"THE SPECIAL AMERICAN CONDITIONS": MARXISM AND AMERICAN STUDIES

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. . . and then there are the special American conditions . . .

—Friedrich Engels, 1851

But there is also another reason for the poverty of theory in American Studies, and that is the reluctance to utilize one of the most extensive literatures of cultural theory in modern scholarship, coming out of the Marxist intellectual tradition.

—Robert Sklar, "The Problem of an American Studies 'Philosophy,'" 1975

In a limited sense, this is a "Marxist" book; in many senses, it is unrecognizably Marxist. For American intellectuals, pro and contra Marx, this is probably as it should be. While it may come close to impossible to think about progressive change without engaging Marxist categories, one of the lessons to be drawn from Kenneth Burke's career is that an American ("self-reliant") Marxism is fundamentally an absurd proposition. The "active" critical soul in America, from Emerson to Burke, joins parties of one, because it is there, in America, that critical power flourishes.

—Frank Lentricchia, 1983[1]

IN HIS RECENT SURVEY OF DEVELOPMENTS IN MARXISM[2] OVER THE LAST decade, Perry Anderson argues that "the sheer density of ongoing economic, political, sociological and cultural research on the Marxist Left in Britain or North America, with its undergrowth of journals and discussions, eclipses any equivalent in the older lands of the Western Marxist tradition proper. . . . Today the *predominant* centers of intellectual production seem to lie in the English-speaking world." The range of this work in the United States is best sensed in the two volumes of *The Left Academy* (1982, 1984), which offer bibliographical essays surveying marxist work in fourteen disciplines.[3] In the face of this, the place of marxism in the study of American culture, in "American Studies," seems somewhat anomalous. For here, there has been

I want to thank Jean-Christophe Agnew, Hazel Carby, Joseph DePlasco, Robert Fogarty, Richard Slotkin, Werner Sollors, and Alan Trachtenberg for their comments, criticisms, and suggestions.

little engagement with marxism by American Studies scholars, and few marxists interpreting American culture: American cultural history has not yet seen the "revisionist" historiography that marks American diplomatic, labor, and social history in the work, for example, of Gabriel Kolko, David Montgomery, and Eugene Genovese. In this essay, I will not only survey marxist studies of American culture but also suggest some reasons for this unequal development by reconsidering the old question of "American exceptionalism," and exploring the curious sense, held by marxists and non-marxists alike, that "American marxism" is "an absurd proposition," at once an oxymoron and an pleonasm.[4]

American Studies as a Substitute for Marxism

When we examine the meaning of Americanism, we discover that Americanism is to the American not a tradition or a territory, . . . but a doctrine—what socialism is to a socialist. Like socialism, Americanism is looked upon not patriotically, as a personal attachment, but rather as a highly attenuated, conceptualized, platonic, impersonal attraction toward a system of ideas, a solemn assent to a handful of final notions—democracy, liberty, opportunity, to all of which the American adheres rationalistically much as a socialist adheres to his socialism—because it does him good, because it gives him work, because, so he thinks, it guarantees his happiness. Americanism has thus served as a substitute for socialism.

—Leon Samson, 1934[5]

There are two principal reasons why there have not been substantial marxist cultural studies dealing with the United States. The first has to do with the way marxist cultural thought reentered American intellectual activity in the last quarter century. It has come through the rediscovery, translation, and interpretation of continental "western marxists": Lukács, Gramsci, Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse, Korsch, Sartre, Althusser, Lefebvre.[6] Fredric Jameson's 1971 book *Marxism and Form* may stand as the epitome of this work, and it is significant that his professional affiliation is French language and literature. The most interesting work of American marxist cultural critics since then has remained centered on European theory, texts, and culture: one finds this in journals like *Telos*, *New German Critique*, and *Semiotexte*. Unlike the powerful impact of the British marxist historiography (E. P. Thompson, Hobsbawm, Hilton, Hill and others) on American history writing, European marxist cultural theory has, to date, left little imprint on American cultural studies.[7]

The second reason lies in the peculiar formation of "American Studies" itself, which has served as a substitute for a developed marxist culture. American Studies emerged as both a continuation of and response to the popular "discovery" and "invention" of "American culture" in the 1930s, a discovery marked in such contrary slogans as "the American way of life" and "Communism is twentieth-century Americanism." Though Warren Susman,

the finest analyst of the culture of the thirties, has seen the concept of culture as finally conservative—nationalist, nostalgic, and sentimentally populist—I would argue that its wide ideological range allowed the "American Studies" it spawned to function as a substitute marxism in two quite different ways. First, American Studies served as the quintessential alternative to marxist explanations, the embodiment and explicator of the American Way, the "genius of American politics"; its interdisciplinary and totalizing (perhaps "pluralizing") ambitions rivaled those of marxism, which was understood simply as Soviet ideology. American Studies in its imperial guise was based on the uniqueness of the American experience, and, as Gene Wise pointed out, this Cold War vision of the American tradition attracted corporate funding and moved overseas as an intellectual arm of American foreign policy. One might take the work of Daniel Boorstin as the epitome of this side of American Studies: both his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, naming names, affirming that "a member of the Communist Party should not be employed by a university," and placing his own work in the context of the anticommunist crusade; and his three-volume *The Americans* (1958, 1965, 1974), the finest cultural history of the United States from the point of view of capitalism. For this American Studies, "American marxism" was surely an oxymoron: Americanism substituted for marxism as an antidote.[8]

Yet there was another strain in American Studies which had a more complex relation to the marxist tradition: the practice of American cultural history as a form of radical culture critique. In a recent essay, Alan Trachtenberg has argued that the "myth/symbol" school had its origins in "a strain within American cultural history itself, its own 'usable past' so to speak, in a line which runs at least from Emerson through Whitman and Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford . . . a cultural-political current brought to a particular focus in the work and career of F. O. Matthiessen, whose importance in the launching of a 'myth and symbol' enterprise can hardly be stressed enough." This tradition, he maintains, saw "cultural criticism as a form of cultural reconstruction" and attempted a "comprehensive view of American life, a view in which the distinctions as well as the relations between culture and society were clear and definitive." Its politics began from "an embattled posture against what it defined as 'commercialism,' a cultural reflex . . . of corporate consumer capitalism." The myth and symbol group shared "a critical vision of Cold War America and . . . a critical view of American historical experience." Out of this tradition of radical cultural criticism have come the most significant works in American Studies, and it is this tradition which continues to draw the fire of the academic right, as when Kenneth Lynn, in a review of Jackson Lears' *No Place of Grace*, dubbed it "anti-American Studies."[9]

Ironically, this "critical" American Studies has also served as a "substitute marxism." For its direct ancestry is less Emerson than the peculiar union of the

cultural criticism which sought an American "usable past"—that of Brooks, Mumford, Kenneth Burke, Waldo Frank—and the cultural politics of the popular front Communism of the late 1930s and 1940s, which recovered and celebrated American folk culture. The figure of F. O. Matthiessen is indeed central to this union and to its later influence in American Studies.

This ancestry has had several consequences for the relation between marxism and American cultural studies. On the one hand, this moment established the left politics and critical stance of an important element of American Studies; and, in a sort of intellectual popular front, the work of these cultural critics, like the progressive history-writing of Beard and Parrington which influenced it, was occasionally mistaken for an American marxism. (There are moments when one wishes it were so, as when Frank Lentricchia attempts to claim Kenneth Burke as a "western marxist"; but there are also moments when one must decline: consider the confusion of marxism with economic determinism as a result of the influence of Beard's "economic interpretation" of history.)[10] Moreover, by combining the search for a usable past with popular front "Americanism," this group of intellectuals entered a more serious engagement with American culture than did the other major left cultural formation of the thirties, the group of anti-Stalinist modernists around *Partisan Review*. A sign of the difference is their respective treatments of Melville. For the "Americanist" cultural critics, Melville became a key figure of the usable past in the work of Mumford, Matthiessen, Newton Arvin and Leo Marx. The avowedly cosmopolitan "New York intellectuals" kept their distance from Melville, finding the sources of a critical culture in European modernism.[11]

