

TACTICS OF APPROPRIATION AND THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION IN LATE MODERN DEMOCRACIES

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Walking down the street in Toronto one day in 1987, pedestrians were surprised to see a message flashing across an electronic billboard. "Lesbians fly Air Canada" it repeatedly signaled. The next day the message was gone. A gay rights group broadcast the phrase, but their communication terminated abruptly when Air Canada threatened to apply for an injunction to stop the group from using its name.

READERS WHO ARE NOT CANADIAN should be aware that at the time this message was conceived (prior to the deregulation of the airline industry), *all* Canadians flying within Canada "flew Air Canada." This archetypal "normal" Canadian activity was selected to demonstrate similarities in Canadian lesbians' everyday experiences that were too often overshadowed by fears of sexual difference. A reconfiguration of social identity was thus written over one of the distinguishing signs of the nation-state in a manner that temporarily realigned the forces defining citizenship. The simultaneous identity of this sign—Air Canada—as both a privileged indicia of government and a legally controlled commodity with an exchange value on the market operated to prohibit this communication from becoming a form of hegemonic articulation.

POLITICAL ARTICULATIONS

The Air Canada anecdote¹ maps a complex intersection of significations that define a contemporary political space. The tactics of appropriation and

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processes of identification that are involved in articulating identity and compelling recognition always invoke and transform fields of power. The polysemic power of the nation, the seductive power of the commodity form, the instrumental power of the state—through the mode in which it signifies, power shapes the political tactics that implicate identities even as they deconstruct difference. The law is central to and constitutive of such productive powers—simultaneously a generative condition and prohibitive boundary for hegemonic articulations.

Politics is a signifying activity in which identities are constructed through transformations of dominant categories even as it calls their boundaries into question. Kobena Mercer has suggested that our eagerness to discuss identity is symptomatic of the postmodern predicament of contemporary politics—a politics in which no political subjects are privileged, identities are never essentially fixed (or fixed by any essence), and the signifiers mobilized to achieve recognition have no intrinsically progressive or reactionary character but are strategically positioned in the signifying chains of dominant discourses.² This is politics as articulation, a concept that derives from Gramsci and Voloshinov, who both recognized politics to be a site of struggle over key symbols whose connotative fields of reference are always at stake.³

Chantal Mouffe argues that the politics appropriate to a radical and plural democracy requires a new concept of citizenship that imagines the citizen as a subject-position requiring processes of identification.⁴ Such a citizen does not merely occupy a position—possession of a legal status—but is defined by her active engagement in practices of social articulation. These presume ethico-political principles of freedom and equality but do not presume to fully define their meaning. In seeing citizenship as “a form of identification, a type of political identity, something to be constructed, not empirically given,”⁵ Mouffe shares with many theorists of late modern politics the desire to reconstruct recognitions of social difference without succumbing to “the liberal logic of difference which tends to construe every identity as positivity.”⁶ As William Connolly puts it, identities are established in relation to socially recognized differences that have a tendency to emerge discursively as “fixed forms, thought and lived as if their structure established the true order of things.”⁷ Veiling the elements of contingency in their construction, particular constellations of identities coalesce, privileging particular categories of difference. Against this metaphysics of political presence, theorists of late (or post) modern politics posit a cultural politics of difference:

We can use the word difference as a motif for an uprooting of certainty. It represents an experience of change, transformation and hybridity . . . an approach to cultural politics . . . for assembling new practices and languages, pulling together a diversity of

theories, politics, cultural experiences and identities into new alliances and movements. Such a politics wouldn't need to subsume identities into an underlying totality that assumes their ultimately homogeneous nature. Rather it is a critique of essentialism and mono-culturalism, asserting the unfixed and 'overdetermined' character of identities.⁸

In these theories of late modern politics, pluralism is reconceived. The liberal vision of multiculturalism characterized by an ahistorical multiplicity of discrete and insular cultural identities⁹ is rejected in favor of engaged commitments to equality that go beyond mere political alliance to transform the very identities of those social agents involved. The "subject" of this late modern or radical democratic politics, however, remains amorphous precisely because of its lack of fixity and the laudable necessity of avoiding suggestions of closure. As Paul Smith argues, however, the identities of political agents may be inessential or contingent, but there *are* specific material stakes and discernible referents in political articulation. The actual enactment of the political is a historical moment in which a particular signifier in a particular discourse becomes meaningful for the particular agent. Situations of subordination are transformed into articulation through *identifications* with *specific* signifiers that hold promise for new forms of political recognition. The aspiration to identity and recognition is a matter of taking advantage of historically available, historically laden signifieds.¹⁰

In a diverse democratic society, many discourses signify in the public realm. These include the signs of the nation, those of the state, those circulated by capital and the endless life-style options it affords, the symbolic traces of imperialism, and the marks of transnational institutions through which the globalization of capital now signifies. The most powerful signifiers are those that compress the connotations of all these forms of power—marketing experts agree that American Express is the world's most widely recognized and valuable of trademarks.¹¹ It is generally acknowledged that the proliferation of signification is one hallmark of the late modern or postmodern space we occupy. Jean Baudrillard, David Harvey, and Fredric Jameson, for example, have attempted to theorize the "cultural logic of late capitalism" in terms of the growth of consumer society and modern media technologies. Cultural reproduction or image production effaces production in Western societies, leading to an immense expansion of "culture" throughout society.¹² As Henri Lefebvre much earlier observed, "We are surrounded by emptiness, but it is an emptiness filled with signs."¹³

In his early work, Baudrillard engaged in the task of extending Marx's critique of the commodity form in the context of contemporary or late capitalism.¹⁴ In an era of multinational capital, characterized by the controlled programming of commodity production and the pervasive penetration

of mass media, we experience the hegemony of a “signifying culture,” in which the social world becomes saturated with shifting cultural signs—the circulation of images and texts through which we negotiate the social and our place within it.

