such as "lunchtime" or "dinner time." Similarly, we usually go to bed not necessarily when we get tired, but, rather, when it gets "late." Cleaning one's home is another activity which typically takes place not necessarily when things get dirty, but, rather, on particular days of the week that are designated as "cleaning days" in a standard fashion.

Consider also the temporally rigid structure of work, a phenomenon which will be further explored in the last chapter. As Wilbert Moore has pointed out,

> For the primitive food gatherer or peasant cultivator time as such is not economically valued. He pursues a particular task or set of tasks steadily, except as he is interrupted by darkness or fatigue, until the work is completed, and then may spend a variable period "doing nothing" until the next endeavor is started.[19]

We, on the other hand, usually go to work not necessarily when we feel like it or when there is an urgent necessity, but, rather, at certain normatively prescribed standard hours. Furthermore, even our hours of rest are determined by "the rigid requirements of the urban schedule."[20] We usually rest not necessarily when we are tired, but, rather, during officially designated rest periods such as lunch breaks and weekends.

The association of social activities and events with some standard temporal locations is by no means a mere empirical coincidence. Very often it is a normative prescription as well. After all, children do not necessarily go to bed at a certain standard hour because they want to, but, rather, because they *have* to. Fixing the temporal location of events entails a broadly conceived norm of "punctuality," which involves assigning a deviant character to the acts of being "early" or "late." Being late for work, for example, might entail some loss in one's social reputation. In various social circles, the same is also true of men and—even more so—women who are "late" in getting married. On the other hand—yet for precisely the same reason—one would be particularly careful about keeping one's children from launching their drinking, smoking, or sexual careers "too early." Both cases indicate some deep respect for the norms of "proper" timing that derive from what Julius Roth has identified as "career timetables."[21]

Generally speaking, we have relatively fixed notions of what constitutes "the proper time." It is almost inconceivable, for example, that an event such as a dance would be scheduled for the morning (even on non-working days). However, we ought to realize that the basis for locating—or abstaining from locating—certain activities

and events at particular time periods is, very often, purely conventional. To appreciate the fundamental difference between naturally determined and socially based standard temporal locations of activities and events, contrast, for example, the reasons for sowing in the spring or hunting during the daytime with the reasons which underlie routines such as going to church on Sunday or to college around the age of eighteen. As Murray Wax has noted,

> societies that live according to casual time recognize adolescence by the appearance of the appropriate social and physiological manifestations. . . . societies that perceive time as a schedule grant this status according to time-serving—so many years of school or training.[22]

The artificial nature of social scheduling is also evident from the sheer fact that so many events in our daily life are scheduled for "rounded off" times such as "on the hour." A dinner that is scheduled for 8:19 P.M., for example, is almost inconceivable. Note also how we teach our children, especially during the summer, that bedtime is determined by the clock alone and that it may very well be "late" even when there is still light outside. It should be pointed out, in this regard, that we probably would have never felt the need to invent daylight saving time were it not for the fact that our standard wake-up time is dictated by the clock rather than by the sun! The conventionality of the standard temporal locations of so many activities and events in our life is even more evident when contrasted with the way in which the same events and activities are temporally located not only in other civilizations, but also in the worlds of some segments of our own society which are not as strictly governed by the clock and the schedule—presocialized infants, the retired aged, the unemployed,[23] and bohemia.

Uniform Rates of Recurrence

In the particular case of recurrent activity patterns, the standardization of the temporal location of activities and events also entails uniform rates of recurrence, that is, some fairly rigid *rhythmicity*. That a particular seminar is routinely scheduled for Wednesdays necessarily implies also that it is being held regularly on a weekly

basis. That Christmas always falls on 25 December necessarily implies also that it is celebrated regularly on an annual basis. Along the same lines, official meetings and conferences that are routinely scheduled for 2:00 P.M. or for the first day of the month essentially recur regularly on a daily or monthly basis, respectively. Such periodic patterns are regular not only in a social sense, as when families space their reunions in accordance with routines such as "every wedding or funeral," but also in a strictly mathematical sense, as when the reunion takes place "every Memorial Day" (that is, every year). In other words, in such periodic patterns, the time intervals during which sequences of recurring successions of social activities are completed are mathematically equal.

The sociological concern with periodic recurrence is analogous to the concern, in the physical and life sciences, with regularly recurrent patterns such as the revolution of the earth around the sun and its rotation on its own axis, or the various rhythms in accordance with which sleep, hunger, ovulation, and body temperature are temporally structured. It began with Emile Durkheim's, Henri Hubert's, and Marcel Mauss's pioneer explorations of the "rhythm of collective life," and was further consolidated by Pitirim Sorokin's analyses of "sociocultural rhythms and periodicities." Since then, sociologists have identified various *"social cycles"*—classic examples of which are the day, the week, and the year—that are responsible for the rhythmic structure of social life.[24]

The rhythmicity imposed on social life by the temporal spacing of numerous recurrent activities and events at mathematically regular intervals is by no means characteristic of formal organization alone, and is identifiable not only at the macrosocial level, as the above-mentioned studies and works might suggest. It is also possible to identify uniform rates of recurrence of periodic activities at the microsocial level and within relatively unstructured domains such as that of informal relations. Furthermore, these are not only empirical patterns, but actual normative prescriptions as well. The normative overtones of notions such as "too often" or "hardly ever" suggest that even the temporal spacing of visits, telephone calls, and letters exchanged among friends—a most useful indicator of what Durkheim considered to be the "moral density" of social relations[25] —is by no means "casual" and is quite often governed by some regular "proper" tempi.[26]

