New Introduction:

Writing Labor's History

The history of capitalism has, typically, been written as a series of narratives unified by the themes of accumulation: mercantile and imperialist interests seeking fresh sources of investment; the scientific and technological revolutions that have driven growth; and international rivalries over territory and labor supplies. A multitude of conflicts among fractions of capital that take political forms, such as the struggles for power among capital's personifications or wars, also mark this history. In these accounts, workers enter the theater of history as abstract labor, factors of production, dependent variables in the grand narratives of crisis and renewal.

Writing modern history from capital's standpoint has not been exclusively the wont of liberal and conservative historians whose conceptions may be traced to their worldview. Those who adopted Marxist perspectives also wrote such histories and their work seemed to be grounded in no less an authority than Marx himself. After all, *Capital* may be plausibly read as the story of the penetration of the commodity form into all corners of the social world, the transformation of use value into exchange value which, as labor-power, is the movement from concrete to abstract labor.

Marx intended this account to be a *critique* of political economy, not a revolution in economics—that is, he intended to demonstrate that the epistemological foundation of economic science was the standpoint of capital. That his work should not be construed as an alternative descriptive science in correspondence to an objective material reality completely eludes the literal-minded.

There is no detailed treatment of concrete labor, of use value. In Marx's discourse, concrete labor is the raw material from which the "real abstraction" is derived just as exchange value is presupposed by use value. But the three volumes of *Capital* are written from the point of view of capitalist accumulation. While concrete labor as a use value constitutes the necessary condition for capital formation, this is not Marx's concern in these texts.

Until recently, even the histories of the workers' movements focused, in the main, on rendering an institutional account, one that took the trade unions as an adequate representation of concrete labor. Thus, insofar as trade union struggles are oriented toward improving the conditions of labor within the framework of the capitalist labor process and exchange, these histories ignored the history of concrete labor. For just as capital, in its manufacturing and industrializing modes, was organized by trade and industry, workers formed craft and industrial unions in which labor's dependent character was preserved. Consequently, we have many detailed histories of the individual trade unions and, similarly, not a few treatments of great strikes, which in most countries were conducted against capital's claim to unilaterally regulate wages and working conditions according to its own logic. We might say that these histories follow the reified, institutional forms of labor, already subsumed under their quantitative aspect, under exchange. For trade unions struggle, in the main, over shares of the quantity of value produced in the labor process. In this sense, they are ensconced in the categories of commodity exchange.

Although capital divides labor in various ways, notably by distinctions between skill and "unskill," head and hand, race and gender, one of the crucial interventions of mass unions was to insist on the unity of labor based upon the common interest of those forced to work for wages and salaries. But a second and, in the United States, largely suppressed tradition of the workers movement insists that workers cannot constitute themselves entirely within the labor process or with respect to the wage system, even if these relations provide the necessary condition for labor's

solidarity. Instead labor as an independent discourse is constituted both by common histories rooted in the past as well as the present and by a shared future that is conceived apart from and beyond production. Culture and community are the other crucial components that negate labor's abstraction into labor power.[1]

The history of concrete labor cannot be a single grand narrative, but a series of specific narratives situated in local communities which are, almost without exception, the site of both the struggles against capital's sectoral and individual personifications and of those cultural unities without which the struggles are typically short-lived. Even in countries such as the United Kingdom or Germany, where the modern labor movement reached considerable social power within the capitalist framework, the history of concrete labor is relatively undeveloped. Thus, it was the unique and pathbreaking achievement of E. P. Thompson to have provided the premier work of this history, to have constituted the working class within *and* independent of capital.[2]

The formation of the working class as a separate social event entails a series of temporally and spatially specific developments that are indeterminate from the standpoint of the apparently self-activating history of capital accumulation. The formation of a class-conscious working class movement, expressed in socialist and anarchist discourses and organizations, takes place under certain circumstances: where workers share common or similar experiences of having been formed out of a peasantry; when the struggle for "bourgeois democratic rights," particularly the right to vote and to organize independent trade unions, reveals the contradictions of the ideology of universal bourgeois freedom; and when workers themselves constitute, at least incipiently, a counter public to the bourgeois public, the appearance of which is abetted, but not determined by, the resistance of established authorities to include workers in social and political discourses.

Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* is a precise demonstration of the specificity of how concrete labor constitutes itself through the invention of public discourse. The "proletarian public sphere" is rooted not chiefly in common working conditions, since many national working class movements never succeed in overcoming the limits of trade unionism. The crucial presupposition of such a sphere is various kinds of communities—especially common historical experiences and the overflow of the economic, social, and political struggles into one another.

Of course, elements of a working class public sphere accompany nearly all labor movements. These are manifested in common spaces—town squares, streetcorners, but also pubs and cafes where debate and discussion are shared widely by workers in a particular town or city; in addition to this oral discourse, other public spheres include written communications such as pamphlets, newspapers, and leaflets, as well as social clubs, singing societies, and other informal organizations. These public spheres rarely constitute a national network of concrete labor. The dramatic and mature working class public of Turin after the Great War was matched by few other Italian cities.[3] While the Berlin and Vienna workers demonstrated their capacity for constituting such a public at the turn of the century, these were not singular examples in their respective societies, but were unevenly dispersed elsewhere.[4] Perhaps England is among the few instances of a truly national working class public and this "model" has since guided many historians and theorists.

While conforming in many ways to European models of capitalist development, the United States has important specific features. Here, I only want to focus on the fact that working class publics were formed in exemplary places, particularly in New York, Chicago, and several smaller industrial cities, but never achieved anything like a national counterculture. Yet, as recent historiography shows, segments of U.S. workers formed working class public spheres which transformed the social and political character of some key U.S. cities for brief periods. This work of cultural reclamation is the basis for what has become known as the "new" social history that today dominates American Working Class History as a discursive practice.[5]

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Under the influence of the mass New Left of the 1960s, a new generation of labor scholars and commentators has begun to make its way, principally in universities. The quality of the work matches its prodigious output and has, for the first time since the 1930s, when a parallel movement occurred, spanned the disciplines of history and the social sciences. If the new labor studies had done nothing more than sharpen our knowledge of the past

and the conditions of work it would have been enough. As it has turned out, the new scholastic labor studies has done more—and less.