The debate about postmodernism and its regimes of signification tends to swing between two poles. First, we have those who see a world saturated with signifiers but bereft of meaning, in which people are inert in the face of “terroristic” modes of signification to which no effective political response is possible. People are no longer historic subjects but “silent majorities,” incapable of any significant social action other than a passive “yes/no” response to signals (for Baudrillard) or the creation of new, decontextualized, arbitrary, and ineffective connections among signifiers (for Jameson).¹⁵

Cultural studies theorists, on the other hand, have insisted that “one of postmodernism’s most provocative lessons is that terms are by no means guaranteed their meanings; regimes of significance are used in numerous and unexpected ways.”¹⁶ They call on us to examine the ways in which people use the signifiers of a commercialized society in their quotidian practices—the extent and degree to which consumption practices may be sites of empowerment, resistance, contestation, or critique.¹⁷ Increasingly, they ask us to redefine the political in terms that include local practices of signification and cultural transformation. Influenced by Michel de Certeau, they redefine the political to include potentially all practices of cultural appropriation.¹⁸ Remarkably, however, there has been very little dialogue between these two schools of theory on the condition of postmodernity and philosophical theories of late modern politics.

If one school of cultural studies posits a univocal world of signs controlled by an abstract force demonized simply as “Capital” and the other imagines a Rabelaisian consumer carnivalesque, both, I would contend, have failed to address the logic of the commodity when applied to cultural forms and the politics that this logic engenders. Property is a legal relationship. The law creates and enforces rights and limitations that constitute the relationship between those who claim a proprietary interest in a sign and those who seek to appropriate signifiers for their own ends—to create other meanings, alternative identities, and new forums for recognition.

Intellectual property laws are those that enable the commodification of symbols, imagery, and texts—they create limited monopolies over representational forms. Cultural forms thus become signs with an exchange value on the market. The twentieth century has witnessed a massive expansion of legal protection for these forms of property because intellectual property has become the most important site of capital growth and investment in consumer societies. Those who lay claim to intellectual property protections may

control both the sign's circulation and its connotations. The law inserts signifiers into the systems of political economy that "reduce symbolic ambivalence in order to ground the rational circulation of values and their play of exchange."¹⁹ Intellectual property laws play a fundamental role in determining what discourses circulate in the public realm and achieve dominance, and how these "languages" are spoken, while providing both enabling conditions and limiting obstacles for those who seek to construct identities and compel recognition.²⁰

Elsewhere I have examined the law of publicity rights and subaltern appropriations of celebrity images in the construction of alternative gender identities, adding ethnographic example to Judith Butler's theoretical framework delineating the articulatory politics of gender.²¹ Here I focus on two tactics of appropriation that relate to two forms of signifying power constituted by the law of trademark. First, I focus on two examples of political articulation that appropriate the signifiers of the nation-state and the transnational institution. I will suggest that the visible power of these institutions invites particular tactics of appropriation in the service of specific forms of politics. Second, I consider the palpable but invisible power of corporate capital in consumer societies and suggest that it invites other tactics of appropriation that suggest a very different politics. The first set of examples concern the tactics that engage "official marks" controlled by public authorities. The second set of examples consider rumors that circulate about corporate trademarks.

OFFICIAL SIGNIFIERS

A large number of statutes bestow upon "public authorities" (which are not elected bodies but usually government agencies, state-owned corporations, or nonprofit organizations) an absolute right to control particular signifiers. In Canada, for example, there are over 3,000 of these signs.²² In the United States, there are probably millions, given the greater number of state jurisdictions and operative public authorities.²³ For Canadians, the list of signifiers so protected is indicative of our postcolonial situation. It includes all symbols of the British monarchy (crowns, crests, ciphers, arms, standards, and members of the Royal Family), those signs that indicate the state (various flags, animals, and flowers), as well as those indicia of Canada's determination as a nation to avoid American cultural domination (the logo for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board, for example). For Americans, federally protected signs are iconic of revolutionary

origins, patriotic fervor, and the nationalized landscape—the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic, the American Legion, American War Mothers, the Boy Scouts, the 4-H Club, Future Farmers of America, Little League baseball, the Golden Eagle, Woodsey Owl, and Smokey the Bear.²⁴ Prohibitions on the use of these signs are contained in the same chapter of the U.S. Code that imposes penalties for the desecration of the flag.²⁵ Fines and imprisonment for unauthorized use of these symbols is dictated. The law thus creates the most expansive set of signifying powers for those authorities that control the signs of the nation, the state, and transnational institutional icons.²⁶

The absolute power of public authorities to prohibit the use of certain symbols is generally justified in terms of public order and safety.²⁷ A simple example is the red cross; both confusion and danger are avoided by univocally fixing the meaning of this sign and restricting its use to a single organization with defined goals and commitments. Another rationale is consumer confusion; people should not be able to suggest government or crown sponsorship in the market. This power to control signification, however, is not always so easily justified. Once the signifier is adopted, the authority is given complete discretion to singularly determine the “official” meaning of the sign and to prosecute those who give the signifier unsanctioned connotations.²⁸

Two examples, the first American, the second Canadian, illustrate the politics of recognition and the limits to freedom that the commodity form enables in the articulatory struggles of minorities. In 1981, San Francisco Arts and Athletics (hereinafter “the Athletics Group”), a nonprofit organization, began to promote the Gay Olympic Games—an event designed to promote a more positive image of the gay community.²⁹ T-shirts, buttons, and bumper stickers were sold to finance the games. The United States Olympic Committee (hereinafter “the Committee”) brought suit to stop the games from occurring and to prevent the use of the term “Olympic” by the nonprofit group. Congress had granted the Committee exclusive rights to use the word Olympic under the Amateur Sports Act.³⁰

A preliminary injunction enjoining the use of the term was issued³¹ and affirmed.³² Eventually, a permanent injunction was imposed, and the Athletics Group were forced to pay the Committee’s legal fees. Finally, in 1987, the Supreme Court upheld the Committee’s exclusive and absolute rights to the word “Olympic” and decided that it could prohibit any uses of the term that it found offensive.³³ Trademark legislation thus enabled a public authority to exercise its power over a signifier in a discriminatory manner—to prevent subordination from becoming translated into hegemonic articulation.

The term Olympic has a long history connoting human excellence and achievement. It is a transnational humanist symbol with which dispossessed groups in society seek to identify in order to educate the public and achieve positive recognition. Indeed, the Committee had authorized groups of the disabled to hold "Olympic" games to encourage their public acceptance and incorporation. Homosexuals, however, were not deemed worthy of the same privilege. As one judge, dissenting on the appeal bench remarked, "It seems that the Committee is using its control over the term Olympic to promote the very image of homosexuals that the [Athletics Group] seeks to combat: handicapped, juniors, police, Explorers, even *dogs* are allowed to carry the Olympic torch, but homosexuals are not."³⁴ At the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Brennan, dissenting from the majority opinion, noted over 200 organizations listed in the Los Angeles and New York phone books *alone* whose names began with the word "Olympic" and concluded that the complete discretion that Congress had given the Committee over public usage of the term threatened freedom of speech.³⁵

Although signifiers circulate in social fields, become inflected with new meanings, and are politically engaged in new articulations, the fields of discourse in which they figure as sites for identification shape and limit tactics of appropriation. Those in marginal groups will continually attempt to put signifiers into arenas of symbolic exchange³⁶—activities that do not contribute to capitalist production and accumulation—but they have fewer resources at their disposal than do those who maintain the exchange value of the sign. Here, the meaning of Olympic as festival, as a celebration of human excellence and the energizing powers of the body (tied implicitly, of course, to a nonreproductive sexuality) confronted the Olympic signifier as a commodity. Its universalizing and exclusionary values were carefully contained for transnational marketing efforts.