However, the possibility of an American marxist cultural studies was also blocked by this formation. The political alliance with the popular front prevented an engagement with the more sophisticated marxism of the anti-Stalinist left; thus no "Americanists" were associated with the short-lived *Marxist Quarterly* which attracted America's equivalents of "western marxism": Sidney Hook, Lewis Corey, and Meyer Shapiro, among others. But the Stalinized marxism of the Communist Party could not support a serious cultural criticism, and F. O. Matthiessen's critical reviews of the marxist literary histories by Granville Hicks and V. F. Calverton are a sign of this tradition's formative break with that "vulgar marxism."[12]

As a result, this critical tradition of American Studies has often combined radical dissent with an ambivalence toward marxist theory, a disposition it shared with the emerging New Left.[13] However, at present this stance leads to a common, if curious rhetoric in American cultural studies, which finds an exaggerated, but not unusual, example in Jackson Lears' recent essay on "cultural hegemony." After repeatedly condemning the "rigidities of orthodox Marxism," "Marxist teleology," and "Marx's epigones" (without citing them by name), he builds his argument around the contributions of Gramsci,

Genovese, Jameson, Bakhtin, Williams, Thompson, Stuart Hall, and Henri Lefebvre—all marxists. Marx, like any other important thinker, has his epigones—second-rate imitators and followers—and worse. But the straw man of "orthodox marxism" obscures the fact that the figures Lears cites positively are central to the marxist tradition. Thus, the continuing spectre of a Second International or Stalinist marxism often prevents a serious engagement with contemporary marxism, and leads to the random borrowing of terms from a Gramsci, a Williams, a Benjamin—borrowings that too often ignore the context and role of the concepts in a larger conceptual system and tradition.[14]

So this critical American Studies has become a "substitute marxism" in the pleonastic sense, from the popular front claim that Communism was simply twentieth-century Americanism, to the New Left sense that there was an indigenous radical tradition that preempted marxism, and now to the covert, pragmatic appropriation and Americanization of marxist concepts without the baggage of the marxist tradition. Behind this dance of marxism and Americanism lies, however, not merely the circumstances of the arrival and Americanization of the immigrant "marxism" but the larger question of "American exceptionalism."

The notion of "American exceptionalism" is in many ways the foundation of the "discipline" of "American Studies"; whether the answers are cast in terms of the "American mind," the "national character," American "myths and symbols," or "American culture," the founding question of the discipline remains "What is American?" Consider the difference if the discipline had been constituted as "cultural studies," as was the case with the discipline that grew out of the work of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall in Britain; like American Studies, British cultural studies grew out of a dissatisfaction with an ahistorical and technical literary criticism and with a Stalinist marxism in the 1950s. Both disciplines practiced cultural criticism to recover a usable past for cultural reconstruction: F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941) and Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) on one side of the Atlantic were paralleled by Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) and Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958) on the other.[15] But in "cultural studies," the central questions—"what is culture?", "what are its forms and how is it related to material production?"—formed a more productive theoretical agenda, and allowed a more serious engagement with marxism than did the question "What is American?" As a result, the work of Raymond Williams has proved richer and more prolific than any of the founding generation of American Studies, and the underfunded and understaffed Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies has produced a body of work with greater range and political and intellectual influence than that of any American Studies program.[16] In American Studies, the focus on American uniqueness often prevented the emergence of a more general "cultural studies," and tended to ignore non-American theoretical paradigms.

The issue of American exceptionalism may be cast in many ways, but for socialists, and for those implicitly or explicitly debating them, it is summed up in the question the German sociologist Werner Sombart posed in 1905: "Why no socialism in America?" Despite perennial attempts to dismiss it as one of those fruitless "negative" historical questions, it has been continually returned to since Sombart. In the question lie two different issues which have not been sufficiently distinguished. The first is an historical question: why has there been no (or so little) socialist class consciousness among American workers, or, as it is usually put, why has there not developed a major labor, social democratic or communist party in the United States? There are a number of excellent reviews of this question, and I will not recapitulate them.[17] The second, theoretical question is, however, central to the relation between marxism and American Studies: do the categories of marxism apply to the United States? Is the historical experience of the U. S. so unique, so exceptional as to require an entirely new theoretical framework?

The sense that America has "disproved" Marx pervades much of the "exceptionalist" debate. In part this is because most "exceptionalists" continue to take the evolutionary marxism of the Second International which forecast an inevitable transition to socialism as "marxism"; thus to disprove the "inevitability of socialism" is to disprove the entire theory. However, the historical defeats of the socialist and workers' movements in the aftermath of the First World War and the complex history of the Soviet Union have purged from contemporary marxism any simple (or even complex) inevitabilism. The "western marxism" that "American Studies" confronts is a tradition of more than half a century which begins from the defeat of "inevitabilist" hopes and assumptions, a tradition which has chastened the prophetic mode without forgoing engagement.[18]

Nevertheless, other exceptionalists see American development as disproving not only the prediction of a socialist opposition or future, but also the methods and categories of marxist analysis, historical materialism. This often remains implicit or cast in ambiguous formulations. Take this formula of Louis Hartz: "Marx fades because of the fading of Laud." Does this simply mean that "there will not be a marxist opposition because there is not a Laudian establishment" (Hartz's plausible historical argument of no feudalism, no socialism), or does it mean, as its rhetorical structure suggests, that "Marx's analysis becomes wrong, or at least irrelevant, in the liberal fragment society"? There are several reasons why the latter claim remains rhetorically implied rather than explicitly argued. First, most treatments of "American exceptionalism" have recognized that European marxists, from Marx and Engels to Lenin, Trotsky, and Gramsci, have themselves suggested the factors that have made the United States exceptional—the absence of feudalism, the free land of the frontier, the appearance of greater prosperity and mobility, the centrality of race and ethnicity, and the ideological power of "Americanism"—and have debated their

effects on the development of a workers' movement in the United States. So marxism as a theoretical framework does not necessarily blind one to the peculiarities of the Americans.[19]

Second, the relation between history and theory posited by the anti-marxist American exceptionalists is a crude pragmatism—if it doesn't work, it's not true—or a simple historicism—in another time, in another place, Marx was right. The first is tricky because it provokes the question of whether the United States' uniquely un-marxist character means that, in nonexceptional countries, marxism is true; the latter—often calling itself post-marxism—responds by characterizing Marx and his progeny as old-fashioned. In the end, neither of these work. To establish that American development is in many senses unique is not to demonstrate the irrelevance of marxist theory. American Studies must mount a theoretical argument that could persuade us that its "methods," its categories, and its "discipline" are more adequate to cultural studies than is marxism. Though such an argument might be constructed on a number of grounds, the most common theme has been to stress marxism's undervaluing of the power of ideological factors. So Louis Hartz early wrote that "the instinctive tendency of all Marxists to discredit the ideological factors as such blinded them to many of the consequences, purely psychological in nature, flowing from the nonfeudal issue. Was not the whole complex of 'Americanism' an ideological question?"[20] In the next section of this essay I will consider four major cultural and ideological grounds for American exceptionalism, all of which, it could be argued, have founded the distinctive work of American Studies, and have seemed beyond marxist abilities: the distinctive American literary tradition of the romance; the role of the frontier in American imagination; the ideological power of the Puritan covenant; and the consumer culture of the "people of plenty." A marxist revision of American cultural history would have to revise persuasively our understanding of these aspects of American culture; I hope to show that that revision is underway.