As Sorokin so convincingly demonstrated, many of the rhythms that govern social life are entirely conventional.[27] Most striking in this regard is the rhythmicity associated with time units such as the hour or the week. Given the artificial basis of those time units, such rhythmicity is obviously artificial as well. Consider, for example, the temporal organization of the administration of medications in hospitals.[28] Despite its strong biological basis, the fact that medication times are routinely spaced at regular "rounded off" intervals such as four or six hours—rather than, say, at intervals of five hours and thirty eight minutes—is indicative of its conventionality. Even more suggestive of the fact that we are actually dealing here with a sociotemporal phenomenon rather than with physiotemporal or biotemporal patterns are temporal regularities that are associated with the seven-day week, a cycle which is undoubtedly a purely conventional artifact. As I shall demonstrate in the fourth chapter, this cycle, which governs and regulates so much of our everyday life, actually represents man's first successful attempt to establish a social rhythmicity that is based upon an entirely artificial regularity.

Let us turn now to the daily, monthly, and annual rhythms of social life. First of all, we ought to remember that the calendar day, month, and year are slightly modified versions—and, therefore, only approximations—of their original astronomical models. Furthermore, even if they did precisely correspond to them in actuality, it is still social convention alone that ties the temporal structure of news broadcasts to the daily cycle, the temporal organization of business activity to the monthly cycle, and the professional mobility of young physicians to the annual cycle.

Much of our social life is temporally structured in accordance with "mechanical time," which is quite independent of "the rhythm of man's organic impulses and needs."[29] In other words, we are increasingly detaching ourselves from "organic and functional periodicity," which is dictated by nature, and replacing it by "mechanical periodicity," which is dictated by the schedule, the calendar, and the clock.[30] To fully appreciate the artificial basis of social rhythmicity, note that, not only is it so often quite independent of natural rhythmicity, but it sometimes even conflicts with it. It is certainly not an awareness of our internal biological rhythmicity, for example, that leads us to work for five days and then rest for two. Such discrepancies between organic and mechanical periodicity ob-

viously entail certain risks. As Kevin Lynch has pointed out, "As men free themselves from submission to the external cycles of nature, relying more often on self-created and variable social cycles, they increasingly risk internal disruption."[31] Note for example, that our bodies are internally regulated by natural rhythms that are called "circadian rhythms" because they correspond only very roughly to our twenty-four-hour calendar days. And yet, we routinely impose on them a twenty-four-hour rhythmicity, which derives from the organization of our life in accordance with daily schedules that adhere to clock time, which involves twenty-four-hour cycles. That we are so often sleepy upon getting up yet wide awake around bedtime may well be the price we have to pay for that. Furthermore, according to Lewis Mumford,

> a population trained to keep to a mechanical time routine at whatever sacrifice to health, convenience, and organic felicity may well suffer from the strain of that discipline and find life impossible without the most strenuous compensations. The fact that sexual intercourse in a modern city is limited, for workers in all grades and departments, to the fatigued hours of the day may add to the efficiency of the working life only by a too-heavy sacrifice in personal and organic relations.[32]

Temporal Regularity—the Cognitive Dimension

The temporal regularity of our social world has some very significant cognitive implications. In allowing us to have certain expectations regarding the temporal structure of our environment, it certainly helps us considerably to develop some sense of orderliness. By providing us with a highly reliable repertoire of what is expected, likely, or unlikely to take place within certain temporal boundaries, it adds a strong touch of predictability to the world around us, thus enhancing our cognitive well-being. Temporal irregularity, on the other hand, contributes considerably to the development of a strong sense of uncertainty. As Bruno Bettelheim has noted, regarding life in the concentration camp, "Thus the endless 'anonymity' of time was another factor destructive to personality, while the ability to organize time was a strengthening influence. It permitted some initiative, some planning."[33] Dorothy Nelkin has noted the very same phenomenon with regard to migrant labor.[34]

Consider, for example, the case of durational rigidity. As Alvin Toffler has pointed out,

> Man's perception of time is closely linked with his internal rhythms. But his responses to time are culturally conditioned. Part of this conditioning consists of building up within the child a series of expectations about the duration of events, processes or relationships. Indeed, one of the most important forms of knowledge that we impart to a child is a knowledge of how long things last. This knowledge is taught in subtle, informal and often unconscious ways. Yet without a rich set of socially appropriate durational expectancies, no individual could function successfully. . . . The child soon learns that "mealtime" is neither a one-minute nor a five-hour affair, but that it ordinarily lasts from fifteen minutes to an hour. He learns that going to a movie lasts two to four hours, but that a visit with the pediatrician seldom lasts more than one. He learns that the school day ordinarily lasts six hours.[35]

Much of the predictability which is built into modern life depends on such "durational expectancies."[36] Only on the basis of my knowledge that an appointment I have scheduled for 9:15 will not last more than forty-five minutes can I be certain that I shall be able to make a class which is scheduled for 10:00!

The cognitive indispensability of temporal regularity is generally true not only of durational rigidity. Much of our daily planning presupposes certain expectations regarding the regularity of the temporal location and the rate of recurrence of events. Railroads, airlines, radio, and television, for example, could not have functioned as effectively were it not for the invention of the timetable, one of the most conspicuous products of temporal regularity. Along the same lines, it would have probably also been much more difficult for us to budget our expenses were we to be uncertain as to how often we would get paid.