The second example I explore is one in which a public authority refused to exercise its rights to control a national signifier and commodified sign. Ironically, this failure to restrict the circulation of the sign had a similar exclusionary effect. In 1989, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Force (RCMP) Commissioner recommended to Parliament that the RCMP relax certain aspects of its traditional dress code to attract women and minorities.³⁷ In particular, it was suggested that Orthodox Sikhs be permitted to wear their turbans as part of their uniform while serving on the Force. Nine months of government inaction, public controversy, and racist propaganda ensued.

Despite having obtained legal opinions stipulating that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was being violated by the current policy of refusing to permit Sikhs to wear their turbans when in uniform, the govern-

ment delayed making a policy decision. Conservative members of Parliament from the western provinces tabled petitions signed by over 100,000 people who opposed any changes to the dress code. They claimed that the RCMP scarlet tunic, boots, and Stetson hat together constituted a cherished symbol of the nation, part of an honorable and internationally recognized Canadian tradition that should not be jeopardized by minority demands.³⁸ Sikh leaders and civil liberties groups argued that the RCMP must acknowledge Canada's multiracial and multireligious composition. Moreover, they asserted, the symbols of the nation should reflect Canada's social policy of multiculturalism. Canada's "traditions," it was suggested, were not in the nature of monologic monuments but in practices of pluralism and tolerance. The opposition parties accused the Conservative government of fanning the flames of social hostility by refusing to act. Minority groups claimed government complicity in fueling a racist backlash.

The most ominous signs of racist reaction were the quantities of black market merchandise that proliferated during the government's period of inactivity. In Calgary, a lapel pin appeared, depicting a white man surrounded by an Oriental man in a coolie hat, a Sikh in turban, and a black man clutching a spear. The caption asked, "Who is the minority in Canada?" An estimated 13,000 pins were sold. A poster with a black-faced caricature of a Sikh officer identified as "Sargent Kamell Dung" was mass-produced. Beneath the officer was the question: "Is this Canadian or does this make you Sikh?" Nearly 10,000 posters were sold. Another button depicted a turban-wearing, bearded officer with a slash running across his body and through his throat. Around the symbolic decapitation ran the slogan "Keep the RCMP Canadian."

Criminal prosecutions under the hate literature offense were considered, but no charges were laid. The prime minister called the goods racist and analogized their distribution to Ku Klux Klan activity. What the government did not do, and could have done, was to evoke its powers under the Trade Marks Act to prevent the distribution of this merchandise. Under the Act, no one can commercially use any pictorial representation of an RCMP officer without the consent of the public authority.³⁹

In seeking to ridicule and reject or to legitimize and accept the turbaned RCMP officer as an official signifier, Canadians participated in those practices of cultural signification that Homi Bhabha delineated in *Nation and Narration*.⁴⁰ We construct the field of meanings and symbols we associate with national life in processes of articulation. The cultural boundaries of the nation "contain" thresholds of meaning and are always engaged in a process of hybridity, incorporating new people in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning, and producing new sites of antagonism. To speak

of the nation is to speak of “complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of ‘the people.’”⁴¹ The signs and symbols that signify the affective life of national culture are necessarily contingent. The demand for a holistic, representative vision of society can only be made in a discourse that is both obsessively fixed upon—and uncertain of—society’s boundaries.⁴² The debate about “being Canadian” and the demand that the RCMP officer in turban be recognized *as representative* operated to “provoke a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address.”⁴³ The identity of the [F]orces in this negotiation were themselves transformed by these practices of identification and recognition.

The original “lack” (of meaning), which underpins the identity “Canadian,” is the source and the site for hegemonic articulations. Kieran Keohane draws on Slavoj Žižek’s political reading of the psychoanalysis of Lacan⁴⁴ to explore Canada’s crises of identification and recognition:

The social is constituted as an antagonistic forcefield of relationality between contingent articulations of identities around a basic paradox: that the integrity of identity is contingent upon the identification of elements which are not-the-identity; i.e., a field of Otherness, outside of the identity, which stands in antithetical relation to identity.⁴⁵

The enjoyment of historical identity—the practice, signs, and codes that animate a particular identity—is constantly under threat, vulnerable to the identification of Others. But the dialectical encounter with the Other is never only on terms dictated by the master. The encounter with the Other is antagonistic; in subjecting the identity to the infinity of difference, the identity itself [the One] is altered.⁴⁶

This dialectic between the One and the Other is unending because each depends on the other for its integrity and their boundaries continually meld as a consequence of historical antagonisms in which old symbolic orders give way to new ones. Keohane sees Mounties’ hats and uniforms, oaths of allegiance to the Queen, and official-language barriers as anachronisms—examples of a colonial symbolic order that is transmogrifying into “a sumptuously rich, lusciously fruitful pastiche”⁴⁷ that flourishes in an emergent “intercultural” rather than merely multicultural postcolonial context.

