

A Poor Person's Cognitive Mapping

Fran Mason

ACCORDING TO FREDRIC JAMESON at the end of his 1988 article "Cognitive Mapping," there are two existing ways to map postmodern multinational society. The first is the self-reflexive aesthetics of postmodernist art, an inferior way of mapping the global multinational space we inhabit, as Jameson sees it, because its interiorization of social representation resolves into an endless mapping and remapping of the world as a set of textual processes. Instead of providing a map of society, the postmodern text simply provides a map of itself. The second form of mapping, which is the more significant for this essay, stems from the "omnipresence of the theme of paranoia" in the contemporary world. According to Jameson, the "theme of paranoia" produces conspiracy theory, which, he argues, is "the poor person's cognitive mapping in the postmodern age; it is a degraded figure of the total logic of late capital, a desperate attempt to represent the latter's system."¹ "Cognitive mapping," in Jameson's view, provides a means to achieve an understanding of the complexities of the social relations that exist in what he terms the "multinational age"—and, indeed, is *necessary* for such understanding. Conspiracy theory is a degraded version of cognitive mapping because it cannot adequately represent these complexities. It either misrecognizes totality as totalitarianism or attempts to represent the unrepresentable by analogy. In both cases there occurs a "misrecognition" that produces an illegitimate form of knowledge. Conspiracy theory does not represent ideology and system as they are (in the forms in which they actually occur in late capital), but as something else (conspiracy), as another system altogether. Conspiracy theory produces an analogy or approximation that is subsequently taken to be "real." It generates a map of the world that is actually a map of a different world entirely, a parallel or imaginary world of misrecognized social systems and power structures.²

Jameson, however, is actually fairly vague about what constitutes "cognitive mapping." He develops the term out of Kevin Lynch's work on the understanding of space and people's ability or lack of ability to map the city space that has exploded around them in contemporary culture.³ With the addition of Althusserian politics, and particularly the notion of the "absent cause," Jameson proposes "cognitive mapping," a means by which the individual subject can locate and structure perception of social and class relations in a world where the local no longer drives social, political, and cultural structures or allows the individual subject to make sense of his or her environment. Deluged by a "perceptual barrage of immediacy," the subject is disconnected and fragmented in a more exaggerated form than ever before.⁴ In the corporate multinational global economy of late capitalism, the multiple informational and sign systems that are made available cannot be synthesized by the individual subject or consciousness, a situation that also occurred in modernity, but which is exaggerated and magnified in late capital.⁵ Jameson, therefore, calls for a new "cognitive mapping" of global society because "cognitive mapping" provides the ability to negotiate a relationship between the local and the global on the part of the individual subject so that he or she will be able to generate an informed and practical political response to the saturated sign-space of postmodernity in order "to enable," as Jameson puts it, "a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole."⁶

What Jameson is calling for, in effect, is a way of presenting the unrepresentable, making implicit reference to Lyotard's notion of the postmodern sublime. Jameson does not, however, directly invoke Lyotard's aesthetics of the postmodern sublime because it does not fulfill his political needs. Lyotard's argument that the postmodern sublime "puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself" and that "it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented" works principally in terms of aesthetics, analogy, and simulation, all of which are displacements away from the "real" that Jameson seeks to reveal through "cognitive mapping."⁷ Conspiracy can be seen as a version of the postmodern sublime and offers a similar displacement away from the "real." A "true" conspiracy would be something that is absolutely unrepresentable or absent, providing no signs or clues of its existence and would be a version of the sublime in the Romantic sense, because it is invisible and undetectable. As soon as

it becomes represented it is no longer a conspiracy: a conspiracy cannot be visible (represented) because it derives its status as a conspiracy from its secrecy. In Lyotard's postmodern version of the sublime, conspiracy theory would provide an allusion to reality even though it isn't reality itself. The representation is not a representation of the conspiracy itself, just an approximation or an analogy. In this sense, conspiracy theory is a presentation of the unrepresentable through signs and is a simulacrum in its fullest sense: a copy without an original.