In general, it would have been almost impossible to plan our lives were we to be totally in the dark as to what might take place when, how often, in what order, and how long. In order to appreciate the extent to which temporal regularity enhances predictability—and thus planning in general—note also the considerable efforts made by people who regard themselves as potential targets for kidnapers and assassins to avoid, as much as possible, any temporally regular

life patterns. They know that they cannot afford to have too many routines, since these might provide those who follow them with clear expectations upon which to base their planning. On the other hand —and yet for the very same reason—temporal regularity helps us to attain some peace of mind regarding our environment. As Elijah Anderson, for example, has noted with respect to social groups that are formed around bars, "When group members see a person going to work every day and coming to Jelly's at a regular time, they can begin to place some trust in him."[37]

It is a well-known fact that regular physiotemporal and biotemporal patterns provide us with such a high degree of predictability that we can use our natural environment in itself as a fairly reliable clock or calendar. It is quite easy, for example, to tell the time of day by reference to the position of the sun in the sky. In a similar fashion, many of us can easily tell the season—if not the actual month—by referring to the temperature, the color of the leaves, the birds and animals around, the flowers that blossom, or even our allergy symptoms. Societies that use lunar or lunisolar calendars can also tell the approximate date by the phase of the moon.

Is this not true of regular *socio*temporal patterns as well? Given its considerable temporal regularity, cannot social life in itself function as a clock or a calendar which is as reliable as any natural clock or calendar? I believe that it can and that, indeed, it very often actually does. One of the implications of the highly regular temporal profile of so many social events is that we carry in our minds a sort of "temporal map" which consists of all our expectations regarding the sequential order, duration, temporal location, and rate of recurrence of events in our everyday life. Given this "map," it is quite often relatively easy to tell the time by simply referring to our social environment!

Let us examine first one particular social environment which highlights many of the characteristics of what I would like to call "clockwork environments"—the hospital. Much of the daily life within that environment is systematically structured in accordance with the clock and the calendar.[38] Most of the activities and events in hospital life—admissions, discharges, tests, operations, the administration of medications, meals, rounds, conferences, clinic appointments, family visits, and so on—are systematically regulated by fairly rigid schedules. As I shall show in the last chapter, it is also

schedules that define the temporal boundaries of staff's presence at the hospital, as well as those of their professional duties and responsibilities there.

Given all this, it should come as no surprise that, within the hospital environment, people can often tell the time, without referring to a clock, by simply observing what goes on around them at any given moment. When patients are served lunch, for example, they know that it must be around noon. Along the same lines, they can usually tell the approximate time of day by routine daily events such as the doctors' morning round, the administration of medications, the arrival of newspapers, the departure of visitors, and so on. All this presupposes, and would have been impossible without, the temporally rigid structuring of hospital life.

As we shall see in chapter 5, most occupational roles in bureaucratic organizations such as the modern hospital are "activated" only within certain temporal boundaries. This also has some very interesting cognitive implications. Those familiar with hospital routines know, for example, that they are most likely to find particular nurses in the hospital only within the temporal boundaries of their shifts, or that they are quite unlikely to find particular physicians there beyond a certain hour, unless it happens to be their night on duty. These temporally regular patterns of staff's presence at the hospital are taken for granted not only by other staff members, their friends, and their families, but by patients as well. Several years ago, when doing fieldwork in a hospital ward, I once engaged in a conversation with a particular patient around 1:00 A.M. Two days later, around noon, he asked me how come he had not seen me there on the following night. Although prior to that first night he had always seen me there only during the daytime, he probably must have assumed that, like nurses (with whom he used to see me), I had gone to nights. Being accustomed to the temporally regular structure of staff's presence on his ward, it probably did not even occur to him that my own presence there might have been temporally irregular (as it actually was)!

In short, hospital staff members are often associated—in the minds of other staff members as well as patients—not only with particular occupational roles, but also with the particular "time slots"[39] they cover. The temporal aspects of the role of "night nurse," for example, are by no means secondary to its occupational aspects.

In fact, for all practical purposes, night nurses are relevant *as nurses* only within the boundaries of the coverage time slot which is defined as "night." That hospital staff are very often referred to, and even introduced, in terms such as "the evening nurse," "the night resident," or "the day people" is indicative of the centrality of the time slot within which they work in the hospital to their relevance to others within that social milieu. Those who work permanently on a particular shift may even be identified by that time slot as if they were inseparable from it. I once heard a nurse referring to an evening nursing technician as "the 4-to-12 Bill"! (Quite similarly, in my daughter's nursery school, children who do not stay for the afternoon program and, thus, leave regularly at 1:00 P.M. are generally referred to, by the other children, as "one o'clock kids.")

Within this context, it is not hard to see how hospital staff get to function as timepieces. Many a patient can tell the approximate time of day by simply noting which staff members are around. The actual presence of a particular evening nurse on their unit, for example, might indicate to patients that the day shift has already ended or is about to end, that is, that it is approximately 4:00 P.M. In Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun,* a blind and deaf patient miraculously manages to keep track of the passage of time by learning to distinguish among the vibrations of the footsteps of the various nurses on his ward, as well as by noting when certain events such as the changing of his bedclothes take place.[40] Such cognitive adjustment presupposes the overall temporal regularity of that social milieu.