Although we might celebrate these new sites of intercultural enjoyment, Keohane suggests that we still lack sublime objects of identification to fill the cultural space of this new nation. If “Canadians become aggressive and divisive over Mounties’ hats and mug-shots of Her Majesty”⁴⁸ it is because they cling to symbols of national unity in a country where such signifiers are in short supply. But if society or the nation as an intelligible, unitary object is an impossibility, “one might say that Canada doesn’t exist, and that the

Sikh Mountie is one of its symptoms."⁴⁹ Canada exists, in other words, only "insofar as the symptoms of its Lack have a particularity."⁵⁰

The Canadian state has a longstanding commitment to multiculturalism. Canada prides itself on its distinction as a "mosaic" of cultures from the American "melting pot" model of assimilation. The Mulroney government could have used its power over this national signifier positively, promoting new meanings for the RCMP image that envisioned a proliferation of "Canadian" identities and the multivalence of "Canadian" tradition (pregnant Mounties, disabled Mounties, Mounties of many colors—all represented as proud "Canadians"). It might also have evoked its power of prohibition to prevent the univocality of the sign propagated by the racist merchandise. The commodity form, ironically, could have been engaged to encourage symbolic exchange. Instead, inertia on this front enabled this official signifier of the nation-state to become temporarily colonized by fixed and rigid connotations. The most visible image of the RCMP circulating was a monologic image of white supremacy, raising the spectre of closure "which always plays enigmatically in the discourse of the sign."⁵¹

The Olympic symbol and the RCMP image are visible, reified signifiers of legitimacy and prestige whose connotations are *legally* contained by powerful structures of prohibition. It is precisely their status as official signifiers of power that makes them attractive to those who seek political recognition and important to those who seek to maintain current hegemonies. They attract efforts of appropriation and rearticulation by those who wish to inscribe their *own* authorial signature on the people, the nation, the state—the official social text. Tactics of appropriation engage the signifiers of power in a fashion appropriate to their mode of signification. This may be clarified in the following discussion of trademark rumors.

POSTMODERNITY AND THE RUMOR

Exploring two bizarre rumors that consumers have spread about the origins and meanings of corporate trademarks,⁵² I will suggest that they indirectly articulate social anxieties about the intersections of culture, power, and place in the condition of postmodernity. To make political sense of such practices, however, it is first necessary to summarize some of the socio-economic conditions from which they spring. The corporate trademark is a signifier that proliferates in the mass media communications technologies of postmodernism. As production moves elsewhere and the industrial landscape fades from public view (emerging, of course, in export processing zones,

women's kitchens, and immigrants' garages) the power of the corporation is most evident in the exchange value of the brand name, the corporate logo, and advertising lingo—the “distinctions” these texts assume in the market.

The proliferation of signification is often understood to be a peculiar characteristic of postmodernity with its hyperreality of self-referential signs.⁵³ The quintessential self-referential sign or “postmodern cultural good,” I would suggest, is the product brand name or corporate trademark, as indicated by the slogans that propel them into the public arena—“What's good for General Motors is good for America,” General Electric “brings good things to life,” and Coca-Cola is “the real thing.” These signifiers serve as the locus of capital's cultural investments and social inscriptions. Through the mass media, the sign increasingly replaces the product itself as the site of fetishism. In postmodernity, the focus of commodity fetishism shifts from the product to the sign values invested in products by corporate imagery and marketing's structures of meaning. The “value” of a product, in other words, lies in the exchange value of its brand name, advertising image, or status connotations—the “distinction” it has in the market. Monopoly of the trademark or “commodity/sign” is crucial to corporate capital, often the most valuable of corporate assets and the most important site of capital growth and investment.

Corporate trademarks are key symbols in postmodernity. Corporations invest huge amounts monitoring the use of their trademarks. Because a corporation has proprietary rights in its sign, it may attempt to maintain control over its connotations and to police critical commentary. The stronger or more famous the mark, the greater the legal protection that is accorded to it.⁵⁴ In practice, this means that the more powerful the corporation, the more successfully it can immunize itself against oppositional cultural strategies. But attempts to restrain the tactical appropriations of those signifiers that embody corporate presence in postmodern culture are not always successful.

This is especially evident in the case of rumor. Rumor is elusive and transitive, anonymous, and without origin. It belongs to no one and is possessed by everyone. Endlessly in circulation, it has no identifiable source. This illegitimacy makes it accessible to insurgency, while its transitivity makes it a powerful tactic, one that Gayatri Spivak calls a truly subaltern means of communication.⁵⁵ When the recoding of corporate signifiers takes this form, it may be impossible for a manufacturer to stop aliens from speaking its language with their own voices or colonizing its exchange systems with their own symbolic lifeworlds.

Proctor and Gamble, a company that bombards North America with cleaning products, discovered this phenomenon at quite some cost. First, a word about the sponsor. Proctor and Gamble is the single largest American

advertiser.⁵⁶ Its daytime television commercials engendered the term “soap opera” and the marketing of its brands (Tide®, Crest®, Ivory Snow®, Pampers®) has been the paradigm case in business school textbooks for years. Yet despite all this public cultural activity, the company keeps a remarkably low corporate profile.⁵⁷ Like any good corporate citizen, it lets its trademarks do the talking.

Corporate capital, however, cannot always control the conversations in which its trademarks become engaged. In the early 1980s, a rumor campaign linked the company to Satanism. Anonymous social groups ascribed occult significance to the man-in-the-moon logo it used on all its products; the trademark was seen to be the mark of the devil. One woman, for example, claimed that when you held the logo up to a mirror, the curlicues on the man’s beard became 666—the sign of the Antichrist; “I just don’t understand the coincidence.”⁵⁸ An anonymous leaflet asserted that a company official appeared on national television and “gave all the credit for the success of the company to SATAN. . . . They have placed their satanist symbol on all their products so that they can get SATAN into every home in America.”⁵⁹ Others reported hearing that Proctor’s “owner” appeared on a talk show where he admitted selling his soul to the Devil for the company’s success.⁶⁰

Proctor and Gamble hired private investigators and established a toll-free hotline to deal with twelve to fifteen thousand monthly phone calls from concerned consumers. As their public relations office put it, “Proctor is going after the rumor with all the diligence that it devotes to a new product.”⁶¹ The antirumor campaign cost millions. Yet, in 1985, when the hydra-headed rumor surfaced again, the company acknowledged defeat. It removed the 135-year-old trademark from its products, a decision described by marketing experts as “a rare case of a giant company succumbing to a bizarre and untraceable rumor.”⁶²

In a decade when the federal Centers for Disease Control linked the company’s tampon with fatal toxic shock syndrome, feminists protested the use of sex in its advertisements, and unions urged boycotts to back their struggles for recognition, it was the battle over the meaning of a tiny moon-and-stars symbol that brought the diffident corporation most prominently to public attention. In other words, the biggest threat to the company’s benign, if somewhat empty, public image came not from organized groups with expressed political agendas but from the anonymous appropriations of mysterious agents whose interests and motivations remain inscrutable.⁶³

In *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, Mick Taussig explored the significance of devil symbolism to the emergent proletariat in Bolivia and Columbia.⁶⁴ He persuasively showed that proletarianizing peasants used the devil, a fetish of the spirit of evil, as a powerful image with which to culturally

express an ethical condemnation of the capitalist mode of production, their hostility to wage labor, and the unnatural subjection of humans to the commodity form. The maintenance and increase in production under capitalism was understood to result from secret pacts made with the devil.