For Jameson, on the other hand, conspiracy theory is not a presentation of the unrepresentable "absent cause" but rather a metaphor or analogy, "a degraded figure of the total logic of late capital." Conspiracy is not a true presentation of either the "absent cause" of late capital's system and its power structures or its history. It is simply a narrative or story created through control and power and as such has ideological effects. Conspiracy theory, in Jameson's terms, can therefore be seen as a diversionary tactic directing attention away from the real causes of oppression in capitalism because it identifies secret societies or government agencies as the cause of oppression rather than the system itself.⁸ Where the conspiracy groups are seen to be simply utilizing the current social system, they act as scapegoats for the system's failure and thereby focus disaffection on the abusers of the system rather than the system itself. If, on the other hand, they are seen as the creators of the current social system, they are effectively untouchable and transhistorical superagents who cannot be thwarted. In either case, conspiracy theory offers an ideologically produced response to oppression in Jameson's logic.

What is at issue, therefore, as far as Jameson is concerned, is the question of the legitimation of knowledge and how to produce knowledge that is real and not ideological. Jameson follows Habermas's position and desires an objectively legitimated knowledge that can be accepted as history or reality, a knowledge that incorporates the "absent cause" rather than referring to it by the analogy of narrative. Indeed, in his foreword to the English-language edition of *The Postmodern Condition* Jameson challenges Lyotard's argument that the master narratives of legitimation have disappeared to be replaced by small narratives of legitimation and suggests instead that they have simply passed underground.⁹ Jameson, therefore, is offering "cognitive mapping" as a way of finding "real" knowledge rather than the analogies of narrative knowledge, or, as he puts it in *Postmodernism*, he is using "cognitive

mapping" as a way of overcoming the rift "between existential experience and scientific knowledge," where Lyotard would represent the former and Habermas the latter.¹⁰ "Cognitive mapping" has three main tasks: to revive the global truths and legitimating grand narratives that have gone underground; to prevent the fragmentation that accompanies the move to Lyotard's small narrative units; and to bridge the gap between the small narrative knowledges of existential experience and the larger global or scientific narratives so that a properly legitimated knowledge can be generated.

In opposition, Lyotard, in "A Missive on Universal History" in *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, privileges the position of narrative; first, because it holds together a multiplicity of heterogeneous discourses,¹¹ and second because

legitimacy is secured by the strength of the narrative mechanism: it encompasses the multiplicity of families of phrases and possible genres of discourse; it envelops every name; it is always actualizable and always has been; both diachronic and parochronic, it secures mastery over time and therefore over life and death. Narrative is authority itself. It authorizes an infrangible we, outside of which there is only *they*.

This kind of organization is absolutely opposed to the organization of grand narratives of legitimation which characterize modernity in the West.¹²

Lyotard is describing what he termed "paralogy" in *The Postmodern Condition* (the creation of small performative narratives that challenge the institutional and reified grand narratives of modernity).¹³ Paralogy is itself a form of "cognitive mapping" and describes the positioning of the subject within a community or society through the generation of new knowledges and the rearrangement of existing knowledges. While it would be wrong to conflate Lyotard's narratives of knowledge with either textual or historical narratives, there are nevertheless connections between conspiracy and narrative production. Indeed, narrative or the narrativization of events and facts is the main form of legitimating knowledge in conspiracy theory. Every conspiracy theory provides a narrative to legitimate its account of contemporary society, offering a view of how things got to be as they are. Conspiracy theory provides archaeology in narrative form, locating causes and origins of the conspiracy, piecing together events, connecting random occurrences to organize

a chronology or sequence of sorts, and providing revelations and denouements by detailing the conspiracy's plans for the future. Narrative provides a form of mapping for conspiracy theory, offering not only an explanatory history but also a map of the future that is to come. This is the case whether it is a narrative of occultism and the Knights Templar, the Gnostics, and the Illuminati; a narrative of the New World Order; Alex Constantine's narrative of the founding of the Fourth Reich in America; or a narrative of mind control from Operation Paperclip to MK-ULTRA and Project Monarch.¹⁴ These narratives also exist within a Lyotardian community of paralogy where members can add to the narratives, often by rearranging or combining narratives, so that the Illuminati narratives, for example, can also be combined with anti-Semitic Zionist narratives or with New World Order narratives—as is the case with Lyndon LaRouche's original spin on conspiracy in which the British monarchy is allied with other "cabals" and political groups such as Zionism, Freemasonry, the Rockefellers, and Muslim fundamentalists as it seeks to take control of the globe. Similarly, Texe Marrs's account of the New World Order takes in mind control conspiracies and state surveillance:

A frightening behemoth is rising up from the depth of America's hidden establishment. Like a vast and monstrous silicon octopus, Project L.U.C.I.D. is stretching forth its ominous and high tech tentacles. Multitudes of unsuspecting helpless victims will very soon be encircled and crushed by Big Brother's new, Gestapo police state. Who among us can possibly escape from the electronic cages now being prepared for all mankind?¹⁵

The creators of these accounts, however, do not see them as narratives but as histories, and as such it might be better to term them "virtual histories" or "virtual chronologies." They are therefore both grand narratives and the small narratives of paralogy. Conspiracy theory can be seen in terms of the production of grand narratives in its impulse to totalize reality as a system of connections while it also arranges new events according to its existing thesis and thus has mapped reality in advance. On the other hand, conspiracy theory is not officially sanctioned knowledge because it offers alternative versions of reality and would therefore appear to be a matter of paralogy. A postmodernizing process occurs in which there is a proliferation of mutually exclusive knowledge systems each of which has a monocentric belief in its own

truth but whose internal logic cannot be measured against any existing reality. The result is a proliferation of information systems all of which claim to be knowledge systems but which cannot legitimate themselves against the existing realities of multinational global culture. The postmodern phenomenon of contemporary conspiracy theory can thus be seen as a heterodoxy of orthodoxies, a set of paralogic narratives that claim to be legitimating grand narratives none of which can stand the existence of any other system.

The unlegitimated and "virtual" qualities of conspiracy narratives or histories lead Jameson to describe conspiracy as the "poor person's cognitive mapping." The term "poor person" is a rather strange one for a Marxist such as Jameson to use, however. Clearly, Jameson is suggesting that in opposition to conspiracy and other illegitimate cognitive mappings there is a legitimate cognitive mapping, but this doesn't detail what this legitimate "cognitive mapping" or "rich person's cognitive mapping" would look like. It would probably not look like the eclectic postmodernism that Lyotard describes, where "one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong [and where] knowledge is a matter for TV games."¹⁶ Lyotard intends this as his own "poor person's postmodernism," a matter of consumption rather than knowledge, though the jet-setting lifestyle it suggests at times implies something more than this. Nevertheless, although this doesn't provide any answers as to what a legitimate cognitive mapping would look like, it does raise the important question of access to information and knowledge. In some respects, quite surprisingly, Jameson suggests a utopian account of the availability of information in contemporary multinational society, which in its predominance of mediated signs allows the possibility for anyone to cognitively map their position in the global system.

The issue of asymmetrical access to information is nevertheless an important one if a legitimate "cognitive mapping" of global society (or reality) is to take place. The quality of perceived information and whether it has a "value" become crucial if unlegitimated information is to be transformed into legitimated knowledges through the alchemy of "cognitive mapping." Jameson's offhanded dismissal of conspiracy theory as a "poor person's cognitive mapping" suggests that the information that generates conspiracy theory has no "value," but he does not, at this point, take into account the possibility that the people who

create conspiracy theories may not have access to "valuable" information. A theory that does consider levels of access to information is Charles Jencks's notion of the "cognitariat." Jencks argues that in a postindustrial information society a new class begins to appear, taking over from the proletariat of the industrial age, when manufacturing was the main force in economic production. He refers to this class as a "paraclasse"—suggesting that it breaks down old class distinctions—and calls it the "cognitariat." He also argues that access to information will be uneven and that there will be "cognicrats" and "cogniproles" within this new category, those who are information-rich and those who are information-poor.¹⁷ It would be into the category of "cogniprole" that, in Jameson's terms, the use of conspiracy as a form of "cognitive mapping" would fall. So, while cognicrats would have access to enough information to properly map global capital and its social alignments, the cogniproles would have to work with less information, creating degraded versions such as conspiracy theory and UFO narratives.

