CULTURE IN THE AGE OF THREE WORLDS

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THE SOCIOANALYSIS OF CULTURE: RETHINKING THE CULTURAL TURN

Perhaps the central concept in the humanities over the last several decades has been the concept of culture. Raymond Williams, who was as responsible as anyone for the centrality of the term, once told an interviewer that he sometimes wished he had never heard the damn word. I know the feeling. After looking around my office, a student once joked that every book in it had the word culture in its title – an exaggeration, but not by much. Over the last fifteen years, the ostensibly innocuous phrase "cultural studies" has become a divisive slogan, celebrated or denounced for either rescuing or destroying the humanities.

How did a term which was almost entirely the property of mainstream scholarship and conservative criticism in 1950 become the slogan of the left, the postmodern, and the avant-garde in 2000? There is little doubt that the concept of culture was generally conservative at mid-century, tied to notions of consensus and organicism. As Warren Susman has argued, the "general and even popular 'discovery' of the concept of culture" in the 1930s "could and did have results far more conservative than radical, no matter what the intentions of those who originally championed some of the ideas and efforts." Why did this change?[1]

One answer is that it didn't change. A number of recent writers on the left have argued that, despite the intentions of those who champion cultural studies, the cultural turn continues to have conservative results, marking a

slide away from politics and an uncritical embrace of the market's own infatuation with the popular. Despite the apparent shift from worshipping high art to wallowing in cheap entertainment, several writers argue that there are deeper continuities between earlier notions of culture – and of cultural criticism – and the postmodern cultural studies.[2] I disagree.

In this chapter, I will examine the socioanalysis of culture that emerged in the age of three worlds. I will begin by looking at the sea-change in the concept of culture, distinguishing modern from postmodern definitions; I will then try to sort out the antinomies of the form of New Left thought that came to be called cultural studies, the critical reflection on the culture industries and the state cultural apparatuses; and, finally, as an imaginary resolution to no doubt real contradictions, I will outline the lineaments of a labor theory of culture.

Updating the History of the Concept of Culture

The history of the definitions of culture is an old genre which goes back at least to 1782. Culture was a word of Latin origin which, it seems, the English adopted from the Germans who had adopted it from the French who thereupon abandoned it even in translation: E.B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* was translated as *La Civilisation primitive* in 1876–78, and as late as 1950 Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* was translated as *Échantillons de civilisations*. Let me pick up the story at mid-century with two once canonic and now more rarely cited openings. "My purpose in writing the following chapters," T.S. Eliot wrote in 1948, "is not, as might appear from a casual inspection of the table of contents, to outline a social or political philosophy; nor is the book intended to be merely a vehicle for my observations on a variety of topics. My aim is to help define a word, the word *culture*." Four years later, A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn wrote that

> The "culture concept of the anthropologists and sociologists is coming to be regarded as the foundation stone of the social sciences." . . . few intellectuals will challenge the statement that the idea of culture, in the technical anthropological sense, is one of the key notions of contemporary American thought. In explanatory importance and in generality of application it is comparable to such categories as gravity in physics, disease in medicine, evolution in biology.

Between Eliot's modestly-titled *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* and Kroeber and Kluckhohn's confident and encyclopedic *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* stood the mid-century culture concept.[3]

Despite their prominence in the 1950s, neither Eliot nor Kroeber and Kluckhohn are the source of contemporary cultural studies; in retrospect, they now seem more an end than a beginning. Why? Both Eliot and Kroeber and Kluckhohn look back eighty years and find the same landmarks: Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* of 1869 and E.B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* of 1871. Between Arnold and Eliot, Tylor and Kroeber and Kluckhohn, we see what we might broadly call the modernist conceptions of culture: the literary and humanistic notion of culture as an ideal, the arts and letters, the "study and pursuit of perfection," combining "sweetness and light" with "fire and strength," to use Arnold's words; and, on the other hand, the anthropological notion of culture as a whole way of life, the "complex whole," in Tylor's words, of "knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom" and other capabilities and habits. Though aspects of Arnold and Tylor seem more Victorian than modern, their concepts of culture came to prominence in the modern era. Kroeber and Kluckhohn note a dramatic gap between Tylor's use of culture and its widespread adoption after 1920. Similarly, Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* jumps quickly from Arnold over an "interregnum" to the clearly modernist figures of Eliot, Richards, and Leavis. It is striking, for example, that neither Marx nor Engels used it, even though the modern concept of culture has some roots in mid-nineteenth-century Germany (in 1857 Marx did note that he should not forget "so-called cultural history").[4]

These modernist conceptions of culture dominated the first half of the twentieth century, until, beginning in the 1950s, new postmodern definitions of culture emerged that broke decisively from both the Arnoldian *sweetness and light* and the anthropological *customs and morals*, giving both Eliot and Kroeber their retrospective air. *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams's key intervention in the history of the culture concept, stands as

a vanishing mediator. It borrowed from the Arnoldian and Tylorian traditions while burying them.[5]