I shall speculate here on the role of the devil in the current stage of capitalism and its feverish proliferation of media signifiers in the service of maintaining and increasing consumption (appropriating and detourning Taussig's terms to make them speak to a postmodern context). The devil contract may be operating in postmodernity as an image with which to indict a system in which consumption is the aim of economic activity, signs circulate without meanings, symbols are divorced from social contexts, the images that convey commodities are abstracted from the sources of their production, and trademarks are held to be their own sources of value. It may be against this obfuscation of power that satanic rumors are directed—the fetishization of evil, in the image of the devil, directed at the fetishism of the commodity/sign. The meaning of late capitalism may be emerging in the fantastic fabulations through which trademarks are given evil re-enchantments.

The devil, however, may adopt a variety of forms. In 1985, a company introduced a line of sportswear under the name "Troop," capitalizing on an incipient military aesthetic in the male urban underclass. It marketed these intimidating combat-style goods almost exclusively to black and Latino youths in inner cities where the clothing became incredibly popular. Soon it was reported on community radio stations that the Troop trademark was owned by a company controlled by the Ku Klux Klan. The trademark, in other words, was employed to create the perception of a threatening, oppositional "army" that would legitimate *and fund* the Klan's own paramilitary operations.⁶⁵

In fact, Troop Sport was a New York firm owned by Korean and American entrepreneurs with production operations based in Korea. It had no Klan affiliations that could be established. But rumor is never error but basically errant,⁶⁶ and this one, capturing the public imagination, swept the nation. As the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported in 1989,

A Chicago variation of the rumor has rap singer L.L. Cool J. ripping off a Troop jacket on the Oprah show and accusing the firm of hating blacks. The singer has never appeared on the talk show. . . . In Memphis, the rumor was that the letters in Troop stood for: To Rule Over Our Oppressed People. And in Atlanta some believed that the words "Thank you nigger for making us rich" were emblazoned inside the tread of Troop's tennis shoes. . . . Troop's [black] marketing director . . . [claims] that he has gone to great lengths to disprove the alleged Klan connection. "I went to Montgomery, Alabama to a store and cut open five pairs to prove it wasn't like that."⁶⁷

In contrast to Proctor and Gamble's defensive countertactics, Troop Sport responded overtly. It decided to "Do the Right Thing" and affirm its allegiance to civil rights. A \$200,000 public relations campaign enlisted the aid of Operation Push, the NAACP, and black musicians and athletes. Church rallies were held, black students were publicly awarded scholarships, and anti-Klan posters were distributed. Despite these efforts, the company fell into dire straits, closed its stores, and filed for bankruptcy in summer 1989. Its downfall may have been due to changing fashion trends, but it is difficult to deny the injuries that the rumors visited upon the company's reputation.

Like the Proctor and Gamble rumor, these anonymous appropriations pushed an invisible company into the public limelight. They also provoked the company to take a stand, renounce its lack of public presence, and make some political commitments. Proctor and Gamble, whose implicit motto is that cleanliness is next to Godliness (its products are marketed with biblical referents) may have been compelled only to reaffirm its advertising commitments to purity, cleanliness, and light against the forces of evil, filth, and darkness. Troop Sport, however, was pushed into overt political engagement.

The objective falsity of these rumors makes it difficult to understand why people found them persuasive, and invites us to speculate on the nature of truth and its difference from objectivity. Although the Ku Klux Klan rumors were empirically false, they figuratively articulate compelling truths about the history of black social experience in North America. The identification of blacks as a significant segment of the North American market has a long history. There is a tradition of black American capitalism catering to the specific needs and tastes of black consumers. Not until the late 1970s, however, did the major corporations begin to make concerted efforts to focus on blacks as consumers actively participating in making American "life-style choices." In some cases, they made efforts to integrate their advertising; in others, they created marketing aimed directly at the black consumer market. These gestures could be understood as inclusionary—indicating to blacks that they were no longer being marginalized in the market—"we recognize that you, too, eat margarine," in other words.

In marketing goods to the black population, then, the Troop campaign was not unusual. However, there were elements specific to this endeavor that make it unique. Instead of addressing blacks as part of a market in which everyone could now be seen to consume the same goods—an inclusionary gesture—the Troop marketing strategy was designed to *mark a difference*. The pseudomilitary character of the product itself physically interpellated young black men as identifiable targets and marked them (while inviting them to brand or tattoo themselves) as recruitable subordinates.

If this seems far fetched, this excerpt from *The Metro Word*, "Toronto's Black Culture Magazine," indicates that such possibilities are never far from consciousness in black urban communities:

On a warm autumn day, Rick is easy to spot wearing his Black leather jacket imprinted with an X along with his Malcolm X cap. . . . As Rick turns to catch the bus, the large white X smack dab in the middle of his back takes on an ominous meaning. The X appears almost like a target and Rick appears to have become human prey. From Public Enemy's Rebel Base One in New York, [Harry] Allen says, "This is why Public Enemy has taken the image of a Black man with his arms crossed defiantly and his head held upward in a rifle sight as their logo. Most Black people see themselves in the same situation—in the sights."⁶⁸

The Troop marketing strategy appears to have evoked disturbing associations in black cultural memory and the social unconscious. The disproportionate numbers of young black men recruited to serve as subordinate "grunts" in Vietnam was a powerful memory. The experience of serving as capital's reserve army of labor, increasingly mobilized according to the demands of the military industrial complex, was potentially evoked, as more distant memories of black service in the Confederate Army and the embodied memories of slavery itself were subconsciously stirred. As Michelle Wallace explains,

Afro-Americans, as ex-slaves, are not only permanently exiled from their 'homeland' (which now exists most meaningfully only in their imaginations), but also from their bodies. Their labor and their reproduction can be considered to be in a state of postcoloniality—no longer colonized but not yet free. In a manner that may be characteristic of 'internal colonization,' Afro-American culture has traditionally seemed fully aware of its own marginality to the white American mainstream. Accordingly, it combined (and often cleverly disguised) its political objections to Afro-American 'invisibility' with a progressive integration and reinterpretation of those qualities and features that first marked the 'racism' of white images of blacks. In other words, black culture continually reincorporates the 'negative' or 'racist' imagery of the dominant culture.⁶⁹