Although the past two decades have been marked by a veritable explosion of studies of mass-mediated culture and the postmodern debate has addressed the blurred distinction between "high" and "popular" culture, the relationship between cultural change, taken in its everyday life meaning, and class formation remains unexamined except for the nineteenth century. Part of the responsibility for this absence is, undoubtedly, that working class studies have been appropriated by the disciplines, none of which has demonstrated a concentrated effort to address issues of culture and consciousness. For example, with few exceptions, historians are discouraged by academic conventions from writing about the present or the near-past; similarly the gulf between economic, sociological, political, and cultural studies remains wide, despite the transgressive moves of postmodernism. Just as social sciences, for the most part, remain deeply loyal to the algorithms of eighteenth-century science even as relativity and indeterminacy theory has overtaken physical sciences, cultural historians and cultural critics simply avoid the economic and political dimension of their objects. Marxist social scientists, historians or not, have claimed the specialty of economic determinations, just as those who focus on the organization of work seem to be sociologists; political scientists concentrate on voting and other aspects of political participation, and so on. The results are a series of competent and sometimes brilliant specialized studies, partial totalizations which tend to reduce working class history to its economic, political, or cultural determinants.

In the mainstream are those who still produce institutional histories of periods or individual unions or biographies, sometimes critical, sometimes not, of labor's giants. These are the histories in which the epistemological stance is still that of capital's despite the subjective feelings of the authors, most of whom are pro-labor.[6]

Mike Davis, Michael Goldfield, William Serrin, Hardy Green, Arthur Shostak, and Kim Moody (most of whom are outside the universities or became academics after considerable trade union and organizing experience) are among the tiny band of writers who have attempted to account for the profound reversal of worker and union fortunes in the 1970s and 1980s. And a small group of sociologists and political scientists, notably Ruth Milk-

man, Veronica Beechey, Susan Strasser, Steven Steinberg, William Julius Wilson, and Herbert Hill, have explicated structural features of the social and economic position of women and people of color in the contemporary labor force.[7] Younger scholars, notably David Halle, Craig Reinerman, and Rick Fantasia, have made estimable empirical studies of contemporary working class consciousness.[8] Although informed by both theoretical and historical categories, these writers have relied chiefly on case studies, primarily among white working class men, a choice which tends to reinforce my judgment that "working class" is a racially specific gendered category.

But most of the historians who have distinguished themselves as this country's leading exponents of the "new" social history have confined themselves to producing an impressive collective work of local studies of past (male) working class culture and detailed accounts of labor struggles. Most controversially have attempted, in their only substantial contributions to twentieth-century history, to counter cold war-inspired judgments of the Communists, especially among Blacks and in the labor movement, as little more than what Dwight Macdonald once called "the American branch office of the Communist International."

This new movement of "history from below," really the historians of concrete labor, inspired by Thompson, has influenced even the biographers and institutional historians who still see the social world from the perspective of elites and organizations. Following the lead of an older generation of Thompson's followers—Herbert Gutman, David Montgomery, and David Brody—the mainstream labor historians must now be socially and culturally "sensitive." These writers have carried Thompson's methodological imperative to recognize as historically significant the informal as well as the formal modes of self-organization of the working class, the complex interactions that take place on the ground level, despite the fact that everyday life obeys rules of time different from those of what are considered historically significant events and organizations.

Social movements consist of more than their immediate demands for the redress of grievances. The precondition of sustained protest and contestation is a congealed community with broadly shared perceptions and values upon which agreement to act may be reached. Participants may retain their individual views, may be in conflict about many aspects of the movement's goals and program, but what marks their unity is not only shared

enemies, but a strongly held sense that they share the same world-view. But the movement also bears the historical scars on the culture left by their forebears, so they are the legatees of past infamies as well as the glories, whose mythological aspects sustain them even if these have not been overtly incorporated into their discourses. For, although a strong cultural identity is indispensable for the survival of the social category or class, its culture may also become a burden preventing it from moving beyond a certain more or less comfortable social and political niche. In this connection, the English working class survived two centuries of an ever-changing British capitalism and formed its own political party, which in the twentieth century succeeded, from time to time, in governing the United Kingdom. But it was a largely white, male culture whose institutions and ideologies proved incapable of grasping the new conditions under which it was obliged to live: a declining capitalism, deindustrialization, new issues of immigrant workers, the massive entrance of women into the work force, and many other challenges.[9] British labor has suffered recomposition and decline not merely in the face of economic change, but also because its culture had ineluctably conservative features.

Yet, unlike their U.S. counterparts, British workers have a usable past. Without a usable past which becomes part of collective memory, workers are condemned—not only to remain ignorant of the dangers undiscovered by the predecessors—but to repeat some of their mistakes.

Bathed in the light produced by the fires of social movements of the 1950s and 1960s, historians and social scientists of the American Black freedom movement created a new past which has, even if incompletely, been made part of the bone and marrow of the body of its practices.[10] Similarly, feminist historians have succeeded in providing a historical context for the self-understanding of the movement: collective memory has been so reconstructed that the names of those who paved the way for contemporary victories and defeats are well known to tens of thousands of women.[11] The rise of feminism in the late 1960s is commonly called the "third wave," a description that provides for the current generation a sense of historical depth of their movement.

We are currently witnessing an intellectual insurgency among those linked to gay and lesbian movements to recover their own hidden pasts. Historians such as Martin Duberman, whose work

was, until recently, framed in sexually neutral academic scholarly conventions, have decided to speak in their own sexual voices, which are, at the same time, emanations of an increasingly public gay culture. In short, at the margins of contemporary society have arisen incredibly vigorous intellectual movements that are literally forcing the mainstream to address the new issues of desire as well as race and gender.

Tragically, the American labor movement, guided by Henry Ford's motto "history is bunk," has not, in the main, acknowledged its own complex legacy. Scholars have profusely chronicled its conservative, progressive, and radical traditions, especially in the last twenty years, but they are not integrated into the current practices, educational programs, or culture of the labor movement. Workers, organized or not, are largely ignorant of their own past. Union leaders and staff as much as local activists are caught up in the tribulations of the moment, are deprived of the references to earlier strategies, practices, and events. I want to more fully explore the consequences of the absent workers culture and class ideologies for labor's contemporary crisis and fate. For the moment it is enough to note that most union education programs are still obsessed, in their moment of profound crisis and decline, with collective bargaining, labor law, and union administration.

This instrumental approach to training union activists assumes precisely what is in question: whether unions can any longer afford to shape their program and their practices in the image of the stable postwar labor relations to which they had become addicted or whether the image of an embattled social movement more accurately describes the current situation for American labor and, for this reason, demands an entirely new strategy for labor.