How do we account for this history? Why did the concept of culture appear and why did its meaning change? In a classic analysis of the meaning of the abstraction "labor," Marx argued that the concept of a generalized, unspecified labor did not emerge until certain social relations created an equivalence between the many different activities which were henceforth labor: "It was a prodigious advance of Adam Smith," Marx wrote, "to throw away any specificity in wealth-producing activity – labor pure and simple, neither manufacturing nor commercial nor agricultural labor, but the one as much as the other." "The most general abstractions," Marx suggested, "generally develop only with the richest concrete development, where one [abstraction] appears common to many, common to all."[6] One might pursue a similar inquiry about the concept of culture. What concrete development enabled the "general abstraction" of culture? What allowed the reduction of such a wide range of human activities to the peculiar common denominator we call culture? We often forget the strangeness of the category, a strangeness that led Adorno and Horkheimer to refuse it: "to speak of culture was always contrary to culture. Culture as a common denominator already contains in embryo that schematization and process of cataloguing and classification which bring culture within the sphere of administration." Why did the modernist concept of culture emerge in 1870? And why did it undergo a sea-change in 1950?[6]

A rereading of Arnold and Eliot, Tylor and Kroeber and Kluckhohn, offers a plausible hypothesis: the modernist notion of culture is largely the product of a crisis in religious thinking. For both Arnold and Eliot, culture was less a canon of great books than the historic dialectic between Hellenism and Hebraism, classical antiquity and Biblical revelation. More over, both Arnold and Eliot understood culture in relation to the battles between the established church and the dissenting sects. Sharing the peculiarities of Anglicanism – a Catholicism without a Pope, an established Protestantism – they both imagined culture as an ideal whole that incorporates the social cement of religion without its doctrinal controversies. The two errors, Eliot tells us, are either to see religion and culture as identical; or to see a relation between religion and culture. Searching to solve this conundrum, he arrives at a metaphor: culture is the "incarnation" of religion.[7]

Similarly, the anthropological "science of culture" emerged largely in the imperial encounter with "savage" religion, recoding religious difference – which is to say paganism – as "primitive culture." Though the science of culture, like the Arnoldian tradition, continued to draw a line between the sacred and the profane, culture, the science of the complex whole no less than the study of perfection, was able to cross that line with relative ease, seeing all the particular forms of worship as means, not ends.

The modernist notion of culture thus takes shape as an abstract realm of generalized spirituality or religiosity. Thus, culture, one might say, emerges only under capitalism. Though there appears to be culture in precapitalist societies, the concept is invented by Tylorians and Arnoldians alike to name those places where the commodity does not yet rule: the arts, leisure, and unproductive luxury consumption of revenues by the accumulators; and the ways of life of so-called primitive peoples. The world dominated by capital – the working day, the labor process, the factory and office, machines and technology, and science itself – is thus outside culture.

These two complementary modernist notions of culture had remarkable success and influence in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly, as Kroeber and Kluckhohn noted, in the societies of the European semiperiphery, the United States and Russia. Even the Marxist tradition adopted aspects of both the anthropological definition, particularly in theorizing the national question, and the high culture definition, particularly in the social-democratic tradition of appropriating and popularizing the classics. The latter was the cultural history that was the object of Walter Benjamin's brilliant critique in his essay on Eduard Fuchs. Marxism's major addition was the concept of cultural revolution which came out of the Russian Marxist tradition, particularly in the work of Lenin and Trotsky. This would deeply influence Gramsci and Lukács (particularly in his path breaking essay, "The Old Culture and the New Culture" of 1920). Nevertheless, by 1950, it would be odd to think of a specifically Marxist theory of culture, the way there was, from Mehring and Plekhanov to Christopher Caudwell and Ernst Fischer, a Marxist aesthetics.

Once we reach the work of Raymond Williams, culture emerges as a

very different kind of abstraction. Williams's carefully constructed index of "Words, Themes, and Persons" in *Culture and Society* has entries for "Ideology" and "Panopticon," but none for "Religion." Arnold and Eliot's concern for the controversies of establishment – the disestablishment of the Irish church, Arnold's thoughts on the "great sexual insurrection of our Anglo-Teutonic race" figured by the Shakers and the Mormons, or Eliot's use of the term "sub-culture" to refer to the divided parts of Christendom, Roman Catholics in England – are replaced in Williams's *The Long Revolution* by the grand chapters on education, the growth of the reading public, and the rise of the popular press.

Williams's culture thus echoes the dramatic explosion throughout the world of what was called at the time "mass culture" – a culture that seemed as far from customs and morals as from the pursuit of perfection, as far from "folk" culture as from elite culture.[8] The postmodern concept of culture was the result of the generalization of the commodity form throughout the realm the moderns had called culture. What had been an elite culture became, as Pierre Bourdieu was to argue, simply a cluster of cultural commodities of distinction; and what anthropologists had seen as distinctive noncapitalist ways of life became different lifestyles, ways of purchasing. Religion was transformed less by a process of secularization than by a process of commodification.[9]

Far from marking the places outside capital's empire, culture was itself an economic realm, encompassing the mass media, advertising, and the production and distribution of knowledge. Moreover, it came to signify not only the cultural industries and state cultural apparatuses but the forms of working-class subsistence and consumption, both the goods and services supplied by the welfare state or purchased in the market, and the time of leisure and social reproduction outside the working day.