I have used the particular example of hospital life because it highlights some of the major characteristics of "clockwork environments" in general. However, the hospital is obviously only one of many such environments. Consider, for example, the railroad world. As Henry David Thoreau reflected, upon the introduction of the railway system to New England,

> I watch the passage of the morning cars with the same feeling that I do the rising of the sun, which is hardly more regular . . . . The startings and arrivals of the cars are now the epochs in the village day. They go and come with such regularity and precision, and their whistle can be heard so far, that the farmers set their clocks by them, and thus one well-conducted institution regulates a whole country.[41]

Generally speaking, most of us are able to tell the approximate time of day without having to refer to our watches or to clocks. We do that by simply attending to various cues in our social environment, such as particular television programs, the arrival of mail, rush-hour traffic jams, and so on. Given the highly regular temporal structuring of our social life, we tend to use such cues as fairly reliable timepieces.

Even more indicative of the considerable temporal regularity of our social world is the way in which we can tell what day it is without referring to a calendar. Here we are definitely within the realm of *socio*temporality, since the weekly cycle is a purely conventional artifact. We very often use our natural environment in order to tell what season or time of day it is. However, only our *social* environment can be of any help to us when we try to figure out what day it is.

As F. H. Colson pointed out, counting the days of the week is a form of time reckoning which is not anchored in nature and, thus, "if once lost by a single lapse would be lost forever."[42] This problem has always intrigued the Jews, who—as we shall see in the fourth chapter—were the first to have regulated their entire social life in accordance with the weekly cycle. In the Talmud, there is a lengthy discussion about what a Jew ought to do in case of losing count of the days of the week.[43] There is also a Talmudic story about seven maidens given by the Persian king Ahasuerus to his Jewish queen Esther, to help her keep count of the days of the week.[44] The terrible panic of a Jew who lost count of the days of the week is nicely depicted in Sholem Asch's short story "Losing Count of the Days."[45]

Jews have bequeathed such fears to non-Jewish Sabbatarians as well. Making sure that he would never lose count of the days of the week was one of Robinson Crusoe's first concerns:

> After I had been there about Ten or Twelve days, it came into my Thoughts, that I should lose my Reckoning of Time for want of Books and Pen and Ink, and should even forget the Sabbath Days from the working Days; but to prevent this I cut it with my Knife upon a large Post, in Capital Letters, and making it into a great Cross I set it up on the Shore where I first landed, viz. *I came on Shore here on the 30th of* Sept. 1659. Upon the Sides of this square Post I cut every Day a Notch with my Knife, and every seventh Notch was as long again as the rest, and every

> first Day of the Month as long again as that long one, and thus I kept my Kalander, or weekly, monthly, and yearly Reckoning of Time.[46]

Such measures were necessary only because Robinson Crusoe was far away from civilization. That applies also to the hypothetical subject of the Talmudic discussion about losing count of the days of the week. Likewise, both Queen Esther and the hero of Asch's story were Jews who tried to adhere to the weekly cycle of Jewish religious life in a purely non-Jewish environment. When in their own "normal" environment, Jews never have any problem knowing what day it is. For example, as Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog noted, given the fact that, in Jewish communities, most of the cleaning work takes place toward the Sabbath, it is said that, "By the smell of the street water. . . . you can tell what day of the week it is."[47]

Today such a state of affairs is by no means characteristic of Jewish communities alone. F. H. Colson made this very clear:

> How do we ourselves remember the days of the week? The obvious answer is that something happens on one or more of them. If by some means or other we lose count in the course of the week, Sunday is unmistakable, even if personally we have no religious feeling about the day. So, too, school half-holiday or early-closing days force themselves on the notice of those who are not directly affected by them. But if nothing happens it is very doubtful whether a week-sequence could maintain, much less establish, itself.[48]

In occurring regularly in accordance with the weekly cycle, numerous events in our everyday life also function as cues which help us figure out what day it is. A nice example of that is provided by Hans Christian Andersen in his children's story "The Roses and the Sparrows":

> On Sunday mornings early the young wife came out, gathered a handful of the most beautiful roses, and put them in a glass of water, which she placed on a side table. "I see now that it is Sunday," said the husband as he kissed his little wife.[49]

Along the same lines, consider also the following social events: a political meeting that is held routinely on Mondays; a television program that is shown regularly on Tuesdays; a sociology seminar that meets regularly on Wednesdays; a piano lesson that is routinely scheduled for Thursdays; a telephone call from a friend who regularly calls on Fridays; a volleyball game that is regularly held on Saturdays; a family dinner that always takes place on Sundays; and so on. Such events help to orient us within the weekly cycle. Whenever I wake up to the sound of a garbage truck, I know immediately that it is Tuesday, because that is the regular garbage pick-up day. Likewise, on Wednesday mornings, I know that it is Wednesday, because I remember all the time that I have to teach later in the day.

One of the major contentions of cognitive psychology is that man essentially perceives objects as some sort of "figures" against some "ground."[50] Maurice Merleau-Ponty even went so far as to claim that assigning meaning is essentially an act of differentiating figure from ground, since the ground actually constitutes the context within which the meaning of the figure is anchored.[51] (This is also why the same figure might have entirely different meanings when placed against different grounds.) Any interpretive process of "defining a situation" essentially presupposes a solid, reliable ground, against which the situation can be perceived and assigned some meaning. A "groundless" figure or situation cannot be defined in any way which would make sense and is, therefore, totally meaningless.

The notion of "ground" has been incorporated into sociological theory through Harold Garfinkel's phenomenological explorations of the "normalcy" of the world of everyday life.[52] The centrality of this notion to Garfinkel's theory is quite evident from his constant use of concepts such as "routine grounds" and "background expectancies," both of which highlight the intricate relationship between regular, routine patterns and expectations. Garfinkel has demonstrated that the "normalcy" of our everyday life—which is the basis of all our expectations from our social environment—essentially presupposes a process of taking for granted some background features of familiar environments. These "background expectancies," against which all social situations are perceived, are the basis of all our standards regarding what is "normal." Our everyday life would not have been possible had we not internalized a certain interpretive order. Obviously, we are usually unaware of this order, because we tend to take it for granted.