Jencks's idea of the cognicrats and cogniproles is not a new idea and has been a staple of conspiracy theory and paranoia for some time. It can also be seen as a conspiracy theorist's version of class relations, something that particularly finds its provenance in cyberpunk fiction's accounts of the relationship between information-rich corporations and their servants and the underclass that exists outside corporate enclaves.¹⁸ Indeed, this account of information society can be found in a slightly different form in Philip K. Dick's novel *The Simulacra* (1964), which predates Jencks's *What Is Postmodernism?* (1986) by about twenty years. In this novel, Dick constructs a society polarized into the *Geheimnisträger* (the *Ges*), those who know secrets (particularly the secret that the president of the United States of Europe and America, a prototype perhaps of the New World Order, is a simulacrum or android) and the *Befehlsträger* (the *Bes*), the carry-outers, as they are described; the obedient servants who follow orders in the hope that they will be rewarded with entry into the *Geheimnisträger* class.¹⁹ As in many Philip K. Dick novels, government and social relations are constructed in terms of a conspiracy created by those who have knowledge in order to control an alienated underclass.²⁰ Indeed, in relation to conspiracy theory in the contemporary period it might be suggested that the generation of a conspiracy theory is as much about imagining yourself into the *Geheimnisträger* or "cognicrat" class as it is about describing or validating a sense of alienation or victimhood. Paranoia, for example, is not

just an expression of marginalization and alienation in a seemingly hostile world, nor is it simply an attempt to find depth and meaning in the simulacra and multiple information systems of postmodernity. Paranoia also acts as a centering device for subjectivity by allowing all the world's random events to be explained in terms of the paranoid's version of conspiracy: paranoia provides coherence for subjectivity by providing coherence for society. This raises a paradox of identity in conspiracy theory, in that it functions to express a postmodern decentered subjectivity, but it can also be a way of expressing a meaningful and centered identity or subjectivity by apparently locating the self within the secret knowledges of the powerful. The paranoid is a figure who is both inside the secret operations of society (and therefore in a position of knowledge not shared by other marginalized subjects) and on the outside as one of the marginalized and powerless majority.

This is the ideal for "cognitive mapping," but it faces the same problems and offers the same contradictory subjectivity as paranoia. To negotiate a relationship between local and global or individual and system, cognitive mapping needs a subjectivity capable of the "critical distance" that Jameson has often argued is impossible in postmodernity.²¹ Jameson's subject is one who has to distance him- or herself from the relationships he or she is trying to map and must therefore exist outside history and society. And yet the subject also has to be inside society and history in order to know what is relevant and legitimate. As a result, conspiracy, rather than being a "poor person's cognitive mapping," might actually be a paradigm of "cognitive mapping" and the difficulties it faces in creating a legitimate position of distance between the subject and the global society he or she inhabits. The postmodern subject does not have the stability that Jameson desires, placed within the morass of postmodern information systems and simulations in which signals suffer interference and thus intercut and merge like Baudrillard's FM radio band.²² The postmodern or global subject is not the "subject-outside-history" that Jameson desires. The subject may be both local and global, but this is not the same as being inside and outside—with local knowledge providing inside information and global consciousness providing a wider overview. While cognitive mapping ideally provides the connections between local and global (or inside and outside), this depends on a stable self who can process the mass of information and simulacra made available in late capital. Similarly, Lyotard's narrative legitimation has a problematic position because his

discourse, in its references to the Cashinahua tribe, is predicated on the subject having a stable position in a stable community, whereas conspiracy theory of course maps the subject's instability in an unstable society, which constantly inflates as external connections and systems are created.²³

We can see the problematic of subjectivity that these discourses represent when we turn to conspiracy. Very often, conspiracy theories are constructed in order to create a subjectivity that is outside history and society so that, although the subject is threatened by the New World Order, the BATE, secret government agencies, or black helicopters, it is not complicit with the conspiracy itself. In conspiracy theory the subject is predicated as a perfect autonomous subject who, despite being one of the majority outside the conspiracy's elite, remains unaffected by the conspiracy's operations and untouched by its disinformation—unlike the rest of society. However, conspiracy theory also represents the independent autonomous subject under threat, struggling to maintain his or her identity in the face of an intrusive conspiracy. The representation of the body and the way it is probed by aliens, subjected to mind control, or implanted with electronic devices signifies this fear of the threat to "the rights of the individual" and the sanctity of the individual's mind. In UFO abduction narratives, anal probes and the insemination of women, for example, represent the ways the human body is turned into a thing, a soulless piece of meat. These claims are made, for instance, by Budd Hopkins when he writes that there are three possible functions for alien implants:

They could function as "locators," in the mode of the small radio transmitters zoologists attach to the ears of hapless, tranquilized elk to trace their wanderings. Or they could be monitors of some sort, relaying the thoughts, emotions or even the visual and sensory impressions of the host. Or, and perhaps least palatable, they could have a controlling function as receivers, suggesting the possibility that abductees could be made to act as surrogates for their abductors.²⁴

Such threats to the individual map a fear that individuality means nothing and that everyone is treated as a functional unit, a thing, or a commodity in contemporary society. And while such narratives may, by Jameson's criteria, offer a mapping that diverts attention away from the

control of the total system of late capital, they nevertheless enact a cognitive mapping of real fears and anxieties in the age of corporations and multinational capital. Implant narratives map similar anxieties over co-optation and complicity in contemporary culture and the sense that there is no possibility for distantiation, as Jameson argues. Implants and mind control represent a discourse of making the "knowing" subject complicit without the subject being aware of their own complicity—a very postmodern concern—so that they are both knowing and unknowing at the same time. They are brought within the conspiracy while they still believe they are outside it and are both puppet and autonomous individual.

Militia groups and New World Order conspiracists, on the other hand, predicate themselves in terms of the notion of the subject as a "subject-outside-history." The fetishization of the Constitution and Bill of Rights represents an attempt to evade not only society as it exists but also history, something that can be seen in the desire to return to a mythical prehistory America—a "retro-topian" attempt to construct an alternative future by a nostalgic return to the past. Bo Gritz, indeed, is fond of stating on his lecture tours that the rights enshrined in the Constitution do not come from the Constitution itself. They are not given to the people of America in history (by the Founding Fathers) but, because they are *inalienable* rights, come from outside history—from God.²⁵ New World Order conspiracies can indeed be seen as a paradoxical cognitive mapping of global systems *and* a resistance to cognitive mapping. NWO conspiracies simultaneously map projected global systems in their imagined conspiracies and embody a desire to retreat from complex global systems to local communities. Again, Bo Gritz rails against the New World Order and global control systems while establishing his own community ("Almost Heaven") in Idaho, which he connects with a global system by setting it in opposition:

Bill Clinton is more of a globalist than Bush. I think it means a loss of the United States as a separate nation, and our Constitution will eventually come under the UN charter. Maybe there are enough people in Idaho who think we ought to maintain our identity. If there aren't it doesn't make a difference. We'll have a Neighborhood Watch program if we have to. Meaning if there's only five of us we'll say, "Look, we're not going to hurt anybody, but don't you come in here and tread on us."²⁶

Effectively, Gritz is offering a cognitive as well as a geographical map of the world here, in which "Almost Heaven" has isolated itself from the United States because it is a controllable and mappable unit. And because it exists outside larger systems, he is effectively arguing that a response to global control is to step outside global history even while his discourses still offer cognitive maps of global systems. Gritz has a literal Neighborhood Watch in his area of Idaho ("Almost Heaven") and a metaphorical Neighborhood Watch in his conspiracy theory map of global society.