The shape of this new postmodern culture concept – the culture of entertainment industries and welfare states – can be seen in the essays of the 1940s and 1950s that have lasted longer than those of Eliot or Kroeber and Kluckhohn: Adorno and Horkheimer's "The Culture Industry," Dwight Macdonald's "Theory of Popular Culture," later revised as "Theory of Mass Culture" and then as "Masscult and Midcult" (it is interesting to note that Eliot himself wrote that "Macdonald's theory strikes me as the best *alternative* to my own that I have seen"), Roland Barthes's *Mythologies*, Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, C. Wright Mills's unfinished book on *The Cultural Apparatus*, Williams's own *The Long Revolution*, C.L.R. James's turn from an Arnoldian Trotskyist cultural politics to a new engagement with popular or mass culture in *American Civilization* and *Beyond a Boundary*, and the American Studies movement associated with figures like Leo Marx, whose "Notes on the Culture of the New Capitalism" was published in *Monthly Review* in 1959. It is perhaps not an accident that one of the first uses of the term "postmodern" appears in the landmark anthology of 1957, *Mass Culture*, which collected essays by Adorno and Macdonald, among others. By 1959, Daniel Bell was noting that the new journals of the left, *Dissent* and *Universities and Left Review* (soon to become *New Left Review*) "are full of attacks against advertising, the debaucheries of mass culture and the like. . . . these problems are essentially cultural and not political," he argued, "and the problem of radical thought today is to reconsider the relationship of culture to society."[10]

The four decades since Bell wrote have seen an extended reconsideration of the relationship of culture to society, as both Arnoldian cultural criticism and Tylorian cultural anthropology have been displaced by the postmodern notion of culture and cultural studies, what one might call socioanalytic theories of culture.[11]

The Antinomies of Cultural Studies

One could begin to sort out the kinds of socioanalytic theories of culture by intellectual histories and national traditions – British cultural studies, French structuralism and post-structuralism, German critical theory, North American theory, canon revision, and new historicism, Latin American dependency theory, South Asian subaltern studies, among others. No term captures all of these trends: postmodern theory is too broad; cultural Marxism misses the often antagonistic relation to the Marxist tradition; New Left theory sounds too narrowly political. Nevertheless, a generation of New Left intellectuals around the globe did seem to turn to culture in order to reshape radical thought (see Table 2).

Table 2
New Left Generation (the year they turned 20)

Roland Barthes 1935	Richard Ohmann 1951
C. Wright Mills 1936	Samir Amin 1951
Louis Althusser 1938	Stuart Hall 1952
Leo Marx 1939	Alexander Kluge 1952
Doris Lessing 1939	Antonio Negri 1953
Harry Braverman 1940	Susan Sontag 1953
Raymond Williams 1941	Stanley Aronowitz 1953
Betty Friedan 1941	Fredric Jameson 1954
E.P. Thompson 1944	Amiri Baraka 1954
Lucio Colletti 1944	Edward Said 1955
Amilcar Cabral 1944	Armand Mattelart 1956
André Gorz 1944	Nicos Poulantzas 1956
Frantz Fanon 1945	Wolfgang Haug 1956
Michel Foucault 1946	Frigga Haug 1957
John Berger 1946	Perry Anderson 1958
Gustavo Gutiérrez 1948	Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1958
Jürgen Habermas 1949	Roberto Schwarz 1958
Noam Chomsky 1949	E. San Juan 1958
Hans Magnus Enzensberger 1949	Juliet Mitchell 1960
Andre Gunder Frank 1949	Régis Debray 1960
Jean Baudrillard 1949	Etienne Balibar 1962
Immanuel Wallerstein 1950	Walter Rodney 1962
Pierre Bourdieu 1950	Gayatri Spivak 1962
Jacques Derrida 1950	Ariel Dorfman 1962
Roberto Fernández Retamar 1951	Angela Davis 1964

Not surprisingly, many of the most important New Left intellectuals were not themselves students during the great student uprisings of the late 1960s and early 1970s (the meaning and shape of the intellectual work produced by the New Left student cohort – those who turned twenty between, say, 1965 and 1975 is a somewhat different story). Rather they were the teachers, literally or symbolically, of those students, having come of age in

the 1940s and 1950s. Usually too young to have shared in what was henceforth the old left – the depression-era Stalinisms, anti-Stalinisms and antifascisms – they sought some new left, *nouvelle gauche*, *neue Links*, in the face of the crisis of Stalinism, the triumphalism of the American century, and the electrifying new politics of the national liberation movements. In retrospect, it was a generation as striking as the classic modernist generation of Western Marxists – the generation of Lukács, Gramsci, Benjamin, Mariátegui, de Beauvoir, and C.L.R. James.