Toward a Revisionist History of American Culture[21]

Since American Studies grew out of literary criticism, it is not surprising that one of its earliest cultural revisions lay in literary history: a powerful argument that the uniqueness of American fiction lay in its repeated flight from history and society, its myth of Adamic innocence, and its reconstitution of romance within the novel form. Though somewhat shopworn and battered, this interpretive paradigm—founded by R. W. B. Lewis, Richard Chase, and Leslie Fiedler—continues to inform studies of American literature, and, perhaps more importantly, forms a part of the common sense of American literary history. Further, this understanding of American fiction would seem to disable the social and historical concerns that characterize marxist critics of the European novel

from Lukács to Jameson. If Balzac is the classical instance for a marxist criticism, Melville would seem to lie beyond its boundaries. However, several critics have turned to the work of Georg Lukács to contest or revise our understanding of the American romance. The pioneering efforts were Harry Henderson's use of Lukács' treatment of the historical novel in his *Versions of the Past* (1974), a discussion of the historical fiction written by "classic" American writers, and Myra Jehlen's use of Lukács' distinction between epic and novel, in her "New World Epics: The Novel and the Middle-Class in America" (1977), to recast the romance as a failed flight from an exceptionally pervasive ideological hegemony of the middle class. Yet the most powerful Lukácsian readings of American literature have derived from his analysis of the cultural effects of the commodity-form, his theory of reification: Michael T. Gilmore's *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* (1985) which analyzes the response of the romantics to the commodification of literature, and particularly Carolyn Porter's *Seeing and Being* (1981), which combines theoretical reflection with close readings to show that the antinomies of participant and observer in American texts are a response to reification. Thus, she argues, we can "no longer either luxuriate or despair in a belief that American literature's classic tradition was defined primarily by a flight from society and the constraints of civilized life, but must at least entertain the possibility that, as a result of the relatively unimpeded development of capitalism in America, its literary history harbors a set of texts in which is inscribed, in its own terms, as deep and as penetrating a response to history and social reality as any to be found in the work of a Balzac or a George Eliot."[22]

The other response by marxist critics to the exceptionalism of the American romance has been to uncover and recover other literary traditions. A long overdue marxist reevaluation of the naturalist tradition has recently appeared in June Howard's *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (1985) and Rachel Bowlby's *Just Looking* (1985). The work of leftist writers of the 1930s has been examined by Alan Wald and Robert Rosen, and H. Bruce Franklin's recovery and interpretation of working-class and minority writing founds a thorough revision of American literary history in *The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (1978).[23]

Though marxist-feminist scholarship has focused more on women's work and the politics and economics of gender than on women's writing, the making of a marxist-feminist literary criticism can be seen in Lillian Robinson's influential collection, *Sex, Class, and Culture* (1978), and Rachael Blau DuPlessis' *Writing Beyond the Ending* (1985), which focuses on the relation between narrative and ideology in women's writing. The important discussion of the politics and ideologies of women's romantic fiction in the work of Ann Snitow, Tania Modleski, and Janice Radway has been informed by marxist-feminist theories of gender and sexuality as well as by marxist debates over popular literary forms.[24]

And a similar concern for popular fiction has also produced significant marxist work on science fiction.[25] In these works, marxist literary criticism is moving beyond offering marxist "readings" of particular texts, and is beginning to reshape the contours of American literary history.

Behind the romance interpretation of American literary history lies perhaps the most durable explanatory framework for American history and culture, the frontier thesis. American Studies has in many ways restored the centrality of the frontier by shifting the debate from the economic and the political—the frontier as safety valve for class antagonisms, or as the source of democratic institutions—to the ideological—the frontier as a key to the American imagination. From Henry Nash Smith's classic *Virgin Land* (1950) to Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration through Violence*, a 1973 revision provoked by the question "why are we in Viet Nam?", and Annette Kolodny's *The Land Before Her*, a 1984 feminist revision, the study of the myths of the frontier lies close to the heart of the method, content, and politics of American Studies. So it is perhaps not suprising that the frontier has provoked something very close to a marxist revision of American culture in the work of Richard Slotkin, Michael Rogin, and Ronald Takaki. Slotkin's *The Fatal Environment* (1985) offers, first, an engagement between the methods and categories of American Studies and those of contemporary marxist cultural criticism, between, in short, "myth" and "ideology," and second, an argument that, in the frontier myth, "the simple fable of the discovery of new land and the dispossession of the Indians substitutes for the complexities of capital formation, class and interest-group competition, and the subordination of society to the imperatives of capitalist development." Michael Rogin has combined historical materialism and a historical psychoanalysis in *Fathers and Children* (1975) and *Subversive Genealogy* (1983) to show how slavery and Indian war in American "primitive accumulation" gave a distinctive racial cast to American class conflict: the "American 1848," he argues, was the struggle over slavery. Ronald Takaki analyzes the domination of various peoples of color within the context of the development of capitalism and class divisions in his *Iron Cages* (1979), a work that draws on both the critical American Studies tradition and marxist theory. Focusing on white "culture-makers and policy makers," he explores the "cultural hegemony" of the republican, corporate and imperial "iron cages."[26]

What Slotkin, Rogin and Takaki have done is to recast the "special American conditions" of culture in an historical materialist way.[27] The uniqueness of the United States lies in the contradictions of a specifically "settler colonial" capitalism; indeed, perhaps the solution to the endless debates about American exceptionalism is to suspend the analogies with the development of capitalism in western Europe and look to the settler colonial cultures in South Africa, Australia, and North and South America. This work was begun, in a non-marxist way, by the classic exponent of American exceptionalism, Louis Hartz,

who focused on ideological issues, and it has been practiced particularly in the fields of comparative frontiers and comparative slavery and race relations. Stanley Greenberg's *Race and State in Capitalist Development* (1980) is an example of a marxist attempt at such work, and it would seem to promise much to cultural studies.[28] For when Marx wrote that the account of the development outlined in *Capital* was "*expressly* limited to the *countries of western Europe*," he referred specifically to its path of primitive accumulation. The absence of feudalism in settler colonial societies does not imply the absence of precapitalist modes of production. Capitalism in the settler colonial societies was built not primarily on the expropriation and proletarianization of a peasantry nor on the "gift" of free land, but on the dispossession of the native peoples, imported slave and free labor, and racialized class structures.[29]

From Marx's statement that "labor in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin" to the politicial controversies between black and white marxists, and between marxists and non-marxists in black liberation movements, the history of slavery and the subsequent entangling of race and class has always been seen by marxists, in the U. S. and abroad, as fundamental to understanding American history and society.[30] The essays of Manning Marable and Eugene Genovese offer marxist perspectives on historical, economic and sociological work in Afro-American Studies.[31] In Afro-American cultural studies from a marxist perspective, there has been particular attention to what Cornel West has recently called the "two *organic* intellectual traditions in Afro-American life: *The Black Christian Tradition of Preaching* and *The Black Musical Tradition of Performance*." The interpretation of black religion forms the heart of Eugene Genovese's cultural history, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974), and is central both to Cornel West's treatment of black intellectual traditions in his *Prophecy Deliverance!* (1982) and to V. P. Franklin's elaboration of "mass testimonies" in his *Black Self-Determination* (1984). Black music has found interpreters in a number of marxist traditions, from popular front Communism (Sidney Finkelstein) to the Frankfurt School (Theodor Adorno) to a New Left marxist surrealism (Paul Garon).[32]

A critique of the Black Arts Movement and the "Black Aesthetic" of the 1960s was the starting point for two very different contemporary marxist literary theories: Amiri Baraka's Marxist-Leninist essays collected in *Daggers and Javelins* (1984), and the post-structuralist marxism of Houston Baker's *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (1984). Though one finds its poetry in the political slogan and the other in the topics of discourse, they both attempt to base literary analysis in a vernacular culture and the material conditions of black life. A cultural materialism grounds the essays of John Brown Childs on Afro-American intellectuals of the early twentieth century, and Hazel Carby's *Reconstructing Womanhood* (forthcoming), a study of the ways nineteenth-century black women writers reconstructed dominant sexual and racial

ideologies.[33] These historical materialist analyses of Afro-American culture join the marxist revisions of the meaning of the myths of the frontier to establish racial formation and conflict rather than wilderness and virgin land as the center of American cultural studies.