From this perspective, we can see black male adoption of army surplus, camouflage gear, and military insignia in the service of a "BAD" aesthetic as ironically inverting this symbolism to create and affirm black solidarity. The gesture is one that Henry Louis Gates⁷⁰ might see as a form of Signifyin(g)—the employment of figurative rhetorical strategies that repeat and imitate elements of dominant culture while critically marking a difference—that enables blacks to respond indirectly to an exclusionary white culture. Gates discusses literature and the oral tradition, but Wallace argues that

Signifyin(g) tactics are even more characteristic of Afro-American popular culture and its mass culture derivatives.⁷¹

The conversion of the signs of physical conscription into a subcultural aesthetic of resistance is Signifyin(g), but it was as signification that it was rerouted to serve the endless needs of commerce for new sources of distinction. The appropriation and projection back upon blacks of their own Signifyin(g) by anonymous forces of capital—an inversion of their inversion—inevitably sparked racial anxiety about white enmity, an enmity most aptly represented by the Ku Klux Klan.⁷² Black response to the Troop marketing strategy—the Ku Klux Klan rumor—however “false,” served to connote historical “truths” about black male subordination. The Troop marketing strategy stirred something in the political unconscious of black Americans that surfaced in the form of a fantastic recognition of black social identity; the rumor might be understood as a return of the repressed in the black social imaginary.

Rumor campaigns such as those directed at Proctor and Gamble and Troop Sport must be understood in the context of a consumption society in which corporate power maintains silence and invisibility behind a play of media signifiers without referents, a circulation of signs without meanings. In a world where the presence of power lies increasingly in the realm of the imaginary, such rumors may be understood as cultural guerrilla tactics—“political” in their significance, if not in their self-consciousness. The nature of signifying power shapes the form of the appropriations it engenders. Arguably, such rumors constitute a “counterterrorism” of sorts to the “terror” of postmodern hyperreality.⁷³ If the “terror” of hyperreality lies in its anonymity, its fleetingness, its dearth of meaning and excess of fascination, then it is not surprising that it provokes “counterterrorist” tactics that have the same characteristics. It constitutes an “other” in its own seductive image.⁷⁴ The rumor campaign has the same superficial senselessness and indeterminacy as the media that it combats, into which it simultaneously insinuates itself.

Simultaneously, these rumors challenge visions of the masses as silent majorities capable only of passive yes/no signals in response to power and add more subtlety and dimension to claims that people are capable only of making arbitrary and ineffective connections among floating signifiers. Faced only with the signifier, people construct a signified; in a world of empty signification, people may invest their own meanings. The connections that people make may well be arbitrary—they may even be absurd—but the massive investments manufacturers make to counter their influence suggests that they are hardly ineffective.

Finally, these rumors indicate popular refusal of a dominant cultural logic that replaces exchange value with sign value to the extent that even the

memory of use value is lost. To put this more succinctly, as manufacturers erase and obscure all traces of production through their investments in decontextualized media signifiers, they encounter consumers determined to re-embed these signifiers in myths of origin or narratives of production. These narratives bespeak an anxiety about the abstraction of symbols from lifeworlds and the invisibility of production relations in Western societies and give voice to a profound suspicion of corporate power.

Devil rumors provide a means by which people culturally express commercial power's lack of place—the simultaneously pervasive but incorporeal presence of corporate might. Moreover, such rumors serve to mark both the consumer's absence and her sense of powerlessness in the ubiquitous but evanescent world of commercial media culture. Rumors give presence to the consumer's cultural absence; they assume power and momentum as they insinuate themselves into the "mediascape."⁷⁵ Traveling anonymously, without clear meaning, authority, or direction, rumors colonize the media in much the same way that commercial trademarks do—while subversively undermining the benign invisibility of the trademark's corporate sponsor and maintaining the consumer's own lack of authorial voice.

SIGNIFYIN(G) POWERS

All of the practices of appropriation explored here speak the language of power in a manner that disrupts its discursive address. At the same time, however, these tactics borrow the mode of signification appropriate to the powers they covet, contest, or condemn. Official signifiers represent visible, monumental powers that present themselves as fixed, stable, and immutable. Subaltern seizures of these signs in struggles for recognition involve practices of identification that seek visibility—gays in the United States and Sikhs in Canada sought to inscribe publicly their own authorial signature on the official social text. Commercial trademarks, on the other hand, mark the increasingly invisible presence of capital in post-Fordist conditions of flexible accumulation. These signifiers are in flux, they are unstable and constantly undergoing new media mutations. Rumors are practices that seek to make the power behind the sign both visible and audible—but those circulating these stories remain invisible, evading both detection and authorial presence.

Identity is established in relations of difference that are constantly in articulated circulation. Those who bear difference may invite recognition, tolerance, appreciation, or even anonymity. By constructing fields of signi-

fyng power, the law plays a constitutive role in the construction, deconstruction, definitions, and counterdefinitions that define the space of contemporary North American politics.

NOTES

1. The story circulates widely in Toronto and I heard it reported by a sociology professor in the form quoted above. As this article was going to press I learned that the sign had been conceptualized as part of a citywide progressive art exhibit organized by a nonprofit arts organization. Before it had actually been broadcast, however, lawyers advised the arts group of the potential for legal liability and the likelihood of injunction. A decision was made not to convey the message, but the story still circulates as if the event had taken place—an apocryphal rumor that bespeaks a truth about gay and lesbian citizenship as it is experienced in Canada. Given the political importance I attribute to rumor in this article, it seemed an appropriate anecdote with which to begin.

2. Kobena Mercer, "Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990).

3. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971); V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973). The concept of key symbols was first developed in Sherry Ortner, "On Key Symbols," *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 1338-46, and further developed in a manner more consistent with my usage here in Sherry Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984): 126-60.

4. Chantal Mouffe, "Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community," in *Community at Loose Ends*, edited by the Miami Theory Collective (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

5. *Ibid.*, 75.

6. Chantal Mouffe, "Pluralism and Modern Democracy: Around Carl Schmitt," *New Formations* 14 (1991): 1-16, at 14.

7. William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 64.

8. Jonathan Rutherford, "A Place Called Home: Identity and the Cultural Politics of Difference," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 10.

9. For an excellent critique of the liberal politics of diversity as instantiated in the academy, see Chandra Mohanty, "On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 1990s," *Cultural Critique* 14 (1990): 179-208.

10. Paul Smith, "Laclau and Mouffe's Secret Agent," in *Community at Loose Ends*, edited by the Miami Theory Collective (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991).