I would like to demonstrate now that the taken-for-grantedness of our "normal environments" is actually restricted to certain time periods and does not transcend their boundaries. In other words, I claim that time constitutes one of the major parameters of any ground against which figures are perceived, and that, as a result of this, determining whether a certain situation or event is "normal" or not depends, to a large extent, on its temporal profile. In short, I wish to bring into focus the *temporal anchoring of normalcy,* that is, to demonstrate that *the "normalcy" of our everyday life world is temporally situated.*

Any meaningful definition of a situation presupposes some "sensible" configuration (gestalt) of figure and ground. We would, therefore, expect that perceiving any "groundless" figure would not make any sense. Given our strong basic need to "make sense"—a need which has been repeatedly emphasized by Garfinkel and his students as well as by cognitive psychologists[53]—we would also expect it to be cognitively intolerable. If time, indeed, constitutes one of the major parameters of any ground against which we perceive figures, we should not be surprised to find out that, in situations whereby a figure is unaccompanied by a temporal ground, we have a strong need to establish the latter. Without it, it is much more difficult to perceive the figure in a way which would "make sense."

To appreciate our strong cognitive need to associate social "figures" with some temporal grounds, consider the following instance. Once, upon arriving at a colleague's office, I was asked by her secretary, who had never seen me before, "Are you her four o'clock appointment?" By asking this "orientational" question, the secretary tried to establish some temporal ground against which she might perceive me—an otherwise "groundless" figure—in a way which would make better "sense" to her. Consider also an instance whereby a nurse, upon arriving at the emergency room around midnight to begin her night shift, asked the first intern she saw there, "Are you leaving soon or do you stay here all night?" Usually in that service, around midnight, two interns would be present—one would leave an hour later, around 1:00 A.M., while the other would stay there for the rest of the night. We should view the nurse's question as an attempt to establish in her own mind which of the two interns was working on the night shift that particular day. In other words, it was an attempt to place him in the temporal map in her mind.

Far more cognitively disturbing than groundless figures, however, are figures which are perceived against some ground other than their "normal" ground. Without its "normal" ground, it is far more difficult to perceive a figure in a way which would "make sense." Consider, for example, our quite common inability to recognize on the street persons that we encounter almost every day on the elevator or at the cafeteria of the building where we work. This is what psychologists call a "bad gestalt."

The above case is an example of an incongruity between a figure and its spatial ground. However, that any incongruity between figures and grounds is cognitively disturbing also applies to temporal grounds. The presence of so many people and other objects in our social environment passes as "normal" and is unnoticeable only within certain temporal boundaries. Outside those boundaries, it is by no means taken for granted. Thus, it is only around the months of November, December, and January that the presence of Christmas trees and Santa Clauses passes as "normal," and it is only around rush hours that we take long traffic jams for granted. Furthermore, even though most of us are present at our working place on a regular daily basis, our presence there at any time outside the boundaries of what is commonly defined as our working hours would not be taken for granted and would not pass as "normal."

The temporal regularity of our everyday life world is definitely among the major background expectancies which are at the basis of the "normalcy" of our social environment. The fairly regular temporal structure of our social life is responsible for the establishment of some solid temporal ground against which the occurrence of certain events and the presence of particular persons and objects pass as "normal" and unnoticeable. The unexpected occurrence of events and presence of persons and objects outside their usual temporal niches tend to disrupt the implicit, taken-for-granted figure-ground configuration which our "normal environment" presupposes. (This is obviously much less so in social environments that are more loosely structured from a temporal standpoint.) It results in a chaotic incongruity between figure and ground, which entails the loss of a meaningful way of anchoring our cognitive experiences. I

should add that our intolerance toward *temporal anomalies* not only reflects the fairly rigid temporal structure of our social life, but also helps to sustain it.

A most useful way of demonstrating the existence of a certain phenomenon is to examine the implications and consequences of its absence. As Benjamin Lee Whorf suggested,

> if a rule has absolutely no exceptions, it is not recognized as a rule or as anything else; it is then part of the background of experience of which we tend to remain unconscious. Never having experienced anything in contrast to it, we cannot isolate it and formulate it as a rule until we so enlarge our experience and expand our base of reference that we encounter an interruption of its regularity. The situation is somewhat analogous to that of not missing the water till the well runs dry, or not realizing that we need air till we are choking.[54]

The obvious methodological implication of this is that investigating the "pathological" might help us to discover, unveil, or simply bring into focus the "normal," which we usually take for granted and—therefore—tend to ignore. This methodological principle was applied in a most successful fashion by Durkheim, who explored the phenomena of criminality and suicide only for the purpose of bringing social solidarity into focus. Likewise, it was Sigmund Freud's general concern with the "normal" personality that led him to study psychopathological parapraxes. Along the same lines, it is Gregory Bateson's general concern with the normal way of framing experience that has led him to study the way schizophrenics reason, and it is Garfinkel's general concern with commonsensical reasoning that has led him to examine misunderstandings in social interaction.[55]

In a similar manner, a useful way of sensitizing ourselves to the existence of temporal regularity would be to examine the consequences of its absence. Therefore, in order to solidify my argument regarding the prevalence of temporal regularity in our social life, I shall try to shed light on the disturbing cognitive implications of temporal *ir*regularity. I shall focus particularly on "pathological" situations which involve some cognitive incongruity between social figures and temporal grounds. People's responses to such anomalous situations might tell us a lot about the "normal," temporally regular world in which we live.