Few controversies over the nature of American culture have failed to contest the image of the Puritans. "Perhaps no other historical image, except that of the frontier," Warren Susman noted, "has been so crucial during the development of our culture. Almost unchallenged has been the contention that Puritanism and the Puritan past somehow determined much that has become characteristic of the nation." For American Studies, the reassessments of the errand of the "peculiar people" have not only figured the peculiaritics of the Americans, but have provided exemplars of the "inter-discipline." For the distance, even marginality, of the Puritans from the canons of orthodox literary criticism, historiography, political science, sociology, and religious studies, combined with their presumed centrality to American culture, has allowed a richness of interdisciplinary work that is unparalleled in other fields of American Studies. In the face of this, it is striking that, though the study of English Puritanism is dominated by the prolific marxist historian Christopher Hill, there has been no significant marxist revision of the New England Puritan past. In part, this may be an implicit challenge to the assumption that the Puritan legacy did determine the characteristics of the United States; and in part, it may be a result of the continuing uncertainty among marxists as to how to characterize the mode of production of the American colonies.[34]

Nevertheless, the issue of Puritanism now confronts marxist cultural critics with new importance; for in the work of Sacvan Bercovitch, it grounds an influential and powerful version of "American exceptionalism." In the rhetoric of the Puritans, particularly in the form of the jeremiad, Bercovitch finds the sources of "an increasingly pervasive middle-class hegemony": "The ritual of the jeremiad bespeaks an ideological consensus—in moral, religious, economic, social, and intellectual matters—unmatched in any other modern culture." In one sense, Bercovitch's argument adds a formal and rhetorical aspect to what might be called the "Americanism" thesis, the principal *ideological* answer to the question "why no socialism in America." This argument is succinctly stated by Leon Samson, a little-known American socialist thinker: "Every concept in socialism has its substitutive counter-concept in Americanism, and that is why the socialist argument falls so fruitlessly on the American ear." Thus, for Bercovitch, no appeal to an American "revolution" can escape the proleptic force of the tradition of the jeremiad, "the official ritual form of continuing revolution"; the form of the jeremiad has contained and paralyzed American radical dissent. However, Bercovitch himself, in a minor but not insignificant moment, substitutes a marxist category—"hegemony"—for his more usual "Americanist" category—"consensus."[35] These two issues—the ideology of

"Americanism" and the use of "hegemony" as a substitute for "consensus" in American Studies—have had their widest influence not in Puritan studies but in the debates over American consumer or "mass" culture.

The discussion of American mass culture involves American exceptionalism in two different ways. First, mass culture, whether celebrated as a culture of affluence, the culture of a people of plenty, or denounced as mass deception, was usually seen not as "uniquely" American, but as coming from the United States. Unlike the Puritan past or the frontier, mass consumer culture was part of the "American way of life" that could be exported. Second, mass culture has been increasingly invoked as an explanation of the failure of socialism; whether formulated as the "embourgeoisment" of workers through mass consumerism or as the channeling of desire by the instruments of the mass media, mass culture is often seen as a central aspect of middle-class "hegemony" in twentieth-century America.

Perhaps because of the international repercussions of "Americanism and Fordism,"[36] the interpretation and critique of American mass culture is the only area of American Studies that engaged the "western marxists": though Gramsci's prison notes on "Americanism and Fordism" were not translated into English until 1971, the work of the Frankfurt School on mass culture began appearing in English in the journal *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* in 1939, and essays by Theodor Adorno and Leo Lowenthal were included in the pioneering 1957 anthology, *Mass Culture*.[37] The particular analyses of film, television, radio, jazz, magazine serials and horoscopes found their theoretical base in Adorno and Horkheimer's conception of the "culture industry" and Herbert Marcuse's later account of "one-dimensional man." Elaborating the theory of reification, they explored the distortions and mystifications inherent in the penetration of culture by the commodity-form. The experience of fascist culture in Germany combined with the shock of American "mass culture" led the émigré Frankfurt marxists on Morningside Heights to an overwhelmingly negative response to the products of the culture industry. The dominance of the commodity-form reduced all culture, high and low, to varieties of advertisements. The products of the culture industry were a degeneration of earlier folk and art forms, and numbed and anesthetized the senses.

The Frankfurt School analysis has been criticized as a mirror image of conservative cultural elitism, and as an undialectical picture of a logic of the commodity that permits neither contradiction nor resistance; indeed, too often contemporary marxist and non-marxist discussions of mass culture open with ritual exorcisms of the Frankfurt School. However, within Frankfurt critical theory, an alternative view of the "age of mechanical reproduction" can be found in the essays of Walter Benjamin and the later work of Herbert Marcuse. The controversies within and over the Frankfurt critique of mass culture have reinvigorated discussions of "mass," "consumer" or "popular" culture.[38]

Perhaps the most important and influential theoretical reformulation is Fredric Jameson's "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (1979). After arguing that we must "read high and mass culture as objectively related and dialectically interdependent phenomena, as twin and inseparable forms of the fission of aesthetic production under late capitalism," Jameson suggests that "works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well"; his interpretations attempt to avoid both denunciation and celebration by showing that works of mass culture cannot "manage anxieties about the social order unless they have first revived them and given them some rudimentary expression."[39]

Among works that analyze the institutions and products of the culture industry, Stuart Ewen's pioneering study of advertising, *Captains of Consciousness* (1976), is perhaps the most directly inspired by the Frankfurt School, and has been criticized for its depiction of the overwhelming power of advertising to shape desire and paralyze dissent. A sign of the present distance from this view is the more dialectical understanding of mass culture in the subsequent book by Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen, *Channels of Desire* (1982). The work of Herbert Schiller has focused on the economic organization of the culture industry, with particular attention to its international power. The related work of the Chilean Ariel Dorfman has focused on the impact of American mass culture in Latin America, in the classic *How to Read Donald Duck* (1975) and *The Empire's Old Clothes* (1983). Todd Gitlin has drawn on the marxist cultural theory of Stuart Hall in a detailed analysis of the effects of news coverage on oppositional movements, *The Whole World is Watching* (1980), and in one of the first significant studies of entertainment television, *Inside Prime Time* (1983).[40]

Film studies, which has developed somewhat separately, has had a vital marxist strain, particularly in Europe: American films were the subject of such classic essays as "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*" by the Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and Laura Mulvey's "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema" in the British journal *Screen*. The developing American marxist film studies can be seen in the journals *Jump Cut* and *Cineaste*, and in the work of Bill Nichols, E. Ann Kaplan, Peter Biskind, and Robert Ray.[41]

A dissatisfaction with an exclusive focus on the institutions and products of mass culture, and with assumptions of a passive and undifferentiated audience, has provoked a number of works that focus on the intersection of mass culture and class cultures. One line of work, following key essays by Martin Sklar on the cultural consequences of capitalism's transition from accumulation to "disaccumulation," and by Barbara and John Ehrenreich on the "professional-managerial class," has explored the relations between mass culture, the new middle classes, and an emerging culture of abundance, consumption, and personality.[42]

Stanley Aronowitz's *False Promises* (1973), on the other hand, remains the most ambitious attempt to interpret working-class history through the analysis of the effects of the commodity-form on the labor process and culture, "trivialized work, colonized leisure." Further, it stands as one of the few works that places the experience of American workers at the center of a thorough revision of American cultural history. For, though the "new" labor history of the last two decades has reconstructed the picture of American workers and their lives, it has not yet fundamentally revised American cultural history.[43] "The story of American culture," according to socialist cultural historian Warren Susman, "remains largely the story of . . . the enormous American middle class." However, recent work building on the "new" labor history has begun to interpret American culture as the product of conflicts between classes and class fractions: Dan Schiller's *Objectivity and the News* (1981) reinterprets the rise of the penny press through an attention to its artisan readers; my own *Mechanic Accents* (forthcoming) interprets cheap sensational fiction by reconstructing its place within working-class culture; and Roy Rosenzweig's *Eight Hours for What We Will* (1983) examines the class conflicts over institutions of culture and leisure—the saloon, the nickelodeon, parks, and holiday celebrations. Sarah Eisenstein's pathbreaking essays on working women's consciousness have been followed by Elizabeth Ewen's *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars* (1985), which examines the contradictory impact of American mass culture on Italian and Jewish immigrant women, and Kathy Peiss' *Cheap Amusements* (1986), which analyzes the rituals and styles of working women's leisure activities. And George Lipsitz offers a provocative view of the class origins of the popular culture of the 1940s and 1950s in *Class and Culture in the Cold War* (1982). Perhaps the major revisionist synthesis to date is Alan Trachtenberg's *The Incorporation of America* (1982), which explores the effects of the corporate system on culture, and interprets the literal and figurative struggles between "incorporation" and "union" in the late nineteenth century.[44]

Finally, I want to mention briefly a few of the major contributions to marxist cultural theory by contemporary North American marxists. Clearly the most influential has been that of Fredric Jameson. *Marxism and Form* in many ways inaugurated the revival of marxist cultural theory, and *The Political Unconscious* (1981), which consists of a long theoretical essay on marxist interpretation and a virtual rewriting of the history of the novel in subsequent chapters, is probably the most debated marxist cultural text of the period.[45] Stanley Aronowitz's *The Crisis of Historical Materialism*, which engages tendencies in European marxism from the standpoint of American developments in politics and theory, offers an important rethinking of marxism through cultural categories. Bertell Ollman's *Alienation* (1976) is a major contribution to the elaboration of Marx's theory. The engagement of marxism with other critical theories is the focus of Michael Ryan's *Marxism and Deconstruction* (1982), John Fekete's *The Critical Twilight* (1977), and Frank Lentricchia's *Criticism*

and Social Change. Cornel West has charted the relationship between marxism and several strands of American thought: Afro-American critical thought, pragmatism, and Christianity. Richard Ohmann's *English in America* (1976) stands as a major critique of a central discipline of cultural studies. And though Edward Said's *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) stands self-consciously apart from marxism, the "oppositional criticism" and "cultural materialism" it develops both draws on and offers much to contemporary marxists.[46]

Why Marxism?