The aim of "cognitive mapping," as has already been stated, is to form an interface between the immediate existential experience of, for example, Gritz's Idaho and larger global systems of knowledge, but without retreating from globalism into fragmented enclaves—whether these are geographical, cultural, cognitive, or epistemological enclaves. Nevertheless, Gritz's desire to be inside and outside society and history simultaneously is paradigmatic of "cognitive mapping" itself and represents the same desire to have a stable position from which global society can be controlled without the subject being controlled at the same time. Another way of putting it would be to say that conspiracy theory and "cognitive mapping" are attempts to map society without the subject being mapped him- or herself. By this logic, "knowledge" of the conspiracy seemingly gives the subject a position of independence and authenticity outside the domain of the conspiracy and its world of ignorance, control, and inauthenticity, while "cognitive mapping" seems to offer the same possibilities for living outside ideology. The conspiracist "subject-outside-history" sees him- or herself as free of the information systems controlled by the conspiracy, government, or secret society and sees subjects inside history and society as constructs of "alien" information systems in which thoughts, values, and beliefs do not originate with the subject. Conspiracy theory in this respect acts as a displaced substitute of ideology, a displacement that is itself ideological. The substitution of conspiracy for ideology can in many ways be seen as a rightist or libertarian attempt to understand control and power in contemporary society and marks an interesting intersection between Marxist theories of ideology popularized by Herbert Marcuse in the 1960s—in the notion of "the System"—with rightist or libertarian paranoia. In this interface, control is moved from a class to the individual and responses to control entail individual knowledge or empowerment rather than social transformation. Conspiracy theory can be seen, in

these terms, as an ideological response to ideological control and, as such, a "poor person's cognitive mapping." Yet it is also a paradigm for "cognitive mapping" as a whole because conspiracy theory enacts the difficulties of mapping society without the subject being mapped in the process. Or, more properly, conspiracy theory represents the difficulties of generating a map that is not itself a product of the subject having already been mapped or interpellated by ideology.

Implant and mind control discourses represent exactly this problematic. They present a version of society in which subjectivity has already been generated by the group or agency that is being mapped: the conspiracy that the subject claims has introduced the implant or mind control information in the first place. Conspiracy theory and conspiracy fictions are full of stories of people whose actions have been determined for them through mind control or implanted technology. Alex Constantine claims that Sirhan Sirhan, like Lee Harvey Oswald, was a "hypnotist";²⁷ Timothy McVeigh apparently had an implant placed in his buttocks by the army; and Cathy O'Brien tells of her "experience" as a CIA-controlled prostitute and drug courier in *Trance: Formation of America*.²⁸ In UFO stories the picture is the same: abductees are implanted, monitored, and controlled by aliens or have "actual" aliens implanted into their cerebral cortex (both of which have become a staple of other kinds of popular fiction, as seen in Scully's neck implant in *The X-Files* and aliens as implants in *Dark Skies*). These conspiracy fantasies represent several things. They are a way of explaining a feeling of disempowerment in contemporary society, but they also allow people to avoid taking responsibility for their own actions. Equally, these narratives hypothesize the entry of the conspiracy into the subject. The conspiracy is internalized and does not just exist as a threatening but recognizable external agency. It is both inside and outside, with the implant or mind control trigger acting as an on-off button. The conspiracy is outside until the implant or mind control trigger is activated, at which point the subject becomes part of the conspiracy. The claims that the CIA has developed "remote viewing" technology (whereby the implanted victim becomes the eyes of a distant receiver) are the clearest example of this type of conspiracy fiction.²⁹ In this instance, the "victim" apparently sees the world through the eyes of the conspiracy agency and becomes a stooge or puppet during the period they are under control—what Ron Patton, a mind control believer, calls the *Marionette Syndrome*.³⁰

Stephen Bury's *Interface* provides a more self-aware example of the contradictions of implant conspiracies and the problematic subjectivity that results.³¹ The novel tells the story of a conspiracy behind the presidential campaign of William Cozzano, a wealthy politician who has suffered a stroke, but who is seen by a secret conspiracy of the wealthy (called "The Network") as necessary to their control of America. He is given an implant that mends the neural networks, but that also allows him to be controlled, without his knowledge. At the same time as this, his campaign staff come upon a new device (the PIPER 100) that straps on to the wrist and will allow people's emotions and responses to stimuli to be accurately observed. Cozzano is not given one of these, but one hundred selected volunteers are, and their responses to Cozzano's political opinions and rhetoric are measured. Among the group being monitored is Floyd Wayne Vishniak, part of the social category the research campaigners call "economic roadkill": an unemployed, alienated white male prone to conspiracy fantasies.³² It is no surprise, therefore, that wearing the PIPER 100 on his wrist causes Floyd Wayne to fantasize a conspiracy in which wealthy William Cozzano is a front man for a secret network of the super-rich who want to take over America and who are using the PIPER 100 Floyd Wayne wears to monitor and control the minds of Americans. The conspiracy is mapped by Floyd Wayne because he believes he is being mapped and controlled by the conspiracy. Yet Floyd Wayne's construction of a conspiracy is accidental: the device he wears is not an implant (although it transmits, the messages are not subliminal), but Floyd Wayne maps the world as if it were an implant and as if he were being mapped and controlled by it. His belief that he is being controlled leads him to both resist the messages he believes are coming from the transmitter (which are actually in his own mind) and thwart "The Network." He kills Cozzano and helps to end "The Network's" conspiratorial threat, the result of which is the election of one of the marginalized, who has plans to transform the United States.