The turn to culture by the New Left generation was not a turn back to Arnold or Tylor; rather it was, as Bell put it, a turn to "advertising" and the "debaucheries of mass culture," the very aspects of the "new capitalism," as Leo Marx called it, that generated this new abstraction "culture" and seemed to leave both arts and customs behind. The most visible manifestation, the phenomenal appearance, of this new world was the new means of communication. I use this phrase "means of communication" in part because the word "communication" was a key word for this generation (perhaps, as Kenneth Burke suggested in the early 1950s, the word was a displacement, carrying some of the libidinal energies invested in the now-disgraced master concept "communism"[12]). *Communications* was the title of Raymond Williams's major programmatic work. I also use the phrase because it captures the first key antinomy of cultural studies, the hesitation between the means of communication as the mass media and the means of communication as the forms and codes by which communication takes place. On the one hand, the means of communication understood as a set of instruments and technologies – the mass media – was a constant temptation toward versions of technological determinism, from McLuhan's *The Mechanical Bride* and *Understanding Media*, to the enormous prestige of Benjamin's rediscovered "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." This line culminates in Armand Mattelart's genealogy of communications, *Mapping World Communication*, which is both an "itinerary of technical objects" and a history of the theories that accounted for them.

On the other hand, the means of communication understood as the forms and codes of symbolic action led to a resurrection of the ancient sciences of rhetoric and hermeneutics, with their concern for the tropes and allegories of social discourse, and the invention of the new sciences of

signs and sign systems, semiology and semiotics. The influential work of Roland Barthes captured both the rhetorical and the scientistic sides: the playful decodings of detergents and plastics, of the brain of Einstein and a photograph of a saluting black soldier, in *Mythologies*, set along the quasi-mathematical rigor and forbidding jargon of *Elements of Semiology*. The last half-century has seen the rise and fall of several of these new "sciences" including deconstruction and discourse analysis. Nevertheless, their central object, what Stuart Hall has called the "relations of representation," remains at the heart of cultural studies.[13]

These new analyses of the means of communication, of what came to be called "mass culture," were not simply added to an already established social or political theory. Rather, as is implied by the echo between means of communication and means of production, the mass media often appeared to be the central terrain, the dominant level, of a postindustrial, consumer order. The new cultural materialisms were not simply a reassertion of the importance of the superstructure, but a rethinking of economy and politics in cultural terms: one can see this even in the least cultural of the New Left Marxists, the *Monthly Review* tendency, who placed a powerful explanatory emphasis on the role of advertising and the sales effort in monopoly capitalism.[14]

In a way, this was not surprising, for the new mass culture, the means of communication, were themselves closely tied to the power of the market and the state. The division between market and state echoes throughout the postwar years, and shapes the second fundamental antinomy of cultural studies – spectacle or surveillance, shopping mall or prison. This antinomy between market-oriented and state-oriented cultural studies developed out of the great conundrum facing the 1960s New Left: how to invent a Marxism without class. How could one maintain the insights and political drive of historical materialism in an epoch when left, right, and center generally agreed that the classes of Fordist capitalism were passing from the stage of world history, when the "labor metaphysic," as C. Wright Mills put it in his influential "Letter to the New Left" (published in New Left magazines on both sides of the Atlantic), seemed irrelevant?[15]

One powerful solution lay in the resurrection of the secret history of the commodity, from Lukács's long-forgotten *History and Class Consciousness*

with its analysis of reification, to Benjamin's archaeology of the "universe of commodities" in the arcades and world exhibitions of nineteenth-century Paris, to Adorno and Horkheimer's account of the "Culture Industry," where the commodity form reduces all art to the eternal sameness of radio jingles, to the "sexual sell" that lay at the heart of the emptiness Betty Friedan called "the problem with no name," the "feminine mystique." It was a short step from the Paris arcades of Benjamin to the Bonaventure Hotel of Fredric Jameson; and one can take Guy Debord's Situationist pamphlet of 1968, *The Society of the Spectacle*, as the quintessential denunciation of a world where we don 3-D glasses in the cinema of daily life. In Latin America, where political independence coincided with economic and cultural dependence, cultural imperialism was also cast in commodity terms, as in the 1971 Chilean classic by Armand Mattelart and Ariel Dorfman, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*.[16]

The contradictions of this commodity Marxism are well known, as we veered from advertising dystopias to rock and rap utopias. Few of us have been immune to either the despair induced by more and more genuinely mindless entertainment or the hopes inspired by the occasional eruption of a genuinely popular and liberatory art. As long as capitalist culture presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities, displayed in the multimedia emporia of Barnes and Noble, Tower Records, and Blockbuster Video, no escape from the antinomies of consumer culture is likely, and Jameson's dialectic of reification and utopia stands as one of the richest, if necessarily failed, imaginary resolutions of that contradiction.[17]

Moreover, it is worth recalling that the power of commodity theories of culture goes beyond the analysis of popular cultural commodities themselves. Together, the theory of reification (the transformation of relations between people into relations between *things* as a result of the generalization of the commodity form) and the inverse but complementary theory of the fetishism of commodities and the fetishism of capital (the transformation of the products of human labor into godlike creatures with the power to dictate the terms of daily work) constitute an entire aesthetic, a theory of the history of the senses, in which the aspects of daily life which had been a "complex whole" – food, worship, art, song, sport – are divided and taylorized into the disconnected jargons, subcultures, and

specializations of postmodern daily life. The results of this instrumentalization of human culture are powerfully analyzed in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, where culture emerges not simply as consumption but as productive consumption, that is to say, as an investment in the creation of a specifically cultural capital. It is a small capital, to be sure, always dominated by economic capital: but, nevertheless, in the symbolic violence of the fields and habitus of capitalism, human choices in food, clothing, and the arts become badges of distinction, the stakes and weapons in class struggle.