Part of the responsibility for the ahistorical perspective of the leadership of U.S. labor lies in the anti-intellectualism rampant among trade union leaders, following a powerful tendency of American life. Unions have made little or no room for intellectuals and scholars unless they are willing to function as professional servants of the leadership. In consequence, some of the best would-be labor intellectuals have retreated to universities and are obliged to construe much of their work in terms of the rules upon which academic careers are made. Organized labor remains suspicious, even hostile toward intellectuals oriented to the labor movement (except, of course, lawyers and pension experts) and its contemporary culture discourages the formation of indigenous,

"organic" intellectuals. On one hand, the estrangement of unions from their own organic intellectuals, which results in the use of intellectuals chiefly as employed experts when they are not ignored, is a symptom of the degree to which workers and the leadership of trade union organizations have implicitly renounced the quest for what Antonio Gramsci calls "moral and intellectual leadership of society," a task for which class-linked intellectuals are uniquely suited.[12]

Instead, I think that the unions have seen themselves as representatives, not of a class, but of disparate groups of workers united by common interests and relationships to industries and crafts. Even when labor becomes politically active, it presents itself, and is perceived by others, as an interest group, part of the parallelogram of forces that is said to constitute national and local power. Although in its most optimistic portraits. such as that of Robert Dahl's study of the local power structure of New Haven, labor's voice may not predominate but is part of the resultant myriad of political conflicts, there is no question of labor, say, challenging the historic domination of the state by big business. The dominant organizations of U.S. labor have never explicitly sought to lead society; rather, they have confined themselves to the articulation of specific worker demands—translated in legislative and particularly collective bargaining programs. (The singular exceptions to this pattern are the two wartime collaborations between union leaders and the executive branch of government in whose hands issues such as productivity and labor relations were suddenly placed.)

This is the efficient cause of labor's distance from intellectuals, who characteristically speak in ideological terms, constructing possible worlds, traditionally in vocabularies of emancipation. Since labor seeks not emancipation but amelioration, intellectuals can be troublesome, especially if they refuse to be integrated within the self-imposed boundaries of labor's prevailing discourse.

When compared to the relationship to the Polish Solidarity Labor union or to the Black South African trade unions, where intellectuals articulate working class as well as national demands in the public sphere of social and political debate. American unions have ignored, spurned, or made their intellectuals into technicians of the bureaucracy. The counter-examples of Black freedom, feminist, gay, and ecology movements in the United States indicate that one practice among the crucial oppositional strategies of the social movements of oppressed and marginalized

groups is, relatively speaking, to value their intellectuals (although given the American propensity to privilege "action over ideas," no social movement respects its heritage adequately). While the dominant ideology of pluralism has influenced these social movements no less than the workers' movements, there is a much stronger radical tradition which, although it has remained in the minority, enjoys considerable influence.

I want to insist that the fissure between ideas and practices has had far-reaching effects on unions and working people as well as on the character of labor scholarship. Among the intellectuals, those who have chosen to address the crisis of American labor—the organic critics whose work prefigures the return of labor to a social movement—have access to only a fraction of the union rank and file when they function as organizers of the few extant opposition movements to established leaders, or work as local union activists and functionaries, or serve as teachers in (mostly) university-sponsored worker education programs or those sponsored by the "progressive" wing of the unions. In many cases their accounts of labor practices and labor history are situated in these perspectives. Where the academic labor historians lack for the most part any integral links with the contemporary working class or its organizations, the critics' work is deeply entrenched in the rank-and-file opposition and "workerist" ideologies, which counterpose what they describe as class perspectives to the prevailing pluralistic progressivism of most trade unions. That is, these intellectuals view the working class and its trade union practices, a priori, as primary social agents. In many cases, they tacitly disparage the effectivity of all others—except, for historical reasons, the Black freedom movement. Moreover, while the labor leadership is excoriated for corruption and undemocratic practices, the actual political and ideological position of the working class is left unexamined, much less criticized. Consequently, neither the new social history nor most critical analyses of contemporary trade unions have cast a wide net of comparative perspectives that view U.S. labor in the context of the international economy and labor movements or, more profoundly, have interrogated their own unreflective class analysis.

The absence of theoretical self-criticism is not true of some of the newer social historians. As we shall see, recent working class history remains rooted in class discourse, but this work no longer interprets labor history in terms of its relevance to the problematic of social transformation or, in many cases, as pre-

figurative of generalized class consciousness. Instead, the implicit discursive framework of the new social history and the labor history that it has influenced is republican and communitarian—a tacit critique of mass society, bureaucratic laborism, and statism. The shift from Marxism to republicanism is implicated in the effects of current events which have placed many of the time-honored Marxist and even populist truths into question: the post-Stalinist upheavals in Eastern Europe beginning in the mid-1950s but particularly since 1968, most notably the utter collapse of the state socialist system after 1989; the virtual collapse of the U.S. ideological left after the end of the Vietnam war, the last historical event that provided common political perceptions to an entire generation of activists and ordinary people, without which social movements are impossible; and, of course, the dogged refusal of workers' movements in Western Europe as well as the United States to reach beyond modern social-democratic welfare state objectives, itself conditioned by the palpable failure of the Bolshevik revolution and its aftermaths. The new labor historians, many of whom cut their political teeth in antiwar and civil rights movements and were influenced by the wave of neo-Marxist inspired theories of the 1960s and early 1970s, have made a fairly substantial, even if subtle, intellectual shift in the past fifteen years.

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The new labor history offers a vision of the workers' movement as the repository of patriotic republicanism—in some accounts the major resistance to authoritarian tendencies in capitalist social rule—which, even if laced with nativism and racism, provides a basis for viewing U.S. history as a multivoiced mosaic rather than a tale of virtually unbridled capitalist power and reflexive resistance. Implicitly, this historiography presupposes the economic and organizational dimension, making working class culture a rich, if sporadic, isolated, and ephemeral phenomenon whose resuscitation takes on the status of the Ideal of an integrated past from which to measure our own times. Labor history's localist social vision uncovers much that has been hidden to general and institutional histories and is subordinated by structural Marxism. It shows that the working class is never identical with unionism

nor is its fate determined exclusively by forces over which it has no control. Nor is the labor process more than a necessary shared condition for workers' action. Workers' culture and autonomous organizations are underdetermined by political and economic imperatives but instead embrace a range of social, cultural, and educational movements which, taken together, often constitute communities that create independent forms of social life that constitute the basis of resistance to capital. Never theorized, the Community of Labor is taken as a social category; the discourses of craft produce traditions of workers' control over production (Montgomery) and independent republican political action (Gutman, Wilentz).