A key element to look for in such situations is surprise. It serves as evidence of the existence of prior expectations, and these, in turn, are indicative of some anticipated regularity. Given the temporally regular patterns that—even though we usually take them for granted and, therefore, ignore—regulate much of our social life, it is quite understandable that we would have certain expectations regarding the duration, sequential ordering, temporal location, and rate of recurrence of many events in our environment. Consider, for example, hypothetical situations such as when what we usually regard as an appetizer is served only after the main dish, when guests who have been invited over for the evening leave after "only" ten minutes without giving any account whatsoever, or when a mere acquaintance keeps calling us every other day. Our obvious surprise on such occasions would be indicative of the existence of some prior expectations regarding the temporal profile of social situations and events. Such expectations, in turn, are indicative of the temporal regularity of "normal" social life.

Very often, when we perceive a certain figure against its "normal" temporal ground, we may not even notice it, because the entire gestalt passes as "normal." However, we would most likely become somewhat surprised, if not actually alarmed, were we to perceive the very same figure against a "wrong" temporal ground. As Erving Goffman has pointed out,

> Points of access can easily become points of alarm. When the doorbell rings at midday, housewives may feel a slight alarm, not having expected any calls. During off-call times for the telephone (say before nine in the morning and after ten at night for adult members of the middle-class) a phone ringing may cause alarm.[56]

Something of this sort happens to the hero of Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun,* which I mentioned earlier:

> And then *an astonishing thing happened.* One day toward the middle of the year the nurse gave him a completely fresh change of bed linen when he had received a change only the day before. This had never happened before. Every third day he was changed no sooner and no later. Yet here everything was upset and for two days in a row he was getting the change. *He felt all in a hub-bub.*[57]

It is certainly not the nature of the event itself that causes the alarm in such situations. After all, what can be a more trivial event than the ringing of a telephone or the changing of bed linen? What seems to cause the alarm is clearly the peculiar, other than "normal" temporal context of the event. In the Northern Hemisphere, for example, we would most likely be intrigued by a snow blizzard in August, not because snow blizzards in general are so unusual, but, rather, because the association of snow with the month of August as a temporal ground is so unusual. Along the same lines, we would most likely be surprised to see a child going to school on Saturday, not because the act itself is so strange, but, rather, because of its unusual temporal location.

Note also that,

> although one ordinarily thinks of alarming signs as occurrences, the absence of an expected sign can serve the same function. A parent who fails to receive a telephone call from a child can be alarmed by the non-ringing of the bell.[58]

Given the fairly reliable temporal regularity of our social environment, we tend to build up certain expectations. If these expectations are not met, we are alarmed. Thus, we would most likely be surprised, if not alarmed, were we to arrive at our local grocery store on a regular weekday around 11:00 A.M. and find it closed. We would most probably experience a similar bewilderment if friends who always call us on our birthday suddenly did not call; if, upon arriving at a regular weekly seminar, we saw an empty room; if we were to turn on the television at the regular news time and the news was not on the air; and so on.

When people encounter cognitively disturbing situations in which there is some incongruity between a figure and its temporal ground —that is, when a figure is seen out of context—it is not at all unusual that they fail to even perceive the figure, because the entire gestalt simply does not "make sense." This obviously happens more often to those of us who, in the course of a regular day or week, get to see a great number of people, and each of them nearly always at the same time. (When such patterns of temporal regularity are established, we tend to relate to people and identify them primarily in terms of particular time slots—as students in our Wednesday evening class, as those who commute with us on the 8:26 train every

morning, and so on. In an outpatient hospital clinic, I once heard a secretary telling a resident, "Your three o'clock is here.") In the same way that we sometimes fail to recognize, upon seeing them on the street, people that we see almost every day in the cafeteria of the building where we work, we sometimes also fail to recognize, upon seeing them in the evening, people whom we usually see only during the day. A clinician once admitted to me that she sometimes fails to recognize patients when she encounters them at the lobby of her clinic at times other than those of their scheduled appointments with her. The crucial variable here is obviously time, since that lobby is the only *place* where she ever sees them.

Another typical response to situations where there is some cognitive incongruity between figure and ground is to refer to some external point which might help to anchor the unfamiliar situation within a more "reasonable" context where it would hopefully "make more sense." Many of those who listened to Orson Welles's historic radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds,* for example, typically looked out of their windows or turned to other stations in order to check whether the broadcast was real.[59] This is also true when the ground in question is a temporal one. At the onset of the October 1973 War, for example, many Israelis, upon hearing the sound of cars in the streets, immediately turned on their radios, because the configuration of that sound and the temporal ground of Yom Kippur, which is typically dominated by almost utter silence outdoors, was cognitively incongruous and, therefore, alarmed them.

Consider also the following incident, which I once observed in a hospital. On one particular ward, the attending physician used to routinely arrive at the unit only for his daily conference with his house staff around 10:00 A.M. That conference always followed the routine morning rounds, which the house staff usually completed around 9:30 A.M. One day, the morning round was still not over a few minutes past 10:00, when the resident and the intern saw their attending physician arriving at the unit. Both of them manifested the very same reaction: they immediately glanced at their watches, so as to "solve" the cognitive incongruity that had been created by the temporal coincidence of the morning round and the arrival of the attending physician, two events which were "normally" segregated in time.