The major alternative to these commodity theories of culture have been those that begin from the state rather than the market, from the exercise of power and domination rather than the buying and selling of goods and labor, and from theories of ideology rather than theories of fetishism.[18] "Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance," Michel Foucault wrote in *Discipline and Punish*, and he implicitly replaced the nineteenth-century Parisian arcades of Benjamin with the nineteenth-century French penitentiaries, as Mike Davis would later replace Jameson's Bonaventure Hotel with the Metropolitan Detention Center as the emblem of postmodern Los Angeles. The prison – or what Foucault called the "carceral archipelago," the network of prison, police, and delinquent – held a central place in New Left politics and imagination.

> Sometimes I think this whole world
> Is one big prison yard
> Some of us are prisoners,
> The rest of us are guards,

Bob Dylan sang after the shooting of George Jackson. *Discipline and Punish* itself had its origins in the prison revolt at Attica, New York. However, the power of *Discipline and Punish* lay not simply in the horrifying, if static, diptychs of premodern and modern punishment – the torture of the regicide juxtaposed to the timetable of the house of young prisoners, the chain gang set against the police carriage – nor even in its alleged theory of power. Rather it lay in the long digression of Part Three which outlined "the formation of a disciplinary society," and what we might call a "discipline theory of culture." Discipline became another name for culture

itself, now defined as the articulation of knowledge and power. Discipline produces docile and useful bodies through elaborate techniques. Discipline indeed has the same productive double meaning we saw in "means of communication." The disciplines are at once the institutions and apparatuses of cultural knowledge, the human sciences, and the particular forms and codes by which that knowledge is transmitted. Just as Marx dissected the simple forms of value, so Foucault anatomized the simple forms of discipline: hierarchical observation, normalization, examination.[19]

The analysis of these articulations of power and knowledge, these disciplines, offers a remarkable contrast to the commodity theories of culture. The fascinating world of consumer desire – the fetishism and fashion of world's fairs and shopping malls, what Benjamin called the "sex appeal of the inorganic," fades before the relentless surveillance and policing of desire by what are the state and quasi-state institutions of the Western social democracies and the Eastern people's democracies (prisons, armies, schools, hospitals) and, as elaborated in Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, by the disciplines, discourses, and apparatuses of the colonial state.[20]

For if the New Left was in part a rebellion against the consumer capitalism of the affluent society, it was also a revolt against the institutions of what Louis Althusser called the "ideological state apparatuses" (the ISAs). The ISAs were, one might say, the state counterpart to Adorno and Horkheimer's culture industry. Like the disciplines, the ideological state apparatuses created – interpellated, in Althusser's jargon – subjects. We recognize who we are in being addressed by the institutions we live in. However, though the discipline/apparatus theories of culture depended on the double meaning of subject – one was subjected to power and domination, but one was also a subject, an agent capable of action – for the most part the docile body overshadowed the useful body. The disciplines and the apparatus were like the Borg on *Star Trek*: resistance was futile.

The other major political, or state-oriented, theory of culture – what I will call the "hegemony theory of culture" – developed as a response to the imprisonment of the subaltern in the disciplines and apparatuses of the state. Like the discipline theory, the hegemony theory stressed the com-

plexity of the modern state, a state which is, in Gramsci's words, educative, ethical, cultural: it "plans, urges, incites, solicits, punishes." But the source of the hegemony argument was not the epochal history writing that underwrote the formation of a disciplinary or commodity society. Rather it was the conjunctural analyses found in Marx's famous pamphlet on the defeat of the revolutions of 1848 and the rise of Louis Napoleon, *The 18th Brumaire*, and in Gramsci's notes on the defeat of the Italian factory councils and the rise of Mussolini, both of which shaped Stuart Hall's brilliant articles on the defeat of social democracy and the New Left and the rise of Margaret Thatcher. All three interventions on the defeat of the left and the rise of an authoritarian populism set the economic narrative in the background, insisting on the relative autonomy of state and social movement politics. However, all three were less interested in power or domination than in the relations of force of particular moments. The argument of all three was, in essence, that politics worked like poetry, that the relations of force were intertwined with the relations of representation. The struggle for hegemony was not merely the disciplining of docile/useful bodies, nor was it simply the cheap bread and circuses of a McDonald's happy meal; rather it depended on the work of representation, on the summoning up of the ghosts and costumes of the past to revolutionize the present. Just as Marx called Louis Napoleon "an artist in his own right," a comedian who saw his own comedy as world history, so Hall argued that Thatcher, "our most-beloved Good Housekeeper," succeeded by representing – depicting and speaking for – the Thatcherite man and woman in us all.[21]