11. Sidney J. Levy, "Product and Brand Symbol Systems" (paper presented at "The Marketing of Meaning: Toward a Better Understanding of Business Signs and Symbols," Eleventh International Summer Institute for Semiotic and Structural Studies, Indiana University—Purdue University at Indianapolis, July 16-21, 1989).

12. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change* (London: Blackwell, 1989).

13. Cited in Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 165.

14. Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975); *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981); *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext, 1983); "The System of Objects" and "Consumer Society," in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, edited by Mark Poster (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988). See also Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991).

15. See especially Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of Silent Majorities* (New York: Semiotext, 1983); Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 59-92.

16. Andrew Ross, "Introduction," in *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, edited by Andrew Ross (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), vii-xviii.

17. Lawrence Grossberg, "Putting the Pop Back into Postmodernism," in *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, edited by Andrew Ross (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). I discuss the need for cultural anthropologists to attend to the quotidian politics of everyday life in "Beyond Modernity's Meanings: Engaging the Postmodern in Cultural Anthropology," *Culture* 11 (1991): 111-24.

18. For example, see Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (London: Blackwell, 1989); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (Boston: Unwin, Hyman, 1989); John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin, Hyman, 1989); Lynda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, Chapman, & Hall, 1989); Angela McRobbie, "Postmodernism and Popular Culture," in *Postmodernism: ICA Documents*, edited by Lisa Appignanesi (New York: Association Press, 1989); Paul Willis, *Common Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990).

19. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique*, 146.

20. See generally, Rosemary J. Coombe, "Objects of Property and Subjects of Politics: Intellectual Property Laws and Democratic Dialogue," *Texas Law Review* 69 (1991): 1853-80.

21. Rosemary J. Coombe, "Publicity Rights and Political Aspiration: Mass Culture, Gender Identity, and Democracy," *New England Law Review* 26 (1992): 1221-80; "Authorizing the Celebrity: Publicity Rights, Postmodern Politics, and Unauthorized Genders," *Cardozo Arts and Entertainment Law Journal* 10 (1992): 365-95.

22. Listed under sect. 9 of the *Trade Marks Act R.S.C. 1985, c.T-13* are sixteen categories of prohibited marks, including a category that includes "any . . . mark . . . adopted and used by any public authority in Canada as an official mark for wares and services, in respect of which, the Registrar . . . has given public notice of its adoption and use." *The Trade Mark Journal*, in which such notices are advertised to the public, lists an increasing number of such marks annually. The number of marks so claimed increased from fivefold to tenfold (i.e., 500% to 1,000%) from 1980 to 1985 alone.

23. It is impossible to know how many marks are protected in the United States. In his treatise *Trademarks and Unfair Competition*, vol. 2 (New York Lawyer's Cooperative Publishing Co., 1984 and 1990 suppl.), at 869-72, J. Thomas McCarthy includes a list of many *federally* protected names, characters, and designs but specifies that the list is neither complete nor exhaustive. The exorbitant cost of doing searches precludes compiling a complete list of marks protected in either the Canadian or the American context.

24. The list is drawn from the larger list contained in J. Thomas McCarthy, *Trademarks and Unfair Competition*, vol. 2, 869-72. States have also granted exclusive use of words and symbols to nonprofit groups. See for example, *New York General Business Law 8397* (McKinney 1984 and 1988 suppl.).

25. USCA c. 33, §700 and Title 36.

26. Whereas the use of other trademarks may only be enjoined when such a use is confusing to the consumer or depreciates the trademark holder's goodwill, public authorities have unlimited power to prevent (or charge exorbitant royalties for) the use of their registered marks in any and all circumstances. In Canada, this has led to situations of grave abuses of power that have alarmed the practicing bar. As R. Brant Latham wrote in 1985, "Section 9(1)(n) of the Canadian *Trade Marks Act* is an unjustifiable abhorition creating unconscionably broad rights in special class persons." See Latham, "Explosion of Section 9(1)(n) Notices," *Patent and Trademark Institute of Canada Review* (1985): 74-93. Many lawyers have called sect. 9 an anachronism and called for amendments to the section. See Gordon F. Henderson, *Intellectual Property: Litigation, Legislation, and Education* (Ottawa: Consumer & Corporate Affairs, 1991).

27. "Section 9 supports public order and as such places the Crown and public authorities in a position of virtual invulnerability. An official mark is virtually unexpendable." Roger Hughes, *Hughes on Trademarks* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1992), 453.

28. "Section 11 of the *Trade Marks Act* now prohibits the use in connection with a business, as a trademark or otherwise, of any mark adopted contrary to ss.9 and 10 of the *Trade Marks Act* . . . no penalty is provided in the statute for the adoption and use of any such marks and s.107 of the Criminal Code, therefore, becomes applicable." Harold G. Fox, *The Canadian Law of Trademarks and Unfair Competition* (Toronto: Carswell, 1972).

29. According to the SFAA's president, the Games would "provide a healthy recreational alternative to a suppressed minority," "educate the public at large towards a more reasonable characterization of gay men and women," and "attempt, through athletics, to bring about a more positive and gradual assimilation of gay men and women, as well as gays and non-gays, and to diminish the ageist, sexist and racist divisiveness existing in all communities regardless of sexual orientation." *San Francisco Arts & Athletics, Inc. v. United States Olympic Committee*, 107 S. Ct. 2971, 2976, 2980 n. 13 (1987).

30. 36 U.S.C. §371-396 (1988). In particular Section 110 of the Act, set forth in 36 U.S.C. §380 (1988) provides that (a) without consent of the USOC "any person who uses for the purpose of trade, to induce the sale of any goods or services, or to induce the sale of any goods and services to promote any theatrical exhibition, athletic performance, or competition— . . . the words "Olympic," "Olympian," . . . tending to cause confusion, to cause mistake, to deceive, or to falsely suggest a connection with the [USOC] or any Olympic activity shall be subject to suit in a civil action by the [USOC] for the remedies provided in [the Lanham Act] and that (c) "the [USOC] shall have exclusive right to use . . . the words "Olympic," "Olympian," [etc.] subject only to lawful uses of these words established prior to 1950."

31. 219 U.S.P.Q. 982.

32. *International Olympic Committee v. San Francisco Arts & Athletics, Inc.*, 707 F.2d 517 (9th Cir. 1983).