During my fieldwork at the hospital, I also noticed numerous

instances in which doctors and nurses glanced at the clock whenever they saw one of their colleagues arriving at work or leaving for the day. In part, this was done in order to make sure that the situation "made sense" from a temporal standpoint. When faced with a cognitive incongruity between a figure and its temporal ground, most of us would probably glance at our watches so as to check whether our identification of that ground was, indeed, correct.

Another typical response to such situations is to ask a question, the answer to which might hopefully help to anchor them within a more meaningful and "sensible" context. Consider for example, the following instance. On her first day coming from a long rotation of night work, a nurse was seen in the early afternoon by a colleague from a different unit. The latter was very surprised to see her, since, for the entire previous month, she had related to her only as a "night person." Her immediate response was to ask her, "Are you on days now?" When hospital staff members are seen on the hospital grounds at times other than their usual coverage time slots, they are usually asked by others, "What are you doing here?" That question is actually an elliptical form of the question "What are you doing here *now*?" since those who ask it are not at all surprised to see their colleagues at the hospital. Indeed, they usually see them only there! Rather, they are surprised to see them there *at that particular time,* which is outside the temporal boundaries of their "normal," taken-for-granted presence at the hospital. During my fieldwork, I heard the question "What are you doing here?" numerous times, in instances such as the following: when an intern came in to the hospital on his day off to pick up his paycheck; when a clerical supervisor came in unexpectedly on a Saturday morning; when a day nurse who had stayed overtime for the evening was seen around midnight by the very same night nurse whom she had relieved earlier that morning; when an intern was still working an hour past the official end of her night shift; and so on. When I first came in to the hospital on a weekend or late at night, I too was asked that question. To appreciate the extent to which "normalcy" is temporally situated, note also an instance in which a nurse asked an intern who was passing through her unit what he was doing there. She probably never asked him that same question only two months before that, when he spent a full one-month rotation on that unit!

Most fascinating, however, is the way people resolve cognitive incongruities between figures and temporal grounds by treating the figure as fixed and adjusting the ground so as to fit it. The following instance is a classic example of such a response. A part-time secretary who worked in my department on a regular Monday-Wednesday-Friday routine once came in on a Thursday to do some personal typing. Such an unusual configuration of figure and temporal ground apparently confused one of my colleagues, who was quite surprised to see her. As he himself admitted to me later, he managed to resolve the cognitive disturbance caused by that only by way of convincing himself that it was probably Wednesday rather than Thursday! The logic he applied must have been, "If it's Lucy, this must be Wednesday."

As I pointed out earlier, whereas the day and the year are essentially based on natural cycles, the week is most clearly a purely artificial cycle. This implies, first of all, that only in our *social,* man-made environment can we find any clues which might help us in figuring out what day it is. We can quite easily tell whether it is morning or evening, summer or winter, by simply referring to our natural surroundings. Nothing in our natural environment, however, can provide us with any clues as to whether it is Monday or Friday. The conventionality of the weekly cycle also implies that, while we are very unlikely to make any gross errors in reckoning the time of day or the season, it is quite easy for us to err in identifying a man-made temporal ground such as the day of the week, as my colleague obviously did.

This theme was used by the Jewish writer Chaim Nachman Bialik as the central focus of his humorous short story, "The Short Friday."[60] In this story, a rabbi is caught on Sabbath Eve in the woods, far away from his village. Despite the Jewish prohibition of traveling during the Sabbath, he decides to travel on until he reaches the closest inn, and spends the night on a bench there. The innkeeper, who had gone to sleep prior to the rabbi's arrival, is totally confused when he finds him there in the morning: "At first Feivka thought this must be illusion and some devil's hocus-pocus. . . . It seemed to Feivka that he must be crazy. . . . Am I drunk or mad? . . . There must be a mistake here."[61] Given the fact that Jews— and especially rabbis—would not normally travel during the Sabbath, Feivka is obviously bewildered at having perceived a most unusual gestalt, a rabbi who must have traveled on Sabbath Eve (since he certainly

was not there when the Sabbath entered). It is definitely neither the figure nor its temporal ground by itself that confuses him. Rather, it is the configuration of both of them *together*. And, indeed, he wonders to himself, "Sabbath—*and* the rabbi?"

Interestingly enough, the innkeeper's solution to this cognitively disturbing and intolerable incongruity is identical to that of my aforementioned colleague. Firmly maintaining that no rabbi would normally travel during the Sabbath, yet being unable to ignore the presence of the figure (that is, the rabbi), he assumes that he probably must have made a mistake in identifying its temporal ground. If the rabbi is here, it certainly cannot be Saturday. "Fancy getting mixed up as to the days of the week," he thinks to himself, assuming that the rabbi who is lying asleep on his bench certainly must be a more reliable calendar than his own memory.

Assuming, then, that it is not Saturday after all, Feivka becomes worried that the rabbi will find out that he almost observed the Sabbath on the wrong day. He therefore decides to transform their immediate environment so that it will look like a regular weekday (which he now assumes it is). While people cannot transform their natural environment so that—outdoors, at least—nighttime will appear as daytime and wintertime as summertime, they can transform their sociocultural environment so that the Sabbath will appear as a regular weekday. (In his film *36 Hours*, George Seaton has suggested that man can deliberately transform his social environment even to the point of making the 1940s appear as the 1950s.)