"The question of hegemony," Hall wrote, "is always the question of a new cultural order. . . . Cultural power [is] the power to define, to 'make things mean'." This politics of representation extended beyond the state and political parties to what Gramsci called "the forms of cultural organization," schools, churches, newspapers, theaters, literary quarterlies, serial novels, and the intellectuals who staffed them. Neither shopping mall nor prison, culture appeared as a giant school system, its product less spectacle or surveillance than the school recital of the Pledge of Allegiance, the articulation of that hybrid of nationalism and populism that Hall, following Gramsci, called the "national-popular." The emergence of this hegemony

theory of culture was closely connected to the upheavals in mass education, which ranged from the formation of the postwar US "multiversity" and the labor-oriented adult education at the base of British cultural studies, to the international student revolts of 1968, to the battles over affirmative action and curricular reform of the last two decades.[22]

Hall's attention to the national-popular, and to the place of racisms in its formation, was part of a dramatic shift in the relations of force in cultural studies generally, a shift that took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The post-World War II fascination with mass culture, with culture as the means of communication, began to be displaced by the notion of culture as communities, as peoples. Cultural theory increasingly took up the question of how peoples are produced. It focused on the concepts that produce a people – nation, race, ethnicity, colony, color, minority, region, diaspora, migrant, post-colonial – and the national and imperial discourses that underlay these fantasies of racial and ethnic identity.

There were many symptoms and markers of the transformation: the great debate about the canon, which proved not to be about high and low culture, but about the lineaments of a national language, literature and education system; the trajectory of the post-structuralists Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said from their early meditations on *différance* and beginnings to their critiques of the discourses of colonial and postcolonial regimes; the remarkable success in the humanities of Benedict Anderson's little book on nationalism, *Imagined Communities*; the relative waning of Raymond Williams as the emblem of British cultural studies largely because of his apparent blindness to questions of nation, race, and empire; the emergence of the leading intellectuals of the decolonizing national liberation movements, figures like Du Bois, Fanon, and James, into the mainstream of North Atlantic cultural theory; the re-emergence of Etienne Balibar, an architect of the Althusserian rereading of *Capital*, as a theorist of racism and nationalism; and the revival of American studies, the original identity discipline.

One *could* see this national turn in cultural theory as the resurrection of the pluralist anthropological notion of culture as the ways of life of particular peoples, the foundation for the studies of national character. Indeed both defenders and critics of multiculturalism have seen this as an

"identity theory of culture," implicitly adopting Immanuel Wallerstein's definition of culture: "when we talk of traits which are neither universal nor idiosyncratic we often use the term 'culture'. . . . Culture is a way of summarizing the ways in which groups distinguish themselves from other groups." For me, this definition misses precisely those aspects of postmodernity that had rendered the "mores and customs" notion of culture inadequate: the mass culture of market and state. Actually, the radical core of so-called identity theories of culture lies in the fact that they are not pluralist group or ethnic theories, but what I will call, borrowing from Nancy Fraser's work, "recognition theories of culture." They find their inspiration in the Hegelian/existentialist theories of culture that emerged alongside the mass culture debates of the 1950s in Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*, de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, and even, I think, in Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*. In all of these works, the culture of the subaltern is a product of a dialectic of self and other, where the self is objectified as the other and denied any reciprocity of recognition. The politics of recognition range from Fanon's attack on the illusions of any national or identity culture and his defense of the cleansing violence of the colonial subject in *The Wretched of the Earth*, to the consciousness raising which sought to exorcise the ideologies of inferiority and inessentiality inscribed on the self, to the claim – on the state and the market – for cultural justice, for "affirmative action" in the woeful bureaucratic language we must defend. A "recognition theory of culture" is *not* built on the plurality of a multiculture, but on what Gayatri Spivak has seen as the radical emptiness of the category of the subaltern, the "underother."[23]

From Text to Work: Toward a Labor Theory of Culture

If the New Left's postwar socioanalytic theories of culture – cultural studies for short – were the product of a new attention to the means of communication dominated by the forces of the market and the state, it is not surprising that Marx's theories of fetishism and ideology were resurrected. And it should be clear that this turn to culture was not a turn away from political economy or politics, but a dramatic reconceptualization of

them. However, the cultural turn rarely reclaimed Marx's analysis of the labor process, and it was a turn away from the classic Marxist concerns with work and production. Here it shared the New Left's aversion to the "labor metaphysic."

Thus cultural theorists were more likely to reach for Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* than for Harry Braverman's landmark analysis of the labor process, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974). If Foucault began from the prison, Braverman began from the factory and the office; what Foucault called discipline, "movement in a resistant medium," Braverman called by two names: management and craft. Against the scientific management of Taylorism, he defended a scientific workmanship. If Foucault offered an outline of a discipline theory of culture, Braverman offers the lineaments of a labor theory of culture.