However, precisely what has made social history so remarkable—its refusal to be subsumed by the dominant discourses—also constitutes its limitation. For in the new labor history we rarely see the interaction of social movements and work communities with national or global political and economic power. Specifically, social-oriented labor history has virtually ignored the relation of workers to the state. When the state appears it is only a constraint on workers' activity or, in the example of studies of the rise of the pre-Civil War working class such as Sean Wilentz's *Chants Democratic*, an arena for artisanal republican interventions. The state takes the form of political ideologies such as republicanism, patriotism, and nativism, all of which bear on party struggles and types of extralegislative political action such as "mobbing" and demonstrations.

Social history provides dense descriptions of what might be called an artisanal and working class public sphere throughout nineteenth century U.S. history. But its lack of theoretical specification and its empiricist proclivities lead to glaring underconceptualizations in areas such as the state, political economy, and the degree to which working class antipopular ideologies such as racism (which in Wilentz's book barely show up) constitute the working class. For if Herbert Hill is accurate in his claim that the history of U.S. unionism is inextricably bound up with racist practices, working class culture must also embody this trait.[13] From the judgment of the centrality of race in the economic, political, and ideological development of U.S. capitalism follows the proposition that democratic and republican discourses must articulate or clash with those of racism and nativism. But if the historian is committed, in advance, to establishing artisanal culture as an essential good, the tendency is to elide the importance

of reactionary ideologies and practices in the process of cultural formation.

The significance of nativism, the pervasive anti-immigrant sentiment which remains even today a crucial element of ideological formation within the working class, can hardly be underestimated. That nativism has been intertwined with racism has been made clear in accounts such as those of John Higham and many others.[14] Irish immigrants were perceived as a threat to native labor from the 1840s to the First World War; eastern and southern Europeans were effectively barred from many skilled trades until the middle of the twentieth century. when labor shortages forced unions to open their books to some white males. Of course, there is a kernel of legitimate grievances in nativism. Today, the growing anti-Japanese and anti-Korean sentiments among industrial workers obscure their legitimate grievances against the free-trade policies of postwar national administrations. And, of course, anti-Semitism has always played an important role in American and European life, among other uses, to displace class hatred. To ignore the influence of nativism and racism in the formation of artisanal culture is, in sum, to mask the limitation of artisan republicanism.

Moreover, a dense description of artisanal republican culture cannot exhaust any discussion of the rise of the working class. For not only did republicanism differentiate itself from aristocratic versions of bourgeois democracy; republicans were obliged to position themselves differently from proletarian currents that harbored deep suspicion of electoralism, the laws, and the courts. As Dirk Hoerder has shown,[15] the crowd in the American revolution often opposed republican conceptions of democracy that excluded them on the basis of property and educational criteria. Conflicts occurred when republicans in large towns tried to separate the courts from town meetings to determine civil and criminal justice. In some New England towns, the crowd rioted when the town governors opened the courts, and they were promptly closed, or never opened.

Parliamentary and extraparliamentary laborism at the local level are not necessarily compatible. It has been left to the historians of African-American history to reveal this underside of working class culture.[16] For working class social history has its own version of the primacy of class in historical explanation, an orientation that produces structural blindness to the profound ethnic and racial splits upon which working class communities

and cultures were constructed. The shameful record of racial exclusions by craft unions before and after the founding of the American Federation of Labor in 1886 is virtually absent in the new labor history. When not ignored it occupies such a marginal place in the accounts as to be rendered inconsequential, unworthy of detailed examination. Gutman's well-known study on the position of Blacks in the turn-of-the-century United Mine Workers paints a fairly rosy portrait of the union, claiming it was an exception to the general rule of exclusion.[17] As Herbert Hill's detailed examination of race relations in the UMW demonstrates, Gutman seriously ignores or occludes a fairly impressive body of evidence. Hill argues that while the union recruited Black miners in the period under dispute, they were restricted to segregated locals and, as the union grew, its Black recruitment flagged. From 20 percent of the membership in the early 1890s, Blacks comprised only 4 percent of a vastly larger union by 1905, indicating that the union's organizing efforts among Blacks came to a halt, especially after its chief Black organizer Richard Davis lost his executive board post in 1898.

As in Thompson's paradigmatic *Making of the English Working Class*, the new labor historians, owing to their own patriotic republican and democratic proclivities, have rendered generally glowing accounts of those strata—mechanics, artisans, and crafts workers—for whom citizenship was guaranteed for property owners even before the Revolution but was substantially enlarged to all white men by the Jacksonian democracy. Although in seemingly perpetual conflict with the large employers, landowners, and others whose yearning for an aristocracy in the New World has been passed on to the plutocrats of our own day, the relationships of these workers with the nascent proletarians, many of whom had rural origins—from the plantation South and the mountains, from Europe and the West Indies—were volatile, even hostile. Wilentz's rising working class was as much a rising anti-religious, anti-aristocratic populist middle class as it was anything else. It experienced the ambivalence of a social category caught in a contradictory class location, part of which, as Wilentz demonstrates, rapidly took on the coloration of an employer class when journeymen separated from the masters with whom they had been associated in the period of transition between the artisanal and industrial modes of production. While it would be excessive to characterize the period after 1836 as anything like mature industrial capitalism, printing was already experiencing stereotyping

and other technologies of mechanization in the 1820s and 1830s, the practices of subcontracting were already common in the building trades, and many other mechanics who could have expected to rise from journeyman status to a master who owned his own shop were condemned indefinitely to wage labor. The new unions formed during this period were democratic and eventually "took a political turn . . . to the ballot box and not to the barricade" like European counterparts. But the movement was always afflicted with the burden of ethnic and racial competition, strategic differences concerning direct action versus political action, and, of course, the conflicts linked to the other two, between mechanics and proletarians. Moreover, labor did not choose to take a political turn toward independent political action. New York artisans were integrated in the 1840s into the Democratic party, a decision that has influenced, if not determined, the course of U.S. working class history.