> Perhaps a simpler way of expressing all this is to say that I have been more influenced by Marxists than by Marxism or by any other *ism*.
>
> —Edward Said, 1984[47]

A reader may have followed me thus far, and still step back and echo Edward Said. Indeed, some of the writers I have cited do take Said's position and are reluctant to call themselves "marxists." Why call oneself a marxist? Why not be pragmatic, "American," and take from marxists what works and leave the rest, including that foreign, "un-American" name? Let me conclude by suggesting some answers.

First, there is a political reason. Though by no means the only tradition of socialist thought, marxism remains the dominant and most developed body of theory and practice in socialist movements. As a result it is an international discourse with an international vocabulary. Spoken in a variety of national and continental accents, it remains, for socialists, a way of avoiding the provincialities of an "American" tradition—"Emersonianism," Irving Howe dubs it—without ignoring the peculiarities of the United States.

Second, marxism provides a tradition, a paradigm, a "problematic": a discourse united not by a dogma nor by a set of fixed assumptions, but by a set of questions. In the case of marxism, these are neither eternal philosophical questions nor pragmatic technical questions of efficiency but are questions raised in the last instance by the politics of emancipation, by the need for a critical understanding of the world. Such a problematic is necessary at the present in part to avoid the tyranny of fashion in contemporary theory—who will be theorist to know and cite next year?[48]—but also because, as the theoretical and historical work of Said and Lentricchia themselves demonstrates, cultural power, even in America, does not lie with parties of one, but in the *affiliations*, to use Said's term, an intellectual makes. Despite American antinomianism, just as there is no fully "authored" discourse of one, there are no "parties of one." We are condemned to affiliation.[49]

Third, marxism does offer one of the few coherent alternatives to the search for an "interdisciplinary method." The dream of "semiotics" as a master

science of signs and the structuralist promise of uniting the disciplines around a common linguistic model have both faded in the face of post-structuralist critiques and the skepticism of historians. "Modernization" theory has made a comeback in American Studies when its life in sociology seemed over, but it remains, with its "traditional"/"modern" dichotomy, more reductive than even Second International marxism. Indeed, precisely because of the economistic reductionism of early versions of the base/superstructure model, marxists are more aware of the dangers of reductionism and essentialism than most other scholars: it is among non-marxists that one finds reductive and essentialist accounts like Marvin Harris' "cultural materialism," the appeal to the last instance of demography, and accounts of the "essence" of a nation, race, gender, or period.[50]

Indeed, marxism now has a number of ways of considering the relationship between culture and society, of showing how "social being determines social consciousness," of dealing with the issues raised by the metaphor of "base" and "superstructure."[51] We can characterize the four main modes of marxist cultural studies at present by their central concepts: commodity/reification; ideology; class/hegemony; cultural materialism.

The first is based on Marx's account of the fetishism of commodities and Lukács' subsequent elaboration of the theory of reification. The effects of the commodity-form on culture: this lens dominates much of the work of the Frankfurt School and of Fredric Jameson, and finds its particular strengths both in illuminating the inscription of the social on apparently apolitical modernist and postmodernist texts, and in the analysis of the mass-produced formulas of the culture industry.

The second line of work draws on the concept of ideology. As Slotkin recognizes, this is close to the "myth/symbol" approach to American Studies. It analyzes the lineaments and functions of ideologies, as a crucial mediation between texts and institutions. This work has been enriched by the displacement of notions of ideology as a systematic world view or as a false consciousness by recent marxist redefinitions: Louis Althusser's sense of ideology as a social process of addressing and constituting subjects; Fredric Jameson's notion of ideology as narrative in form; and Terry Eagleton's examination of "aesthetic ideologies."[52]

The third mode begins from marxist theories of class, and attempts to specify the relations between class and culture. If this had led to occasional reductiveness when applied to individual artists, it has proved indispensable in analyses of working-class cultures: youth subcultures, slave cultures, the impact and uses of mass culture, traditional and invented cultural institutions, and the uses of leisure time. Gramsci's theoretical framework—"hegemony," "historical bloc," "common sense/good sense," the "national-popular"—have allowed this work to escape both the class reductiveness where, as Nicos

Poulantzas joked, classes wear their cultures like license plates, and the liberal appropriation of "hegemony" as a more sophisticated and more fashionable synonym for "consensus."[53]

The fourth direction of marxist cultural studies focuses on the material production and consumption of culture. It is exemplified by Raymond Williams' project of "cultural materialism: a theory of the specificities of material cultural and literary production within historical materialism." Williams' attention to the processes of the "selective traditions," to cultural institutions, formations, means of production, and conventions, and to the relationships of "dominant," "residual," "alternative," "oppositional," and "emergent" cultures provides the conceptual frame for such work.[54]

None of these paradigms exist in isolation from the others; nevertheless, they do indicate tendencies and emphases in contemporary work. The first two tend to be more text-oriented, more "literary-critical"; the latter two tend to engage more in "historical" or "sociological" work. Together they offer a rich and complex approach to cultural studies.

It is more than a decade since Robert Sklar criticized the poverty of theory in American Studies in these pages; and that poverty is still felt, despite the injection (infection?) of post-structuralism, in the crisis of confidence throughout the beleaguered humanities. Meanwhile, marxist cultural studies have steadily developed. The new American marxism has its weaknesses, deriving, as Edward Said notes, from "the comparative absence of a continuous native Marxist theoretical tradition or culture to back it up and its relative isolation from any concrete political struggle."[55] But to dismiss is as "academic marxism" is to ignore the relative autonomy of cultural work, and to mistake the nature of the "academy" in American society. The post-World War Two university is a part of "mass culture," of the "culture industry," a central economic and ideological apparatus of American capitalism. Though right-wing nightmares of a marxist takeover of the humanities seems a little absurd in the reign of Reagan and Bennett, it is worth recalling that, in the development of marxism, it has been in times of political defeat and downturn that theoretical and cultural work have ripened, often at an unavoidable distance from working class struggles. To these labors of reconstructing a critical and emancipatory understanding of American culture, one might eventually say, "well worked, old mole."

NOTES

[1]Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Letters to Americans* (New York: International, 1953), 26. Robert Sklar, "The Problem of an American Studies 'Philosophy': A Bibliography of New Directions," *American Quarterly*, 27 (August 1975), 260. Frank Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983), 6.

[2]On taking the capital out of Marxism: Though Marxism is usually capitalized in style-sheet publications, I follow the increasing, though by no means universal, use of a lowercase marxism that one finds in the journals of the contemporary left. This derives from the sense that marxism is less a doctrine located in the works of Marx than an international tradition of socialist theory and politics with many tendencies and currents. Many, including myself, would prefer another, less proper, name for the tradition, but none has proved as brief and exact. "Historical materialism" is probably the most accepted common name, and readers may substitute it for marxism in this essay if they choose: it remains a mouthful to speak, write, or use as an adjective. "Scientific socialism" still has a too positivist ring in English; "dialectical materialism" has been entirely corrupted by Stalinist ideology. "Critical Theory" remains too closely tied to the Frankfurt paradigm, and in the U. S. is confused with literary speculation. I am partial to the neologism "socio-analysis" coined, I think, by the American socialist Leon Samson (in his *The American Mind: A Study in Socio-analysis* [New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1932]) and recently reinvented by Robert Heilbroner in *Marxism: For and Against* (New York: Norton, 1981); however, if I used it consistently, no one would know what I was talking about. The lowercase marxism may also be seen as a distancing from the official Marxism-Leninisms of the postcapitalist regimes. Many dissident marxists have used terms like "revisionist," "Marxist-humanist," "critical Marxist," or "neo-Marxist" to characterize themselves; the lowercasing of socialism, communism, and marxism derives from a similar motive.