To call for a labor theory of culture may seem odd, a perverse return to the "labor metaphysic." If anything remains of Marxism in our post-Fordist, postindustrial cyber-economy, one would not think that it was its emphasis on work and production. Capitalism, we are told, is not about work but about the market. None of us really work, we simply sell our weekdays in order to buy our weekends. The capitalist dream of complete automation never dies – robotic assembly lines, desktop publishing, and money breeding money on an eternally rising stock exchange. Bill Gates's Microsoft mansion is the latest rewiring of a utopia without work. Even the left often seems to have given up on production; virtually all liberal and radical critiques of capitalism focus, as Harry Braverman noted, on capitalism as a mode of distribution rather than as a mode of production. Many radical anthropologists, ecologists, and feminists have explicitly argued that Marxism is, in Baudrillard's famous phrase, a "mirror of production," a captive of the nineteenth-century desire to dominate nature with a spiraling and self-destructive exploitation of energy and resources.

Moreover, work and culture seem to be opposites in a number of ways. Culture is seen as the equivalent of leisure, not labor; the symbolic, not the material; shopping and tourism, not jobs; sex, desire, and fantasy, not work. It is a commonplace to note our reluctance to represent work in our popular stories. A Martian who hijacked the stock of the average video store would reasonably conclude that humans spent far more of their time

engaged in sex than in work. And most work remains invisible: we have all seen more different places of consumption than places of production: The Gap in the mall, not the garment sweatshops; the Honda showroom, not the auto factory; Perdue chickens in the supermarket, not the chicken processing plants. These places of consumption are, of course, places of work; but it is not an accident that we tend to see front-line service workers – the UPS drivers in the 1997 strike, for example – as the most characteristic kinds of workers.

However, Braverman reminds us that work and culture are synonyms, not antonyms. Culture is the product and result of labor, a part of the same process. Quoting the famous passage in *Capital* – "what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises the structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labor process we get a result that had already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement" – he notes how Marx's definition of human labor echoes Aristotle's definition of art. Human work and culture is purposive, conscious, and directed by conceptual thought.[24]

Thus, the fundamental divide in this theory of culture is not that between state and market, nor that between self and other, men and women, Jews and Goyim, Greeks and barbarians, cowboys and Indians. Rather it is the line between conception and execution, between, to use a musical analogy, composition and performance. The fundamental aspect of human labor, Braverman argues, is that the unity of conception and execution can be broken in time, space, and motive force; it is this that produces human culture. One person can conceive and another can execute. This is both the power and tragedy of human labor. A conception can be communicated from one place and time to another by sophisticated means of communication: writing and the means of mechanical and electronic reproduction. It can be saved in a variety of means of storage – books, blueprints, machines, computer programs – to be executed later, even centuries later, as we stage new productions of Shakespeare's plays and Beethoven's symphonies. But this very separation allows the de-skilling of the crafts that make up the arts, and the appropriation of art and culture to a spiritual realm apart from the world of manual labor.

The unity and division between mental and manual labor is thus the

starting point of any labor theory of culture. Of course, we are more aware of their separation than their unity, since, as Braverman argued,

> the separation of hand and brain is the most decisive single step taken in the division of labor by the capitalist mode of production. . . . The unity of thought and action, conception and execution, hand and mind, which capitalism threatened from its beginnings, is now attacked by a systematic dissolution employing all the resources of science and the various engineering disciplines based upon it.

Though there remains a mental element to all manual labor, and a manual element to all mental labor – even Lt. Troi in *Star Trek* gets exhausted exercising her Betazoid telepathy as the ship's counselor – the illusion of their separation is a *real* illusion. All people are intellectuals, Gramsci writes in a classic version of this theory, but not all have the function of intellectuals in a given society. Thus culture appears simultaneously as something we all have (unlike the Arnoldian culture), and as something in which a few are specialists. Culture appears to us as a vast store of accumulated mental labor – the history of consciousness as one metaphor puts it. This accumulated mental labor appears to be the property of separate classes, leisured or cultured or intellectual classes, or of a separate time, a leisure time: hence the centrality of the struggles for the eight-hour day, the weekend, the paid vacation, and the rights to adolescent education and adult retirement.[25]

Just as the antinomies of public and private, liberty and equality, haunt liberal thought, the paradoxical unity and division of mental and manual labor haunts all socialist theories of culture. It lies behind a number of classic debates which liberal thinkers rarely, if ever, even enter: those of the the relation between base and superstructure in social thought and of the relation between workers and intellectuals in political organization. It is not surprising that many of the most powerful utopian images in the socialist tradition are images of the union of mental and manual labor: Marx's self-mocking vision of a society where one may "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner . . . without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic," William Morris's craft ideal, the slogan of workers' self-management, and

the various communitarian experiments from Brook Farm to Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker.[26]

All very well, you may say, but what are the consequences of such a labor theory of culture? It is not meant as a replacement for the cultural theories I have outlined. We live in a divided and reified culture, and each of the New Left socioanalyses of culture – commodity, investment, discipline, hegemony, and recognition – has its interpretative power and, as we used to say, its relative autonomy. However, a labor theory of culture does address a number of weaknesses and false problems in these other conceptions.