For the discipline-minded investigator, the conditions for social historiography are limited by the availability of written records, the sources of which are, in large measure, tracts and newspapers produced by artisans, journalistic accounts, and, for skilled workers (many of whom were characteristically literate), minutes of union meetings and political clubs they controlled or in which they held membership. The limitations of these sources for nonreading and nonwriting working class categories have inevitably obliged the historian of proletarian struggles and the culture of unskilled immigrant workers to learn foreign languages and consult court records, police blotters, and reports of government bodies concerned with riots, factory conditions, and crime. Moreover, an archaeology of proletarian knowledge will reveal a wide gulf between it and artisanal republicanism, which constructed its discourse around the ideas of commonwealth, civic virtue, independence from the "will" of other men, and citizenship (the obligation to participate in politics), to which they added equality. The political culture of the unskilled and semiskilled workers of the industrial capitalist era derived neither from Marxist nor republican traditions but in a contradictory fashion from those of anarchism, in which social justice is not divisible, and skepticism, according to which the state is a conspiracy of power and privilege and therefore unworthy of effort. Under circumstances where work has neither intrinsic satisfactions nor moral value but is, as often as not, experienced as an imposition from without, culture becomes a quest for pleasure rather than entwined with such ab-

stractions as moral virtue and citizenship. What is perceived by republicans as working class "apathy," especially low voter turnout and almost nonexistent participation in civil organizations, may be interpreted as an expression of different and incommensurable systems of value. Consequently, the rise of industrial unionism at the turn of the century, during and after the world wars, and in the aftermath of the depths of the Depression was as much an effort to bring unskilled workers into the republican sphere as it was evidence that, lacking craft, workers are capable of self-organization. In this context the monumental struggle between the Industrial Workers of the World and the AFL, which had adopted an electoralist strategy by 1910, was over the conditions of citizenship as much as it was over dominance in the emerging mass labor movement. The ultimate victory of republicanism did not signify that labor's new legions had found their own voice within the capitalist state, only that they lacked an alternative language, other than abstention, to articulate their skepticism. It was not until the rise of the CIO as the major institutional voice of unskilled and semiskilled workers that republicanism sank some roots into the classic proletariat.

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Following Pocock,[18] Wilentz emphasizes the applicability of the republican anti-corruption sense of civil virtue. However, the history of mass unionism in the United States reveals that industrial workers betray a certain indifference to political corruption, even within their union organizations, especially when they are not complicitous with the corrupt Democratic urban political machines or when their close relationship with employers does not seem to interfere with the achievement of substantial gains. For example, despite Jimmy Hoffa's evident links to organized crime for much of his career as a Teamsters Union leader, he remained highly popular with broad sections of the rank and file because his imaginative approach to organizing and collective bargaining resulted in genuine gains for over-the-road truck drivers. Similarly, whatever his connections with the underworld, Longshoremen's Union leader Anthony Scotto was perceived by the members of local 1814 as a generally reliable representative of their in-

terests. And when local 560, a New Jersey Teamsters organization formerly led by Tony Provenzano, was taken over by a group of court-appointed trustees under federal anti-racketeering legislation, the first honest election conducted by the new administration resulted in returning the old leadership to office.

I do not invoke these examples to imply that workers are entirely indifferent to corruption. But for many the appropriate response depends neither on the fact that it exists in their midst nor whether they are given the chance to extirpate it from union affairs. The crucial issue is whether corruption has interfered with the capacity of the union to represent them in their relations with employers. That is, whether officials who have relations with organized crime or commit illegal, self-aggrandizing practices thereby sell out members' demands by collaborating with the employer. In the history of the labor movement workers have rebelled against corrupt officials when they discover "sweetheart" agreements, when they are prevented from taking economic or political action because the corruption is tied up with authoritarian unionism. Union racketeers were driven from the Furriers Union in the 1930s, rank and file uprisings in several large Teamsters Union locals were compelled by the fact that corruption had been deeply implicated in the decline of the economic strength of the organizations, and industrial workers frequently vote to change unions because corrupt officials have prevented them from defending their working conditions against arbitrary managements and making wage gains. While some workers do care about the republican virtue of honesty, there are cases where honest but ineffectual unions and union officials have been rejected by the rank and file in favor of organizations that promise militancy and "results," whatever their reputations with government agencies or the press. In fact, there is some romance connected to militant but shady union leaders akin to the Robin Hood phenomenon or to feelings of suppressed masculinity. While the term "labor statesman" is forever used as an accolade by the press to describe a "responsible" trade union official, the term resonates with "soft" on the bosses for many in the rank and file.

This discussion points to the distinction between the penchant of republicanism to formal conceptions of democracy on the one hand, and on the other, democratic participation and the substantive idea of democracy as social justice and equality that informs proletarian culture. I would not want to be interpreted as saying that these broad modes of thinking are dichotomous; on the

contrary, working class republicanism has incorporated equality with the community. And there are republican strains among semiskilled and unskilled industrial workers as the histories of the Autoworkers, West Coast Longshoremen, and Oil Workers attest. These caveats do not, however, vitiate the general rule that values such as civic virtue are differentially adopted by two working class categories.

If artisanal culture is built on a republican foundation, the actual as opposed to imputed proletarian culture is constructed by the American appropriation of ethnicity, which becomes, in popular culture as much as mass politics, a displacement of class ideology and class politics. I suspect the new labor history, which owes much to the republican tradition to which it has devoted much of its investigations, has been slow to investigate the actual culture of the contemporary working class because these displacements are somewhat distasteful and threaten the project of cultural reclamation, which owes less to reviving class perspectives than to opening up to the present the "democratic" vistas of which Walt Whitman so eloquently sang. But Melville shows another side of this history.

One can read Melville's short novel *Billy Budd* (1888–91) as an allegory of the eclipse of republicanism. Billy is the "Handsome Sailor, so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterated blood of Ham" and possessed of an ample supply of civic virtue. He is not only a "sweet" person, he is also a good seafaring citizen, who uncomplainingly and cheerfully accepts difficult assignments from his superiors. Innocent to a fault, he is victimized by the corrupt jealousy of a superior, the petty officer, master-at-arms Claggart. Accused of mutiny, he kills his tormentor, Claggart, and is condemned to death. Despite the accidental nature of the incident, members of the court-martial, despite their personal belief in Billy's innocence, see no alternative but to carry out the sentence. Consisting of ship's officers, the tribunal hears the ship's captain instruct them to carry out their duty: "Then, tell me whether or not, occupying the position we do, private conscience should not yield to that imperial one formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed." The "imperial conscience" in wartime mandates that the extenuating circumstance—that Budd intended neither mutiny nor homicide—be ignored, lest such leniency encourage the crowd to mutiny. The martial "conscience" must be rigid because the ship's company (which here represents the

crowd), "long moulded by arbitrary discipline," have not that kind of intelligent responsiveness that might qualify them to comprehend and discriminate.

The republican conception of citizenship requires that no "arbitrary discipline" be imposed on the polity, that private conscience rather than authority for its own sake be the basis for public good. Melville constructs the ship as a small society, one in which republican traits, civic virtue and independence, are subordinated to the exigencies of command. The "conspiracy of equals" signified by a provocateur's proposal to Billy for a mutiny by the ship's company in order to redress long-standing grievances is not only rejected by him, but is only half-understood. Billy's faith in the justice of established authority places rebellion far from his mind.