[3]Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983), 24. Bertell Ollman and Edward Vernoff, *The Left Academy: Marxist Scholarship on American Campuses*, Vol. I (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), Vol. II (New York: Praeger, 1984). In what follows I will take "American Studies" to be "American cultural studies": I will not attempt to survey marxist work in social or labor history nor in sociology or economics, even though this work has deeply influenced marxist cultural studies. For marxist accounts of these fields see Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Political Crisis of Social History: A Marxian Perspective," *Journal of Social History*, 10 (1976), 205-20; David Montgomery, "To Study the People: The American Working Class," *Labor History*, 21 (Fall 1980), 485-512; Michael Burawoy, "Introduction: The Resurgence of Marxism in American Sociology," in M. Burawoy and T. Skocpol, eds., *Marxist Inquiries: Studies of Labor, Class and States* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982); and Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, eds., *Rethinking Marxism* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1985). For major marxist syntheses of American history and society, see Gabriel Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History* (New York: Pantheon, 1984); David Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982); and Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985).

[4]In a culture where marxism has always been a minority current, often excluded and consistently misrepresented by the liberal disciplines, there is a temptation to begin any discussion of "marxism and . . ." with an account of what marxism is. I will resist, though my conclusion will outline the main modes of marxist cultural studies. On marxism generally, I recommend Robert Heilbroner's excellent and concise introduction, *Marxism: For and Against*. He finds four central concerns that run through the great variety of competing and sometimes incompatible marxisms and that justify talking about marxism as an entity: a dialectical approach to thought; a materialist conception of history; the "socioanalysis" of capitalism (that is, the critique of political economy); and a commitment to socialist transformation. For discussions of specific marxist concepts, see Tom Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983).

[5]Leon Samson, "Americanism as Surrogate Socialism," in John Laslett and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Failure of a Dream?: Essays in the History of American Socialism* (New York: Anchor, 1974), 426.

[6]For introductions, see Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso/NLB, 1976), and Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984).

[7]Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Univ. of Princeton Press, 1971). See also the special issue "Engagements: Postmodernism, Marxism, Politics," *boundary 2*, 11 (Fall-Winter 1982-1983). On the British marxist historians in the U. S., see *Radical History Review*, #19 (Winter 1978-1979). A right-wing critique also notices the European-centered nature of contemporary U. S. marxists: "So far, the Marxist humanistic program in the universities has concentrated on criticism,

social history, and the history of Marxist thought itself. It has nevertheless failed to develop a distinctive, persuasive critique of American culture comparable to the work of Adorno and Benjamin in the 1930s in the European context." Norman Cantor, "The real crisis in the humanities today," *New Criterion*, 3 (June 1985), 32.

[8]Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984). Gene Wise, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement," *American Quarterly*, 31 (Bibliography 1979), 293-337. For Boorstin's testimony, see Eric Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason: Excerpts from Hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1968* (New York: Viking, 1971), 601-12. Daniel Boorstin: *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Random House, 1958); *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965); *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Vintage, 1974). For a representative Cold War text, see Clinton Rossiter's influential *Marxism: The View from America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960).

[9]Alan Trachtenberg, "Myth and Symbol," *Massachusetts Review*, 25 (Winter 1984), 670-71. Kenneth Lynn, *New York Times Book Review*, 10 Jan. 1982, 29. An excellent recent example of this tradition is the collection of essays by a group of young scholars who trained or taught in Yale's American Studies Program: Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1983).

[10]Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change*, 23. On the relation of marxists and "Beardians," see Eugene Genovese, *In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History* (New York: Pantheon, 1971), 318-20, 337-39.

[11]For the "Americanist" perspective, see "What is Americanism? A Symposium on Marxism and the American Tradition," *Partisan Review & Anvil*, 3 (April 1936), 3-16, with statements by Burke, Arvin, and Frank among others. For the modernist position calling for the "Europeanization of American literature," see William Phillips and Philip Rahv, "Literature in a Political Decade," in Horace Gregory, ed., *New Letters in America* (New York: Norton, 1937). For a fine account of this conflict which emphasizes its effect in political historiography, see Christopher Lasch, "Foreword," to Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Vintage, 1974).

[12]F. O. Matthiessen, *The Responsibilities of the Critic* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), 184-99. On Matthiessen, see the Memorial issue of *Monthly Review*, 2 (Oct. 1950); Jonathan Arac, "F. O. Matthiessen, Authorizing an American Renaissance," in W. B. Michaels and D. Pease, eds., *The American Renaissance Reconsidered* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985); and Leo Marx, "Double Consciousness and the Cultural Politics of F. O. Matthiessen," *Monthly Review*, 34 (Feb. 1983), 34-56, which has a fine discussion of Matthiessen's relation to marxism. Marx accurately notes that "in retrospect Matthiessen's rejection of what he took to be Marxism is . . . ironic. . . . Some of today's practicing Marxist critics, Raymond Williams for example, would consider Mathiessen's literary theory . . . to be more acceptable—closer to their own theories—than the rigid economistic version of Marxism that Matthiessen found repugnant. . . . The overall tendency of Marxist thought during the last twenty years has been to allow much greater historical efficacy to ideas and non-material culture than was allowed by the mainstream Marxism of the Stalin era. It is this development which now makes Matthiessen's thought seem less distant from Marxism than he himself believed it to be " (48).

[13]For an example of the union of the New Left and this critical American Studies, see Charles Newman and George Abbott White, eds., *Literature in Revolution* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), which included essays by New Left activists (Carl Oglesby on Melville, Todd Gitlin on TV, and Paul Buhle on comics), an essay on Matthiessen, and essays by Leo Marx and Raymond Williams.

[14]T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony," *American Historical Review*, 90 (June 1985), 567-93.

[15]F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941); Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Changing Patterns in English Mass Culture*, American ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958).

[16]Michael Green notes of "cultural studies" that it "has thus not become a new form of 'discipline.' Attempts to 'unify' the field as the analysis of signifying practices . . . are premature or unsatisfactory. . . . Equally, the notion of 'interdisciplinarity' no longer seems forceful—not so much because marxism itself has superseded its ambitions (though that is substantially true), but because 'specialist skills' do not just lie ready to collaborate together. . . . The relation of cultural studies to the other disciplines is rather one of critique: of their historical construction, of their claims, of their omissions, and particularly of the forms of their separation. At the same time, a critical relationship to the disciplines is also a critical stance to their forms of knowledge production—to the prevalent social relations of research, the labour process of higher education." Green, "The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies," in Peter Widdowson, ed., *Re-Reading English* (London: Methuen, 1982). See Stuart Hall et al., *Culture, Language, Media* (London: Hutchinson, 1980) for a history of British cultural studies and a selection of work from the journal *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, and Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1978). See also the collective volumes by members of the Center (all London: Hutchinson): *Resistance through Rituals* (1976); *On Ideology* (1978); *Women Take Issue* (1978); *Working Class Culture* (1979); *Unpopular Education* (1981); *The Empire Strikes Back* (1982); *Making Histories* (1982).

[17]Sean Wilentz, "Against Exceptionalism: Class Consciousness and the American Labor Movement," *International Labor and Working Class History*, #26 (Fall 1984), 1-24; Eric Foner, "Why is there no Socialism in the United States?" *History Workshop*, #17 (Spring 1984), 57-80; Seymour Martin Lipset, "Why No Socialism in the United States?" in S. Bialer, ed., *Sources of Contemporary Radicalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977); Jerome Karabel, "The Failure of American Socialism Reconsidered," *The Socialist Register* (1979), 204-27.

[18]One might, crudely, distinguish four marxisms of the last half century: the state ideologies of the post-capitalist societies; the "eastern marxisms" which critically interrogate the historical experience of those societies, from Kollantai, Trotsky, and the circle of Bakhtin, to Bahro and Medvedev; the "third world marxisms" which have theorized imperialism, colonialism, and the relations between national liberation and socialist transformation, from the early Mao Zedong and José Carlos Mariátegui to C. L. R. James and Amilcar Cabral; and the "western marxisms" which I draw on in this essay which have since Luxemburg, Gramsci and Lukács addressed the resilience of the advanced capitalist nations, particularly in culture and ideology.

