rhetoric and everyday practices can be defined as internal manipulations of a system—that of language or that of an established order. "Turns" (or "tropes") inscribe in ordinary language the ruses, displacements, ellipses, etc., that scientific reason has eliminated from operational discourses in order to constitute "proper" meanings. But the practice of these ruses, the memory of a culture, remains in these "literary" zones into which they have been repressed (as in dreams, where Freud rediscovered them). These tricks characterize a popular art of speaking. So quick, so perspicacious in recognizing them in the discourse of the raconteur and the peddler, the ear of the peasant or worker can discern in a way of speaking a way of treating the received language. His amused or artistic appreciation also concerns an art of living in the other's field. It distinguishes in these linguistic turns a style of thought and action—that is, models of practice.  

A diversionary practice: "la perruque"  

With these examples of terrains on which one can locate the specific modalities of "enunciative" practices (manipulations of imposed spaces, tactics relative to particular situations), the possibility is opened up of analyzing the immense field of an "art of practice" differing from the models that (in theory) reign from top to bottom in a culture certified by education from the universities to the elementary schools, models that postulate the constitution of a space of their own (a scientific space or a blank page to be written on), independent of speakers and circumstances, in which they can construct a system based on rules ensuring the system's production, repetition, and verification. Two questions burden this inquiry. They concern, moreover, the two sides of a single political problem. First, on what grounds can we call this "art" different? Second, from what position (from what distinct place) can we set out to analyze it? Perhaps by resorting to the very procedures of this art, we can revise our views on both its definition as "popular" and our position as observers.  

To be sure, there remain social, economic, historical differences between the practitioners (peasants, workers, etc.) of these ruses and ourselves as analysts. It is no accident that their culture is elaborated in terms of the conflictual or competitive relations between the stronger and the weaker, leaving no room for a legendary or ritual space that would be merely neutral. This difference can moreover be seen within the study itself, in the gap that separates the time of solidarity (marked by docility and gratitude toward one's hosts) from the time of writing; the latter reveals the institutional affiliations (scientific, social) and the profit (intellectual, professional, financial, etc.) for which this hospitality is objectively the means. The Bororos of Brazil sink slowly into their collective death, and Lévi-Strauss takes his seat in the French Academy. Even if this injustice disturbs him, the facts remain unchanged. This story is ours as much as his. In this one respect (which is an index of others that are more important), the intellectuals are still borne on the backs of the common people.  

We need not stress here either the socioeconomic implications or the locus of ethnological or historical research, or the political situation that, from the very beginning of contemporary research, has inscribed the concept popular in a problematic of repression. But one pressing question must be confronted here: if one does not expect a revolution to transform the laws of history, how is it possible to foil here and now the social hierarchization which organizes scientific work on popular cultures and repeats itself in that work? The resurgence of "popular" practices within industrial and scientific modernity indicates the paths that might be taken by a transformation of the object of our study and the place from which we study it.  

The operational models of popular culture cannot be confined to the past, the countryside, or primitive peoples. They exist in the heart of the strongholds of the contemporary economy. Take, for example, what in France is called la perruque, "the wig." La perruque is the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer. It differs from pilfering in that nothing of material value is stolen. It differs from absenteeism in that the worker is officially on the job. La perruque may be as simple a matter as a secretary's writing a love letter on "company time" or as complex as a cabinetmaker's "borrowing" a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room. Under different names in different countries this phenomenon is becoming more and more general, even if managers penalize it or "turn a blind eye" on it in order not to know about it.  

Accused of stealing or turning material to his own ends and using the machines for his own profit, the worker who indulges in la perruque actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit. In the very place where the machine he must serve reigns supreme, he cunningly takes pleasure in finding a way to create gratuitous products whose sole purpose is to signify his own capabilities through his work and to confirm his solidarity with other workers or his family
through spending his time in this way. With the complicity of other workers (who thus defeat the competition the factory tries to instill among them), he succeeds in “putting one over” on the established order on its home ground. Far from being a regression toward a mode of production organized around artisans or individuals, la perruque re-introduces “popular” techniques of other times and other places into the industrial space (that is, into the Present order).

Many other examples would show the constant presence of these practices in the most ordered spheres of modern life. With variations, practices analogous to la perruque are proliferating in governmental and commercial offices as well as in factories. No doubt they are just as widespread as formerly (though they ought still to be studied), just as widely suspected, repressed, or ignored. Not only workshops and offices, but also museums and learned journals penalize such practices or ignore them. The authority of ethnological or folklore studies permits some of the material or linguistic objects of these practices to be collected, labelled according to place of origin and theme, put in display cases, offered for inspection and interpretation, and thus that authority conceals, as rural “treasures” serving to edify or satisfy the curiosity of city folk, the legitimization of an order supposed by its conservators to be immemorial and “natural.” Or else they use the tools and products taken from a language of social operations to set off a display of technical gadgets and thus arrange them, inert, on the margins of a system that itself remains intact.