Melville's allegory is set in the waning years of the eighteenth century aboard a British warship. But despite its English setting, Billy's fate may be read as a displacement for the fate of the American Republic. Precisely because of what Melville calls a "feminine disposition"—his unique quality of mediating the harsh conflicts that frequently explode among the crew—he becomes the negativity of a system whose authority is grounded in habitual obedience. In Melville's narrative these conditions have already on several occasions produced unanticipated mutinous behavior which requires that the master class be constantly vigilant. As the epitome of civil virtue. Billy stands apart from both poles of society; despite his "simplicity," his is the voice of reason. His personality prefigures the transformation of the crowd into the democratic citizenry for which the Republic stands. But by the time of its writing, the late 1880s, the period in American history when big business becomes virtually identical with the Republic, the United States had already reneged on its promise of equality by reversing most of the codes of Black Reconstruction; like thousands of Southern Blacks whose freedom is the last best hope for the preservation of the Republic's humanism, Billy is expunged from the body of civilized society like an unwelcome virus. Taking him together with Melville's Benito Cereno, we can see the disintegration of the republican ideal, which as late as the 1830s still flourished, at least in the heart of New York City.

Wilentz ends his book with a brief afterword to his republican tale of the rise of the New York working class until 1850. After mid-century the labor movement, still disunited, continued to debate the merits of political action as opposed to direct action, but given its electoral defeats sustained in the twenty years leading to

the Civil War, had little recourse except to use the weapons of strikes and mobbing, especially during periods of economic hardship:

> That movement received no single strategy for change or electoral activism. All of the questions that attended the rise of the working class were asked and would be asked again, as often as not in German or with an Irish brogue—on the sources of inequality, on the merits of political action and political parties, on women, race, small employers and the boundaries of class. What the working people did inherit was a legacy of battle, one that honored independence, equality and commonwealth. . . . The Union army dead were buried; and the workers of Whitman's radical city resumed their struggles, to insure that the Union would be, as they saw it, a republic in fact and not just a republic in name. (p. 396)

What are the roots, by the turn of the century, of the decline of labor republicanism and its eventual disintegration? How did trade unions split ideologically in three ways: anarcho-syndicalism, the doctrine that inspired the formation of the proletarian but antipolitical Industrial Workers of the World; AFL president Samuel Gompers's peculiar conservative syndicalism, which gradually evolved into an American version of republican corporatism; and social democracy, in which the republican legacy was simultaneously preserved but subsumed under doctrines of class struggle and socialist transformation? In order to answer these questions, one is obliged to address economic and political changes external to, as well as those that inhere in, social and cultural communities. The historian must assimilate the work of recent currents that insist on the relevance of world systems to national and local histories, that grasp the rich strands of working class formation in their relation to global shifts as well as local cultures.

By the turn of the century Billy Budd had been resurrected, not as a citizen but as an immigrant, a migrant, and an outlaw. One of his personifications is the social type of the peripatetic "bindle-stiff" of the merchant ships, the lumber camps, and the large corporate farms—the Black and white migrant worker who constituted, together with miners, the early basis for industrial unionism. No longer were such workers predominantly of Irish and Welsh extraction, except in the skilled trades, but increasingly Slavic and Italian. Billy was less able to make it as a sailor than as a textile worker or steelworker. As millions of people lost their

farms in the United States and abroad, they migrated to the great urban centers where factories had long since displaced the workshops, whose inhabitants were also being forced to modify or abandon their craft. For many resisters of the degraded labor and living conditions of the New World, republican virtue was replaced by the vision of class solidarity, and the new unionism, persuaded that the public sphere governed by the rule of reason had gone the way of the workshop and the town square, disdained party "politics" as a fig leaf for providing corporations with the consent they required to exploit labor. On the other hand, independent socialist parties inherited both the left-populist agrarian traditions of the late nineteenth century and European social-democratic ideologies and invented an American discourse that promised the "cooperative commonwealth." Outside the major urban centers where socialism took root, organizers and activists spoke of the cooperative commonwealth as often as they talked of the future "socialist society." The socialist revival of the first decades of the twentieth century based itself in working class culture as much as agrarian southwest populism, which in any case, as James Green demonstrates,[19] was built as much on proletarian variants of grass-roots socialism as it was on European doctrines. Moreover, as Lawrence Goodwyn has shown,[20] the early populist movement, the Alliance, can hardly be equated with a middle class farmers organization. Burdened with the crop lien system, farmers were little more than indentured laborers for merchants who held them in virtual servitude and the banks and rail corporations who controlled almost all of the capital. Contrary to common belief, the Farmers Alliance, which became a powerful turn-of-the-century social movement, may be regarded as a significant part of the emerging labor movement.

The promising surge of industrial working class militancy evident in struggles as the 1902 miners' struggle, the 1910 New York Dress Strike, the IWW-led textile struggles in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Paterson, New Jersey, in 1912 and 1913, and the tragic massacre of coal miners at Coeur d'Alene the following year, was cut off by World War I. The AFL, prodded by its own left wing, encroached on IWW turf and took on two of the largest trustified industries—packing and steel; the IWW was also attacked by the concerted efforts of government and employers to break the back of radical and labor movements that refused to toe the wartime line of the Wilson administration. (Even though the IWW was far more circumspect in its antiwar activities than

the Socialist party, which campaigned against it.)[21] Although postwar America witnessed a brief resurgence of trade union struggles, notably the great 1919 steel strike, the 1920s proved a turning point for labor in more than one way: state and employer repression broke the back of the considerable industrial union movement, culminating in hard-fought but losing strikes. But equally important, the postwar period marked the emergence of what has become known as "consumer society," where everything, including death, could now be bought on the installment plan. The Fordist rise of the United States to world power was inseparable from the emergence of a new culture that replaced the older working class republican and democratic traditions.