[19]Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 6; see also idem, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955), 254n. On European Marxist views of the U. S., see Lipset, "Why no Socialism?"; R. Laurence Moore, *European Socialists and the American Promised Land* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970); and *Marx and Engels on the United States* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979).

[20]Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 252.

[21]In what follows I will be surveying the marxist scholarship of the last quarter century. Two qualifications are necessary. First, for a variety of reasons, including the recurrent "red scares" in the American academy and the disarray of the American left, there is no sure litmus test for "marxist" scholarship. I have based this survey neither on party affiliation nor on political activity; rather I have cited work which either calls itself "marxist," is predominately influenced by leading marxist theorists, or uses marxist categories and a materialist conception of history. I am more interested in sending the reader to this work than in precise labels. If people feel that they have been misidentified as marxists, or have been excluded, please let me know. Second, my focus on the last quarter century is a result of a sense that, as Ronald Aronson has noted, though "the two earlier heydays of American Left activity—centered on the pre-World War I Socialist Party and the Communist Party of the 1930s—were virtually barren of Marxist culture, . . . the New Left has led to the first significant intellectual advances for an American Marxism." Ronald Aronson, "Historical Materialism," *New Left Review*, #152 (July/August 1985), 79. For the history of earlier American marxisms, see David Herreshoff, *The Origins of American Marxism* (New York: Monad Press, 1973); Oakley Johnson, *Marxism in United States History Before the Russian Revolution* (New York: Humanities Press, 1974); the still indispensable Donald Drew Egbert and Stow Persons, eds., *Socialism and American Life*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952); Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (London: Zed Press, 1983); and Stanley Aronowitz, "Culture and Politics," in his *The Crisis of Historical Materialism* (New York: Praeger, 1981). For

bibliographies, see the second volume of Egbert and Persons; Lee Baxandall, *Marxism and Aesthetics: A Selected Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968); and Chris Bullock and David Peck, *Guide to Marxist Literary Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1980).

[22]Harry Henderson, *Versions of the Past: The Historical Imagination in American Fiction* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974); Myra Jehlen, "New World Epics," *Salmagundi*, #36 (Winter 1977), 49-68; see also her *Class and Character in Faulkner's South* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1976); Michael T. Gilmore, *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985); Carolyn Porter, *Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams, and Faulkner* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1981), xvii.

[23]June Howard, *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985); Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (New York: Methuen, 1985); Alan Wald, *James T. Farrell: The Revolutionary Socialist Years* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1978); idem, *The Revolutionary Imagination: The Poetry and Politics of John Wheelwright and Sherry Mangan* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1983); Robert Rosen, *John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1983); H. Bruce Franklin, *The Victim as Criminal and Artist: Literature from the American Prison* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978).

[24]For accounts of marxist-feminist work, see Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (New York: Longman, 1983), and Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1983). Elizabeth Fox-Genovese offers a marxist account of women's history in "Placing Women's History in History," *New Left Review*, #133 (May-June 1982), 5-29. Lillian Robinson, *Sex, Class, and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978); Rachel Blau duPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1985). Ann Snitow, "Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women is Different," in A. Snitow, C. Stansell, and S. Thompson, *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983). *Powers of Desire* is an important collection of feminist, socialist and marxist discussions of sexuality. Tania Modleski, *Loving With a Vengeance: Mass-produced Fantasies For Women* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1982); Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984).

[25]See the journal *Science Fiction Studies*; H. Bruce Franklin's *Future Perfect: American Science Fiction of the Nineteenth Century*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978); and his *Robert A. Heinlein: America as Science Fiction* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980); Fredric Jameson's essays on science fiction: "World Reduction in Le Guin," *Science Fiction Studies*, 2 (1975), 221-30; "After Armegeddon," ibid., 2 (1975), 31-42; "Progress versus Utopia: or, Can We Imagine the Future," ibid., #27 (1982), 147-58; and Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).

[26]Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Myth and Symbol* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1950); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1973); Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984); Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 47; Michael P. Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the Indians* (New York: Knopf, 1975); idem, *Subversive Genealogies: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1983); Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1979).

[27]See also Susan Willis' readings of American writers through the lens of dependency theory: "Aesthetics of the Rural Slum," *Social Text*, #2 (Spring 1979), 82-103; "A Literary Lesson in Historical Thinking," ibid., #3 (Fall 1980), 136-43; and "Eruptions of Funk," in H. L. Gates, Jr., ed., *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1984).

[28]Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies*. Stanley Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980). See also H. Lamar and L. Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981); L. Foner and E. Genovese, eds., *Slavery in the New World* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969); and George Frederickson, *White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981).

[29]Saul Padover, ed., *The Letters of Karl Marx* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 335-36. William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1983) deals with the ecological consequences of the change of mode of production after the European invasion of America.

[30]Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 414. For treatments of the Communist Party and black Americans, see Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1967) and Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1983). Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1983), is a key treatment of black marxist thinkers.

[31]Genovese, *In Red and Black*; Manning Marable, *Blackwater: Historical Studies in Race, Class Consciousness and Revolution* (Dayton, Ohio: Black Praxis Press, 1981); idem, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* (Boston: South End Press, 1983). See also Alexander Saxton's review essay, "Historical Explanations of Racial Inequality," *Marxist Perspectives*, #6 (Summer 1979), 146-68, and the critique and reconstruction of marxist theories of racial formation in Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "By the Rivers of Babylon: Race in the United States," *Socialist Review*, #71 (Sept.-Oct. 1983), 31-65, and #72 (Nov.-Dec. 1983), 35-68.

[32]Cornel West, "The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual," *Cultural Critique*, #1 (Fall 1985), 114. Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974); Cornel West, *Prophecy Deliverance!: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982); V. P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1984). On black music, see Sidney Finkelstein, *Jazz: A People's Music* (New York: Citadel Press, 1948); Theodor Adorno, "Perennial Fashion—Jazz," (1953) in his *Prisms* (London: Neville Spearman, 1967); Francis Newton [Eric Hobsbawm], *The Jazz Scene* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1959); Frank Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970); Ben Sidran, *Black Talk* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971); and Paul Garon, *Blues and the Poetic Spirit* (London: Edison Press, 1975).

[33]Amiri Baraka, *Daggers and Javelins* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1984); Houston Baker, *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-America Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984); John Brown Childs, "Concepts of Culture in Afro-American Political Thought, 1890-1920," *Social Text*, #3 (Fall 1981), 28-43; idem, "Afro-American Intellectuals and the People's Culture," *Theory and Society*, 13 (1984), 69-90; Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, forthcoming).

[34]Susman, *Culture as History*, 41. For the mode of production debate, see *Radical History Review* (Winter 1977), #18 (Fall 1978), #22 (Winter 1979-1980).

[35]Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 176, 141, 13. But he did not title his chapter, "The Ritual of Consensus" "The Ritual of Hegemony." Samson, "Americanism as Surrogate Socialism," 426. The major treatments of the Samson "Americanism" thesis are Lipset, "Why no Socialism?"; Susman, "Socialism and Americanism" in his *Culture as History*; Michael Harrington, *Socialism* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972); Daniel Bell, "The End of American Exceptionalism," in his *The Winding Passage* (Cambridge: Abt Books, 1980); and Irving Howe, *Socialism and America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985). Howe explicitly invokes Bercovitch's work on the Puritan covenant.

[36]Though I am focusing on culture in this essay, it is important to note that for marxists, "Americanism" signifies not only mass consumer culture, but also the reconstruction of the labor process on "Taylorist" and "Fordist" principles. So the studies of the capitalist reshaping of technology and the labor process by Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); David Noble, *America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977); David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979); and Michael Buroway, *The Politics of Production* (London: Verso, 1985), among others, are essential for American cultural studies.

[37]Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International, 1971). For a selection and bibliography of the work of the Frankfurt School, see Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978). Bernard Rosenberg and David M. White, eds., *Mass Culture* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957).

[38]For an account of the Frankfurt critique of mass culture, see Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), 173-218; Patrick Brantlinger, *Bread and Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984), represents the recent critique. For the differences between Adorno and Benjamin, see their correspondence in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: NLB, 1977). For a brilliant reading of Adorno against the grain, see Andreas Huyssen, "Adorno in Reverse: From Hollywood to Richard Wagner," *New German Critique*, #29 (Spring/Summer 1983), 8-38.

[39]Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text*, #1 (Winter 1979), 133-34, 144.