Interface offers an account of mind control that questions the basis of conspiracy versions of control, but it also gestures to the difficulties of "legitimately" mapping society. It suggests, through Floyd Wayne's fantasy of conspiracy, that everything is an implant in postmodern global society even if the implants are not material objects, but simulations, discourses, ideologies, and knowledges. The subject is already pervaded by the social processes he or she wishes to map. *Interface* sim-

ply extends the process by imagining the technologization (or cyborgization) of the mapping process to enact the simultaneous internalization of society and externalization of the self. Similarly, while mind control narratives assume an autonomous independent subject existing before the mind control experiments, they also unconsciously represent uncertainties about the autonomy of the subject because of mind control's claimed ability to alter personality structures and identity. Floyd Wayne believes he has a new subjectivity constructed for him by the conspiracy, but it is actually his own creation. Floyd Wayne, like the "victims" of mind control experiments, fantasizes a conspiracy and a controlled subjectivity for himself. Likewise, accounts of mind control (in the form, for example, of the hypnotic suggestion, electroshock, and LSD experiments of MK-ULTRA and Project Monarch) and implants (whether at a general level in the form of tracking devices, remote-control chips, and human telemetry devices or more specifically in the neurophone or stimoceiver) unwittingly focus on the permeability of the human brain and on the continued effects of the control even once the subject has realized what has happened. As is the case with conspiracy disinformation narratives, it becomes unclear whether the information about the conspiracy is truly experienced or planted in the subject's mind despite the fact that all "victims" of mind control and implants claim to be "subjects-outside-conspiracy" once they become aware of the implant device or mind control techniques that have been used against them. Mind control and implant conspiracies imply an interface between the subject and the "conspiracy," the result of which is a circular self-reflexive mapping. The subject is mapped by conspiracy only because he or she maps a conspiracy, effectively meaning that subjectivity and conspiracy are conjured into existence at the same moment—a fabulation Jorge Luis Borges would be proud of. The production of conspiracy knowledge becomes self-fulfilling and conspiracy theory begins to look rather like Jameson's postmodern text, which produces not a map of society but a map of itself: conspiracy theory maps neither conspiracy nor society but provides a map of itself and the subjectivity that created it.

In many ways, conspiracy theory offers not a "poor person's cognitive mapping" but a "cyborg's cognitive mapping"—but this may be the only form of "cognitive mapping" available in a multinational global society pervaded by technologies and simulacra. As such, the conspiratorial subject is not a product of conspiracy but a product of the

postmodern global society he or she is trying to map through the medium of conspiracy. The conspiratorial subject represents a postmodern self incapable of critical distance, the result of which is a self-reflexive subjectivity that is itself a reproduction of postmodern culture. Subjectivity is exteriorized and made as fluid as the discourses, simulations, and ideologies it tries to map, unsure of whether knowledge is perceived or implanted and unclear where subjectivity ends and where global society begins. Conspiratorial subjectivity is a paradigm of a scattered postmodern and global subjectivity and, as such, conspiracy theory is less a "poor person's cognitive mapping" than a paradigm of "everyone's cognitive mapping" in its attempt to make sense of the confusions of subjectivity in a multinational global society.