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Writers like Kim Moody and Mike Davis have produced trenchant critiques of the contemporary labor movement and, especially in Davis's work, provide a valuable theoretical account of economic aspects of U.S. and working class development. Davis's *Prisoners of the American Dream* is by far the most original Marxist analysis in the 1980s of the relationship of the labor and left movements to the emergence of the United States as a specific social formation. His employment of the category of "Fordism," the name for the particular variant of capitalist regulation which accompanied the tremendous concentration of capital and the integration of banking and particularly the credit system with production, provides a fecund explanation for the character of twentieth-century world and U.S. history. The heart of the thesis, proposed by a number of French and Italian theorists—for example, Michel Aglietta, Serge Bologna, and Christian Palloix[22] among others—is this: capitalism is more than the organization of production, distribution, and consumption of commodities that meet historically constructed needs based on a system of private ownership of the means of production. Capital accumulation entails the production and reproduction of social relations, setting the limits not only for the labor process but also politics and culture. Marx's theory of historical change relied, to a large degree, on the premise of the "anarchy" of capitalist production. Crisis was the result of the structural contradictions inherent in the accumulation pro-

cess which resulted in overproduction—principally of the means of production. In consideration of deepening and more frequent crises, capitalism, in its "late" phase, regulates relations between commodity production and the reproduction of social relations. Capital now organizes itself. The anarchy of production on a national scale is displaced to world competition, but even here cartels, which now take the form of interlocks among multinational corporations, and other mechanisms retard the depth and the effects of economic crisis. The merger of smaller capitals into large corporations, the closer integration of capital and the state, and, most crucially, capitalist domination of the labor process and of consumption through the expansion of the credit system and mass-mediated publicity provide a new stability to the system.

Specifically, as labor's struggle for shorter hours at the turn of the twentieth century successfully limited the production of "absolute surplus value" (the extensive regime), where employers increase profits by extending the work day and stretching the limits of physical effort, capital increasingly introduces machinery and rationalizes the labor process through organizational innovations called "scientific management." The object of these changes is to capture control of the labor process and increase the mass of surplus value even if its proportion to each unit of production declines. These measures become the principal productive forces. The "intensive regime of production" (as opposed to extensive regime) entails coordinating the vastly expanded productive capacity of labor with ways to rapidly increase consumption. The development of the credit system through the creation of state-run or state-controlled banks, higher wages, and the ideologically as much as materially constructed new needs are combined with the emergence of industry-oriented trade unions, whose basic function is to administer the labor agreements which further aid the rationalization of the labor process to control the working class. This theory accounts for the emergence of the American Dream as a central twentieth-century discourse by which capital dominates labor, displacing, at least partially, the promise of the frontier.

Together with other works, for example, those by Scott Lash and John Urry[23] and Claus Offe, Davis advances the proposition that in the third decade after the war, U.S. capitalism suffered a "disarticulation" of its world hegemony, a shift best described as post-Fordist. In the post-Fordist era, which begins in the sixties, the close integration of world capitalism falls apart as Europe and

Japan emerge to challenge U.S. economic and political domination of capital and commodity markets (or, to be more exact, foreign-based transnational corporations emerge to challenge U.S. based groups). This period is marked by capitalist assaults on its own regulation, on higher wages, and consequently on trade unionism, which in the former regime of capital accumulation played a vital part in the regulation of labor. In the new moment of "disorganized capitalism," union militancy becomes an obstacle to the drive toward simultaneous globalization and deterritorialization of production. In sum, U.S. and European capitalism no longer relies on expanded mass consumption of the products emanating from its highly rationalized labor process,[24] nor on the older policies of neocorporatism in which labor shared, through higher wages, job security, and especially the welfare state, in the expanded surplus. Clearly, this collective work plays upon the critical categories of neo-Marxist political economy and has the virtue of explaining a wide range of economic and political phenomena which for other modes of explanation must be examined piece by piece.

Nevertheless, the primary reliance by neo-Marxist analysis upon structural categories to explain the course of working class development tends to obscure, when it does not devalue, the cultural and social vision by which the new social history describes a working class that possesses its own counterlogic, expressed simply as "community," which grounds the resistance. For Herbert Gutman, a representative historian in the tradition which follows what might be called E. P. Thompson's communitarian perspective, categories such as "class" and "capital" lose their abstract character and are examined in concrete instances, or, expressed another way, tacitly adopt the position "class is as class does," a valid insight but in this case one which effectively occludes theoretical reflection. "Working class resistance" is not merely a reaction to capital's initiative but is constitutive of the new economic and social order. On the other hand, for the various tendencies of what might be described as "capital-logic" analysis, working class resistance—where it has not been rendered practically impotent, as in Harry Braverman's study of the labor process—characteristically provides the negativity required by the regime to renew itself. That is, for capital-logicians, workers' struggles may result in extending the movement's political influence, but they are, regardless of intention, functionally linked to capital's self-reproduction and this imperative sets limits upon

their autonomy. Having posited a relatively closed system, various schools of capital-logic are impelled to comprehend workers' culture on the shop floor, as offering at best a steadily declining limit on capital's initiatives. Thus, Braverman's study of the introduction of rationalized methods of production—chiefly Taylorism—complements those that have insisted that Fordism is the dominant regulatory practice of advanced capitalism. In both schemas, capital accumulation in its various phases assumes the position of deux ex machina for social relations as a whole. The possibility of an autonomous workers' movement possessing its own culture, although never explicitly refuted, becomes logically improbable if the paradigm of system reproduction is accepted.

Needless to say, like almost all neo-Marxist theories of late or advanced capitalism, writers extrapolate from Marx's own writings to buttress their arguments. For students of the modern labor process, the seminal text is the initially omitted chapter 6 of *Capital.* Marx here describes the results of the Immediate Process of Production and portrays Capital as the supreme historical agent that dominates all adversaries through its relentless logic of accumulation.

Where Davis follows capital-logic, Kim Moody adopts a quasi-voluntarist perspective, ascribing the decline of labor to misleadership, either in the forms of class collaboration or as a failure of political will. This perspective is born, however, of structural influences. Moody stands in a long line according to which class organization can, under proper circumstances, become a counter-logic to that of capital. But, in concert with many traditions of analysis from the standpoint of particular political ideologies, Moody marginalizes, when he does not completely ignore, the significance of workers' culture for explaining, in the final instance, the possibility of resistance or collaboration. That is, in Moody's analysis, the structural exploitation of wage labor becomes the real impetus for workers' struggles, the eventual success of which depends on the ideology, organization of resistance, and strategy and tactics of the movement.

Chapter 4 of *False Promises* devotes considerable attention to the ubiquity of what I called "colonized leisure" in the wake of the degradation of labor introduced by Fordism and Taylorism. My judgment twenty years ago was fatally shaped by the Frankfurt School, particularly the powerful critiques of mass society made by Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse as well as the similar analysis of C. Wright Mills. In this connection, Stuart

Ewen's important work on the rise of advertising, published in 1976,[25] helped make Fordism concrete to the American case. I am still persuaded of some of the deleterious effects of electronically mediated culture, especially its subordination to ideological, political, and commercial uses. Surely, the fairly tight hierarchical control of information and the substitutions by radio and television for what were once indigenously created cultures have had degenerative effects on the capacity of workers for self-organization and, more generally, on the nature and meaning of citizenship and democratic participation in modern society. Moreover, since the 1930s radio and television have become the most important news sources, replacing all types of print media which, with the exception of the tabloids, are typically read by the middle classes.