33. Moreover, it was determined that there were no defenses available to anyone who used the term without authorization. *San Francisco Arts & Athletics, Inc. v. United States Olympic Committee*, 107 S. Ct. 2971 (1987).

34. *International Olympic Committee v. San Francisco Arts & Athletics, Inc.*, 789 F.2d 1319 at 1323 (per Kosinski, J.).

35. *San Francisco Arts & Athletics, Inc., v. United States Olympic Committee*, 107 S. Ct. 2971 (1987), at 2998 and n. 32. He classified the SFAA's use of the Athletic Group's trademark

as primarily charitable solicitation and political advocacy worthy of full first amendment protection. *Ibid.*, at 2995 and n. 24. In the majority opinion written by Justice Powell, however, it was held that prohibition of the word "Olympic" did not prohibit the Athletic Group's political speech about the status of homosexuals in society but only the manner in which it could convey its message. *Ibid.*, at 2981. The statute was held to apply primarily to commercial speech, which, in any case, receives only a limited form of first amendment protection, and only incidentally restricted expressive speech. *Ibid.*, at 2980-81. For more extensive commentary on the freedom of expression analysis engaged in by the court, see Robert N. Kravitz, "Trademarks, Speech, and the *Gay Olympics* Case," *Boston University Law Review* 69 (1989): 131-84.

36. Symbolic exchange is explored by Jean Baudrillard in *For a Critique* and in "Symbolic Exchange and Death," in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, edited by Mark Poster. See also Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 42-46, 65-66, 87, 103-7.

37. RCMP Commissioner Norman Inkster had first made the recommendation to Solicitor General Pierre Blais in a letter written on April 10, 1989. My account of the controversy is drawn from a number of Canadian newspapers in the public domain.

38. Ironically, the Stetson had been borrowed from the American forest rangers to replace the British pillbox that colonial officers had originally worn.

39. *Trade Marks Act* R.S.C. 1985, c.T-13 s. 9 (1)(o). Several phone calls made to the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor-General's Office were unsuccessful in convincing them to use this provision of the *Trade Marks Act* as an expedient course of action to stem this tide of merchandise. It might have been possible for the government to seek and obtain an Anton Piller order from a court of law that would enable them both to get an interlocutory injunction without notice to the manufacturers and vendors of the goods and to seize merchandise from unknown vendors as evidence likely to disappear before the trial. The practice of seizing goods that bear counterfeit trademarks or infringe copyright from unidentified defendants named only as John and Jane Doe is a common one in Canada. It tends to be employed by representatives controlling the merchandising rights of rock bands, sports teams, and other popular entertainers, especially to prevent the sale of "bootleg" t-shirts in conjunction with local concerts and sporting events. I explore some of the political dangers of this practice in *Objects of Property and Subjects of Politics*.

40. Homi K. Bhabha, "Dissemination: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, Chapman, & Hall, 1990).

41. *Ibid.*, 292.

42. *Ibid.*, 296.

43. *Ibid.*, 297.

44. See Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do* (New York: Verso, 1991).

45. Kieran Keohane, "Symptoms of Canada: National Identity and the Theft of National Enjoyment," *Cineaction* 28 (1992): 20-33, at 23.

46. *Ibid.*, 25.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, 26

49. *Ibid.*, 28.

50. *Ibid.*, 29.

51. Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, 2.

52. I want to make it clear at the outset that I do not believe it is possible to adopt the position of a detached, omniscient observer who studies practices of rumor. In a mass-mediated society and culture, the practices involved in spreading a rumor, reporting it, commenting on it, and

analyzing it necessarily collapse into one another, imploding boundaries between fact and fiction.

53. This is discussed by Jameson, *Postmodernism*; Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*; Baudrillard, *For a Critique, Simulations*, and *In the Shadow*. See also Mark Poster, ed., "Introduction," in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*; Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard*. The importance of media-circulated signifiers is also stressed in McRobbie, "Postmodernism and Popular Culture."

54. McCarthy, *Trademarks and Unfair Competition*, 2:224-26.

55. Gayatri C. Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, edited by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri C. Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 23.

56. I have figures only for the period up until 1985, however. Cited in "Proctor and Gamble Loses Campaign for the Moon and Stars," *The Globe and Mail*, April 26, 1985, B6.

57. See discussion in "Proctor and Gamble Lifts Veil a Little," *Globe and Mail*, March 15, 1982, B1.

58. Quoted in "Proctor and Gamble's Battles with Rumors," *The New York Times*, July 22, 1982, D1, D10.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

62. "Proctor and Gamble Loses Campaign."

63. Threats to a company's public image are necessarily based on perceptions of perceptions and therefore cannot be measured in quantitative terms. Press surveys for the 1980s, however, indicate that the rumor campaign received more press coverage than Proctor and Gamble's other difficulties and suggests that its public relations department devoted more energy and resources to publicly deflecting the rumor than to meeting other challenges that the company simultaneously faced.

64. Mick Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

65. I am grateful to Kathleen Pirrie Adams for her insights into this issue and for helping to give linguistic shape to an inchoate sense of rage upon learning of the Klan's purported involvement in the marketing of these goods.

66. Spivak, "Subaltern Studies," 23.

67. "Klan Rumor Helped Ruin Sport Clothing Firm," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 22, 1989.

68. Heather Beaumont, "The X Factor," *The Metro Word* 1(9): 7 (November 8-December 9, 1992). Margaret Russell also describes how California police use certain brand-name clothing to target minority youth. They are seen as de facto indicators of gang status in "gang profiles" that are used to justify harassment, interrogation, and detainment of minority youth and as grounds for denying Latinos and Afro-Americans entry in public amusement parks or ejecting them if they are inadvertently admitted. Margaret Russell, "Entering Great America: Reflections on Race and the Convergence of Progressive Legal Theory and Practice," *Hastings Law Journal* 43 (1992): 749-67.

69. Michelle Wallace, *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory* (London: Verso, 1990), 2.

70. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

71. Wallace, *Invisibility Blues*, 2.

72. See also Patricia Turner, "Ambivalent Patrons: The Role of Rumor and Contemporary

Legends in African-American Consumer Decisions," *Journal of American Folklore* 108 (1992): 424-42, for a discussion of consumer rumors in black communities.

73. The concept of hyperreality as developed by Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco is well summarized in Benjamin Wooley, *Virtual Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 190-210.

74. The concept of seduction used here is drawn from Jean Baudrillard, "On Seduction," in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, edited by Mark Poster.

75. The concept of the "mediascape" is borrowed from Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 1-24.

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