As we shall see in the fourth chapter, Jews have always made particular efforts to make the Sabbath appear clearly distinct from the regular weekdays. Anyone who is familiar with the Jewish culture can actually "see" the Sabbath: "Only by putting your head inside the door, they say, just by sniffing the atmosphere of the house, you can tell whether it is Sabbath or weekday."[62] Given this, Feivka first tries to remove from the environment everything that might be evidence of the Sabbath. He explicitly instructs his wife, "Don't keep as much as a sign of it."

> The moment Feivka realized what had happened, he dashed off to remove all signs of Sabbath from the house before the rabbi woke up and caught him. To begin with, he put away the brass candlesticks, the remains of the Sabbath meal, and the white tablecloth. . . . And straightway the whole appearance of the house was transformed. Sabbath departed and weekday arrived.[63]

Cultural items such as brass candlesticks, the white tablecloth, and certain food simply had to be removed, since their presence would certainly indicate to any Jew, in the most unambiguous manner, that it was Saturday.

Not only does Feivka make the Sabbath leave, he also makes the weekday arrive. That is accomplished by performing acts that would never take place during the Sabbath. Thus, he starts up the fire, stokes up the samovar with fuel so that it will begin to hum, arranges for the sound of hammer and ax to be heard by having his hostler chop wood and fix things with nails, orders his daughter to start peeling potatoes, and winds his phylacteries around his arm while repeating the morning prayers to their ordinary weekday tune. To any Jew, any one of these components of the newly transformed environment would indicate, in the most unambiguous manner, that it is actually an ordinary weekday, that it simply cannot be Saturday. The message of these acts is so clear that any verbal explanation is totally unnecessary. When the rabbi finally wakes up, the entire communication between him and the innkeeper is nonverbal and consists of the visible and audible cues that he picks up—as Feivka intended it to be—from his environment!

Feivka's operation is quite successful. He manages to transform the environment so that the Sabbath actually appears as an ordinary weekday. As far as the rabbi can tell from looking at his surroundings, it is definitely not Saturday:

> And where was the Sabbath? There was no sign or memory of the Sabbath! Peasants, a weekday crowd. And a samovar was boiling just over there.[64]

All this makes the rabbi feel, very much like Feivka felt a couple of hours earlier, quite bewildered. He is faced with a delicate cognitive incongruity that leaves him rather confused. On the one hand, he remembers very well that when he went to sleep it was still Friday night. On the other hand, his entire surrounding environment indicates to him quite clearly that it is not Saturday, but, rather, an ordinary weekday. The entire gestalt simply does not "make any sense" to him.

Ironically enough, he arrives at a solution which is identical to the

one arrived at earlier by the innkeeper. He decides not to rely on his memory as a basis for identifying the temporal ground of the figure that he perceives:

> in that case I went on sleeping through the Sabbath and the night of the departure of the Sabbath.[65]

The irony, of course, lies in the fact that the rabbi is totally unaware that it was his own presence at the inn that was responsible for the entire confusion in the first place! It is also ironical that, while it is actually Saturday, both Feivka and the rabbi mistake it for some other day, and yet each one of them has a different day in mind. While the rabbi concludes that he must have overslept through the entire Sabbath and that it is already Sunday, the innkeeper must conclude that it is some other day, both because of the availability of Gentile labor and because he knows that he has not celebrated the Sabbath yet.

Let me reiterate a point I made earlier with respect to Robinson Crusoe, Queen Esther, and the hero of Asch's story. All this could have happened only in a setting such as Feivka's inn—an isolated Jewish enclave surrounded by an overwhelming Gentile environment. Feivka's transformation of his environment would not have been as easy and successful—nor would he or the rabbi have encountered such confusion in the first place—were the entire story to take place in an exclusively Jewish environment. And, indeed, the entire confusion is resolved and everything becomes clear at the end of the story, in an extremely comic scene in which the rabbi arrives—in his coach—at his own village, at the very moment that his followers begin to leave the synagogue for a traditional leisurely Sabbath stroll in the street!

It is quite ironical that the environment which the rabbi prefers to his own memory as a reliable source of reference is essentially a totally fabricated environment. That, of course, would not have been possible were the weekly cycle to be anchored in nature. The story highlights the *social* context within which much of our temporal reference is anchored. The above confusion is inherent to cycles such as the week, where one must rely exclusively on sociocultural cues. It would certainly not have arisen with regard to cycles such as the day or the year, which are anchored in nature.

Two

The Schedule

The first major institution that man invented in order to establish and maintain temporal regularity was the calendar. The calendar is primarily responsible for the creation of most of the temporally regular patterns through which nearly all societies, social institutions, and social groups manage to introduce some orderliness into their lives. They do that mainly by regulating the temporal location and the rate of recurrence of socially significant collective events. As Durkheim pointed out, "A calendar expresses the rhythm of the collective activities, while at the same time its function is to assure their regularity."[1]

However, while the calendar has been primarily responsible for the establishment and maintenance of temporal regularity on an annual, monthly, and even weekly basis, it certainly cannot promote temporal regularity at the level of relatively microscopic temporal units such as the day and the hour. That level of temporal regularity, which is so uniquely characteristic of modern life, has become possible only with the invention of another institution—the schedule.

The establishment of temporal regularity at a daily level is quite an old idea. As early as two thousand years ago, Jewish rabbis were already regulating individuals' lives as well as communal life through a strict daily schedule of religious services. However, it is in the medieval Benedictine monasteries that we find what most probably constituted the original model for all modern Western schedules. The earliest instance, in the West, of a rigid schedule that imposed temporal regularity not only on a weekly or daily basis, but at the level of the hour as well, is none other than the medieval Benedictine "table of hours"—the *hora-*