First, a labor theory of culture can take us beyond the noisy sphere of the market in the analysis of mass culture, reminding us that the apparent confrontation between cultural commodities and cultural consumers obscures the laborers in the culture industry. If no reading is uncontested, neither is any composition or performance. The fundamental contradiction in the culture industry is that it is not an automaton, but depends on the sale of the products of particular labor powers. As a result, as I argued at length in *The Cultural Front*, the struggles of the "hacks" and "stars" of the culture industries are fundamental to any understanding of mass culture. With the digitization of cultural skills – think of the effect of synthesized and sampled musics on contemporary instrumentalists – Braverman's model grows more and more relevant to cultural studies. Moreover, by reminding us of the important analytic distinction between the labor process and the valorization process, between the material content of purposive human activity and the specific form labor takes under capitalism, a labor theory of culture guards against the reduction of culture to commodification.

Second, a labor theory of culture avoids a fundamental weakness of the political theories of culture – again, using political in the narrow sense. One reason I hold on to the concept of culture rather than switching to the classical concept of ideology – there are many days when I would be happy to call what I do ideological studies rather than cultural studies – is that the concept of ideology remains a political term, having to do with power, domination, and legitimation. And a fundamental weakness of both the discipline and hegemony theories of culture is the tendency to see all of culture as first and foremost a weapon, a tool for constructing subjects

of one sort or another. This has led some in cultural studies, including Eric Lott, to call for a revival of the aesthetic. Ironically, Lott's own early work was a brilliant example of, in his words, "the definition of culture as 'a whole way of conflict'," looking at "the role of culture in . . . political development." I think that what Lott wants is less the aesthetic than a sense that culture is a kind of work, rooted in our senses as well as our politics, and in its own materials and instruments; it thus always goes beyond the ideological functions emphasized in the political definitions of culture.[27]

In this way, a labor theory of culture also enriches Fredric Jameson's influential argument for the utopian elements of cultural productions. For Jameson, utopia is represented not by private desire and pleasure but by collective wish fulfillment, the imagination of community. But one needs to add to this a legacy of classical German aesthetics, the promise of play, of unalienated labor. How does labor get turned into beauty, particularly since we usually don't want to look at it? Performance is always tied to a strict economy of when and when not to show them that you're sweating. How do the rhythms of work become the rhythms of art? The hypothesis of a "labor unconscious" would mean that cultural historians and interpreters might explore the relations between forms of work and forms of art not only in those classic folk genres – quilts, sea chanteys, and field hollers – where the connections seem immediate, but in the arts and entertainments that seem most distant from the world of work.

Finally, the labor theory of culture reminds us that the cultures of the subaltern, the underothers, which demand recognition and cultural justice are not simply the expression of some pre-existing identity; their unities and divisions are the mediated products of the forms of labor – childbirth, slavery, sweatshop, assembly line – to which subalterns have been subjected. It is worth recalling that one of the most powerful works in what I have called the "recognition theory of culture," Tillie Olsen's *Silences* of 1978, was also an expression of a labor theory of culture, seeing work and art as two sides of the same reality. "For our silenced people," the dedication of *Silences* reads, "century after century their beings consumed in the hard, everyday essential work of maintaining human life. Their art, which still they made – as their other contributions – anonymous; refused respect, recognition; lost."[28]

If the revolutionary explosion of the means of communication – the vast culture industries and state cultural apparatuses – set the agenda for cultural studies in the second half of the twentieth century, perhaps their very ordinariness today can lead us back to their place in daily life, to a sense of culture not simply as the peculiar ways of life of small and distinctive communities of identity nor as the new high arts of the studios of Disney or Nintendo, but as the means of subsistence of mobile and migrant global workers. In the circuit of labor power, the working day is the moment of consumption; culture is the labor which produces labor power. "Marx's rather surprising failure to undertake any systematic study of the processes governing the production and reproduction of labor power itself" was, as David Harvey has argued, ". . . one of the most serious of all the gaps in Marx's own theory, and one that is proving extremely difficult to plug if only because the relations between accumulation and the social processes of reproduction of labor power are hidden in such a maze of complexity that they seem to defy analysis." For labor power remains a curious commodity in that it is, unlike other commodities, not produced as a commodity.[29]

Culture is a name for that habitus that forms, subjects, disciplines, entertains, and qualifies labor power. In it lies the very resistance to becoming labor power. It is the contradictory realm of work in the shadow of value, the unpaid and "unproductive" labor of the household and what the autonomous Marxists called the "social factory"; but it is also the contradictory realm of the arts of daily life, of what Marx called "the pleasures of the laborer," the "social needs and social pleasures" that are called forth by the "rapid growth of productive capital." That maze of complexity – the labyrinth of capital, labor, and culture – remains the challenge of an emancipatory cultural studies.[30]