The actual order of things is precisely what “popular” tactics turn to their own ends, without any illusion that it will change any time soon. Though elsewhere it is exploited by a dominant power or simply denied by an ideological discourse, here order is tricked by an art. Into the institution to be served are thus insinuated styles of social exchange, technical invention, and moral resistance, that is, an economy of the “gift” (generosities for which one expects a return), an esthetics of “tricks” (artists’ operations) and an ethics of tenacity (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning, or a fatality). “Popular” culture is precisely that; it is not a corpus considered as foreign, fragmented in order to be displayed, studied and “quoted” by a system which does to objects what it does to living beings.

The progressive partitioning of times and places, the dijunctive logic of specialization through and for work, no longer has an adequate counterpart in the conjunctive rituals of mass communications. This fact cannot become our law. It can be gotten around through departments that, “competing” with the gifts of our benefactors, offer them products at the expense of the institution that divides and pays the workers. This practice of economic diversion is in reality the return of a sociopolitical ethics into an economic system. It is no doubt related to the potlatch described by Mauss, an interplay of voluntary allowances that counts on reciprocity and organizes a social network articulated by the “obligation to give.” In our societies, the market economy is no longer determined by such an “emulation”: taking the abstract individual as a basic unit, it regulates all exchanges among these units according to the code of generalized equivalence constituted by money. This individualistic axiom is, of course, now surfacing as the question that disturbs the free market system as a whole. The a priori assumption of an historical Western option is becoming its point of implosion. However that may be, the potlatch seems to persist within it as the mark of another type of economy. It survives in our economy, though on its margins or in its interstices. It is even developing, although held to be illegitimate, within modern market economy. Because of this, the politics of the “gift” also becomes a diversionary tactic. In the same way, the loss that was voluntary in a gift economy is transformed into a transgression in a profit economy: it appears as an excess (a waste), a challenge (a rejection of profit), or a crime (an attack on property).

This path, relative to our economy, derives from another; it compensates for the first even though it is illegal and (from this point of view) marginal. The same pathway allows investigations to take up a position that is no longer defined only by an acquired power and an observational knowledge, with the addition of a pinch of nostalgia. Melancholy is not enough. Certainly, with respect to the sort of writing that separates domains in the name of the division of labor and reveals class affiliaons, it would be “fabulous” if, as in the stories of miracles, the groups that formerly gave us our masters and that are currently lodged in our corpus were to rise up and themselves mark their comings and goings in the texts that honor and bury them at the same time. This hope has disappeared, along with the beliefs which have long since vanished from our cities. There are no longer any ghosts who can remind the living of reciprocity. But in the order organized by the power of knowledge (ours), as in the order of the countryside or the factories, a diversionary practice remains possible.

Let us try to make a perruque in the economic system whose rules and hierarchies are repeated, as always, in scientific institutions. In the area of scientific research (which defines the current order of knowledge),
working with its machines and making use of its scraps, we can divert the time owed to the institution; we can make textual objects that signify an art and solidarities; we can play the game of free exchange, even if it is penalized by bosses and colleagues when they are not willing to “turn a blind eye” on it; we can create networks of connivances and sleights of hand; we can exchange gifts; and in these ways we can subvert the law that, in the scientific factory, puts work at the service of the machine and, by a similar logic, progressively destroys the requirement of creation and the “obligation to give.” I know of investigators experienced in this art of diversion, which is a return of the ethical, of pleasure and of invention within the scientific institution. Realizing no profit (profit is produced by work done for the factory), and often at a loss, they take something from the order of knowledge in order to inscribe “artistic achievements” on it and to carve on it the graffiti of their debts of honor. To deal with everyday tactics in this way would be to practice an “ordinary” art, to find oneself in the common situation, and to make a kind of perruque of writing itself.

Chapter III  “Making Do”: Uses and Tactics

In spite of measures taken to repress or conceal it, la perruque (or its equivalent) is infiltrating itself everywhere and becoming more and more common. It is only one case among all the practices which introduce artistic tricks and competitions of accomplices into a system that reproduces and partitions through work or leisure. Sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways of “making do.”

From this point of view, the dividing line no longer falls between work and leisure. These two areas of activity flow together. They repeat and reinforce each other. Cultural techniques that camouflage economic reproduction with fictions of surprise (“the event”), of truth (“information”) or communication (“promotion”) spread through the workplace. Reciprocally, cultural production offers an area of expansion for rational operations that permit work to be managed by dividing it (analysis), tabulating it (synthesis) and aggregating it (generalization). A distinction is required other than the one that distributes behaviors according to their place (of work or leisure) and qualifies them thus by the fact that they are located on one or another square of the social checkerboard — in the office, in the workshop, or at the movies. There are differences of another type. They refer to the modalities of action, to the formalities of practices. They traverse the frontiers dividing time, place, and type of action into one part assigned for work and another for leisure. For example, la perruque grafts itself onto the system of the industrial assembly line (its counterpoint, in the same place), as a variant of the activity which, outside the factory (in another place), takes the form of collage.

Although they remain dependent upon the possibilities offered by circumstances, these transverse tactics do not obey the law of the place, for they are not defined or identified by it. In this respect, they are not any more localizable than the technocratic (and scriptural) strategies that seek to create places in conformity with abstract models. But what