[40]Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); see the important review essay by Susan Porter Benson, "Advertising America," *Socialist Review*, #43 (Jan.-Feb. 1979), 143-55; Elizabeth Ewen and Stuart Ewen, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982). The works of Herbert Schiller include: *Mass Communications and American Empire* (Boston: Beacon, 1971); *The Mind Managers* (Boston: Beacon, 1973); *Communication and Cultural Domination* (White Plains, N. Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976); *Who Knows: Information in the Age of the Fortune 500* (Norwood, N. J.: Ablex Pub. Corp., 1981); and *Information and the Crisis Economy* (Norwood, N. J.: Ablex Pub. Corp., 1984). Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (London: International General, 1975); Ariel Dorfman, *The Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes Do To Our Minds* (New York: Pantheon, 1983); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and the Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980); idem, *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1983). See also Richard Ohmann's "Where Did Mass Culture Come From?: The Case of Magazines," *Berkshire Review*, 16 (1981); Paul Hoch's *Rip Off the Big Game: The Exploitation of Sports by the Power Elite* (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, 1972); and Dave Marsh's rock criticism collected in *Fortunate Son* (New York: Random House, 1985).

[41]Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*," in *Screen Reader 1: Cinema/Ideology/Politics* (London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977); Laura Mulvey, "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema," *Screen*, 16 (1975), 6-18. Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981); E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983); Peter Biskind, *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York: Pantheon, 1983); Robert B. Ray, *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985). See also Flo Leibowitz's review essay, "Marxist Film Theory," *Socialist Review*, #80 (Mar.-Apr. 1985), 127-39.

[42]Martin Sklar, "On the Proletarian Revolution and the End of Political-Economic Society," *Radical America*, 3 (May-June 1969), 1-39; Barbara Ehrenreich and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class," in Pat Walker, ed., *Between Labor and Capital* (Boston: South End Press, 1979). Jean-Christophe Agnew's "A Touch of Class," *democracy*, 3 (Summer 1983), 59-72, is a fine survey of the "new class" controversy. The major works in the "culture of abundance" vein include Susman, *Culture as History*; Fox and Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption*; T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981); and, somewhat earlier, Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (New York: Knopf, 1965). Feminist discussions include Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor, 1978); and Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981). An Italian marxist treatment of this cultural transformation is Giorgio Ciucci et al., *The American City From the Civil War to the New Deal* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979).

[43]Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973); Herbert Gutman's *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Knopf, 1976), is one of the most ambitious revisions with its synthesis of a Thompsonian conception of class and the marxist anthropology of Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf; nevertheless, as David Montgomery noted, its force is blunted by the language of modernization theory. Montgomery, "Gutman's Nineteenth-Century America," *Labor History*, 19 (Summer 1978), 416-29.

[44]Susman, *Culture as History*, 192; Dan Schiller, *Objectivity and the News: The Public and the Rise of Commercial Journalism* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working Class Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (London: Verso, forthcoming); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure In an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983); Sarah Eisenstein, *Give Us Bread But Give Us Roses: Working Women's Consciousness in the United States, 1890 to the First World War* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983); Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1986); George Lipsitz, *Class and Culture in Cold War America* (South Hadley, Mass.: J. F. Bergin, 1982); Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982). See also Francis Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984).

[45]Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981). For a bibliography of Jameson's work, see the special issue on Jameson, *New Orleans Review*, 11 (Spring 1984); see also the special issue on *The Political Unconscious, Diacritics*, 12 (Fall 1982); and William Dowling, *Jameson, Althusser, Marx* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984).

[46]Aronowitz, *The Crisis in Historical Materialism*; Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976); Michael Ryan, *Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1982); John Fekete, *The Critical Twilight: Explorations in the Ideology of Anglo-American Literary Theory from Eliot to McLuhan* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change*; West, *Prophecy Deliverance!*; idem, "Philosophy and the Afro-American Experience," *The Philosophical Forum*, 9 (Winter 1977-78), 117-48; Richard Ohmann, *English in America: A Radical View of the Profession* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976); Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983).

[47]Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 29.

[48]A Foucauldian analysis of a text will attract more attention now than a Sartrian analysis of the same text; and in American Studies, citations to Clifford Geertz are still, I think, de rigueur. But who reads Berger and Luckmann who not very long ago seemed the center of an American Studies "method"?

[49]"It is the case," Said argues, "with cultural or aesthetic activity that the possibilities and circumstances of its production get their authority by virtue of what I have called affiliation, that implicit network of peculiarly cultural associations between forms, statements, and other aesthetic elaborations on the one hand, and, on the other, institutions, agencies, classes, and amorphous social forces": Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 174. By affiliation, then, I mean more than simply political party affiliation, though the purge of the academy in the 1950s focused on that; the new marxist work I have described gains much of its authority from the networks established among socialist scholars: for example, the Socialist Scholars Conferences of 1965-1970 and 1983-1986, and the journals: *Science and Society*, *Dissent*, and *Monthly Review* survive from the Old Left; *Socialist Review* and *Radical America* were products of the New Left. Most of the new marxist cultural studies will be found in the journals which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s: *Social Text, Cultural Correspondence, Tabloid: A Review of Mass Culture and Everyday Life, Praxis, Radical History Review, Radical Teacher, Minnesota Review, Cultural Critique*, and the short-lived *Marxist Perspectives*.

[50]Marvin Harris, *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (New York:

Random House, 1979). Harris' "cultural materialism" ought not be confused with Raymond Williams' use of that phrase. For a useful synthesis of work in demography, see Walter Nugent, *Structures of American Social History* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981). For a marxist critique, see Wally Seccombe, "Marxism and Demography," *New Left Review*, #137 (Jan.-Feb. 1983), 22-47.

[51]For marxist discussions of the original metaphor, see Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," in his *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: NLB, 1980), and Stuart Hall, "Rethinking the Base/Superstructure Metaphor," in Jon Bloomfield, ed., *Class, Hegemony, and Party* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976).

[52]Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971); Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*; idem, "Ideology, Narrative Analysis, and Popular Culture," *Theory and Society*, 4 (1977), 543-59; Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: NLB, 1976); idem, "Ideology, Fiction, Narrative," *Social Text*, #2 (Summer 1979), 62-81. Perhaps the best review and synthesis is Goran Therborn, *The Power of Ideology and the Ideology of Power* (London: NLB, 1980).

[53]Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony," discusses the relation between "consensus" and "hegemony," without, to my mind, escaping the consensus model.

[54]Raymond P. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), 5. See also his *The Sociology of Culture* (New York: Schocken, 1982).

[55]Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 166.

THE FAMILY, THE STATE, AND THE NOVEL IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC

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THIS ESSAY HAS A DOUBLE PURPOSE: ON THE ONE HAND, I WANT TO SET OUT some of the central concerns involving the practices of the state and the family, and the institution of the novel in the early republic, a period roughly defined here as between the American Revolution and the Civil War; on the other, I want to show how these concerns have been re-examined but also replicated by recent literary and social historians working on the early republic. I am particularly interested in what has been called the new historicism and its effects on the study of the literature of the period. Focusing on the complicated relations among women and politics, the family and the state, and the home and the world, I want to proceed by looking at how these relations are thematized in some typical and resonant passages in the literature, and to move then to a more general consideration of the links between the literature and politics of the period.[1]

* * *

Nineteenth-century readers, according to an anonymous reviewer for the *Knickerbocker* in 1858, felt that the novel was "at home in the home's heart, with the children and the women"; I want to suggest that exploring the place of the novel in this regard may be central to understanding the place of women and the family in the early republic.[2] I want particularly to consider here how the very difference maintained between "the home" and "the world" in early nineteenth-century domestic fiction might make the home a functioning part of that sphere to which it seems to be opposed. If, as certain writers of the period suggest, the home already incorporates, for instance, the role of government, the notion of separate spheres may be seen to keep the difference functional.

In 1834, the American novelist Susan Ridley Sedgwick wrote that "it has indeed often been observed by foreigners, with some surprise, that females here are remarkably absent from the care of the public weal; that they either know nothing or care little about subjects connected with it." While "foreigners" may express surprise about finding women "absent from the care of the public weal," what today's readers may find more surprising is that such an absence, in the nineteenth-century domestic novel which presumably encouraged it, should excite comment. Sedgwick's explanation looks at first like that of the early