NOTES

1. Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 356.
2. Jameson's antipathy to conspiracy theory as a form of cognitive mapping also stems from his Marxist insistence on the primacy of economic forces in the creation of social, political, and cultural relations. In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991) he states that conspiracy has as its generating principle an overstated view of technology that produces "high-tech paranoia" (38) and a view that forces other than economics produce social relations. Thus, in conspiracy theory, economic forces are either created by a conspiracy or a secret society (as in anti-Semitic Zionist conspiracy theory) or used by the conspiracy for its own ends (as in New World Order conspiracies).
3. Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," 353.
4. *Ibid.*, 351.
5. Jameson notes that not even apparently omniscient or omnipotent figures such as Hegel, Queen Victoria, or Cecil Rhodes could hold imperialist global realities together. *Ibid.*, 350.
6. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 51.
7. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 81.
8. Daniel Pipes, for example, writes of the way conspiracist views in post-World War I Germany attributed the loss of the war to "Jews, Freemasons,

- socialists, Bolsheviks and others—anyone but the actual leaders of Germany." Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 136.
9. Fredric Jameson, foreword to Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xi-xii.
 10. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 53.
 11. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained to Children: Correspondence, 1982-1985*, trans. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas (London: Turnaround, 1992), 42.
 12. *Ibid.*, 44.
 13. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 60-61.
 14. For an example of the Knights Templar narrative, which also takes in early Christianity and the Merovingian dynasty, see Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (London: Arrow, 1996); for a New World Order narrative, see Texe Marrs, *Project L.U.C.I.D.* (Austin: Living Truth, 1996); for the Fourth Reich in America, see Alex Constantine, *Virtual Government: Mind Control Operations in America* (Portland, OR: Feral House, 1997); and for mind control narratives, see Ron Patton, "Project Monarch: Nazi Mind Control," *Paranoia: The Conspiracy Reader* 4, no. 3 (1996): 2-11.
 15. Marrs, frontispiece, *Project L.U.C.I.D.*
 16. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 76.
 17. Charles Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?* 3d ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 44.
 18. This is a dominant theme throughout cyberpunk, but notable examples include William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (London: Grafton, 1986); Richard Kadrey, *Metrophage* (New York: Ace, 1988); and Pat Cadigan, *Synners* (London: Grafton, 1991).
 19. Philip K. Dick, *The Simulacra* (New York: Ace, 1964), 36-37.
 20. Perhaps the best example of this is Dick's novel *The Penultimate Truth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), which describes a postapocalyptic world in which an elite class lives a life of luxury on a verdant renewed Earth while the majority of the world's population lives an austere existence underground, believing that World War III is still being fought.
 21. According to Jameson
- What the burden of our preceding demonstration suggests, however, is that distance in general (including "critical distance" in particular) has very precisely been abolished in the new space of postmodernism. We are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our new postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiation. (*Postmodernism*, 48-49)

22.

This is the result: a space, that of the FM band, is found to be saturated, the stations overlap and mix together (to the point that it no longer communicates at all). Something that was free by virtue of space is no longer. Speech is free perhaps, but I am less free than before: I no longer succeed in knowing what I want, the space is so saturated, the pressure so great from all who want to make themselves heard.

Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Verso, 1985), 131–32.

23. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 20–21.

24. Budd Hopkins, *Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods* (New York: Random House, 1987), 70.

25. Adam Parfrey, "Guns, Gold, Groceries, Guts 'n' Gritz," *Cult Rapture* (Portland, OR: Feral House, 1995), 249.

26. Bo Gritz, quoted in Parfrey, *Cult Rapture*, 265.

27. Alex Constantine, *Psychic Dictatorship in the U.S.A.* (Portland, OR: Feral House, 1995), 11. See also Jim Keith, *Mind Control, World Control: The Encyclopedia of Mind Control* (Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited, 1997), 151–54 for similar claims about Sirhan Sirhan.

28. Cathy O'Brien and Mark Phillips, *Trance: Formation of America—The True Life Story of a CIA Mind Control Slave* (Nashville: Reality Marketing, 1995).

29. See Constantine, *Psychic Dictatorship*, xii–xiii, 43, for an account of "remote viewing" ideas and for the astonishing claim that it is linked to SDI research and the production of orbiting masers, which will control the minds of the Earth's population.

30. Patton, "Project Monarch," 5.

31. Stephen Bury is the pseudonym for authorial collaborations between Neal Stephenson (whose solo works include *Snow Crash* and *Cryptonomicon*) and J. Frederick George.

32. Stephen Bury, *Interface* (London: Signet, 1997), 340.