Electronically mediated news is presented in twenty-, thirty-, and sixty-second sound and visual bites. The 6 o'clock and 10 or 11 o'clock news have between ten and thirteen minutes of all kinds of (mainly) local news, including murder and mayhem. The national news, usually aired at 7 P.M. (except for the all-news cable networks), retains the fragmented format of the local news, but has been reduced from about forty-eight minutes (excluding advertising) to about twenty-two minutes. While 150 million people watch television on any given evening, only two thirds of them actually watch the news which has become their main source of information about current events. In contrast, less than 40 million people read daily newspapers, many of which, notably the recently published national tabloid *USA Today*, simulate the style of TV formats by offering very small print bites for even major international and national news.

In the past half century, as the organized left has disintegrated and labor has been further incorporated into a new national consensus having little to do with either proletarian or republican traditions, instances of oppositional public spheres have been dispersed to marginal groups whose ability to disseminate their ideas and demands depends upon their exercise of direct action to gain access to media rather than upon "rational discourse." For the monopoly of the means of communication not only has been used as a crucial mechanism of administration on the new regulation of capital accumulation but has also become the key means of organizing consent.

Yet there is another side to the history of global mass communications and electronically mediated culture. In one of the great moments of critical prescience, Walter Benjamin called attention

to the democratization of culture that has been made possible by mechanical (now electronic) reproduction of art.[26] Since an important aspect of the legitimation of bourgeois hegemony is its claim to the inheritance of the Enlightenment and various forms of Western high culture, the possibility for broad dissemination of works of art to the masses through mass reproduction simultaneously removes the aura from these works. This deprivation undermines the value, in all but monetary terms, of the artifacts of cultural production, making their aesthetic value, in contrast to the actual ownership of the art, collective property, and raises the specter of a democratic appropriation, however unintended, by those who produce culture as commodities.

There are many things to unpack in the theory which problematizes the distinction between high culture and popular culture in the age of what Benjamin calls "mechanical reproduction." I want to stress the importance of the unintended consequences of both processes of commodification and technological change. The sensibility of critics of mass culture is deeply rooted in the redemptive features of elitist culture. This judgment is based on the aesthetic conceptions that insist on the separation of art from ordinary life but also on the claim that high art constitutes an implicit criticism of the worst consequences of the penetration of the commodity form "to all corners of the social world" (Lukács).

There are other contradictory consequences, chiefly that the ubiquity of commodification has raised the historical level of material culture, but not only for those fortunately situated in "advanced" industrial societies. Since the products of information technology, aided by powerful instruments of communication, are now ineluctably disseminated on a world scale, maintaining the unequal division of labor that marked the emergence of the world capitalist system after the sixteenth century has become more difficult as we have witnessed far-reaching effects of consumer culture in developing societies. The political upheavals in contemporary Eastern Europe, for example, can be ascribed to Mikhail Gorbachev's reform impulse, particularly his noninterventional policy, at least in military terms. But alongside democratic proposals, particularly the end of the Communist party's monopoly, has been the insistent popular demand for improving living standards in Western terms. Moreover, modernization struggles in the postcolonial world have been inspired by the Western democratic example, particularly by the promise of achieving its consumerism. For there is no question that the other side of eco-

nomic and political disarticulation of the world system has been the cultural articulation of global politics in the images derived from U.S.-style consumerism.

Marxist and other modernist orthodoxies recoil from these aspects of the democratic revolution, just as earlier "critical theory" deplored the penetration of the unconscious, the seat of irrational impulses, by mass culture, which accordingly displaced pleasure to "pseudo-satisfactions" perpetrated by the colonization of leisure. But these displacements have also raised questions of pleasure to a political principle, as millions of people demand a greater share of the global surplus, and as regimes are measured by the degree to which they satisfy the new "needs" for the historical level of material culture. Needs are socially constituted, as in Marx's rule that the measure of a commodity's value is the amount of socially necessary labor time required for its production. The advent of consumer society disrupts the unequal international division of labor and places in jeopardy all authoritarian and totalitarian societies which are undergirded by global inequality. To say this means to challenge the traditional work ethic upon which the critique of colonized leisure is based. The dialectic of leisure may retain the call for autonomous cultural production as a necessary condition for its democratization, but it also implies what Marcuse makes explicit: that the fundamental human struggle is over time—to reduce the amount of necessary labor required for the reproduction of life and to obtain thereby freedom from alienated labor, the use of which is a measure of individual and collective freedom. A radical cultural politics ruptures the traditional liberal and Marxist orientations —both of which, in this respect, are heirs to the Judeo-Christian doctrine according to which social personality and socially sanctioned normative behavior privilege work. The real question for our age is whether the results of the scientific and technological revolution as well as the democratic revolution demand a wholesale revision of our collective ethic, especially the significance of work as the predominant form of life.

In the aftermath of the Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1876 which guaranteed the return of bourbon rule to the South, Billy Budd discovered his negritude. But he was immediately confronted with the alternatives of the stoicism of Booker T. Washington and the unhappy consciousness of W. E. B. Du Bois. In the face of the post-Reconstruction terror that was visited upon the freed slaves in the South, should Black communities circle the

wagons, learn trades, and build an independent economy with the help of white plutocrats? Or should a new birth of Black republicanism be the watchword in the form of a civil rights movement aimed at securing full equality with whites in the scramble for economic goods and political power? If Billy Budd is a worker, albeit of a special type, but now also a Black who has learned to refuse submission to arbitrary authority, whether of the state or a labor leadership that seeks to retain its privileges by his exclusion, how can citizenship be won? And, even if victorious, is equality for Blacks within a racially constituted social system possible? Of these questions, barely a word in the social history of white artisanal republicanism. For among many working class Blacks near the bottom of the social and technical division of labor, as well as a considerable fraction of Black intellectuals, it is precisely the growing belief of America as a stacked deck in which they lose, no matter what the rules of the game, that led to the rise of nationalism and Communism as important twentieth-century influences in Afro-American communities.

Nor is the relation between past and present explored since, as is evident, history is discontinuous. What happened to destroy the culture that became the basis for heroic social movements and for instances of labor solidarity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? Were the sources of disintegration purely external, as is implied in Mike Davis's neo-Marxist account? Or were these locally based artisanal cultures exceptional instances belonging to a bygone era that had little impact in the broader labor movement? Were there internal tensions that led to disintegration, issues arising from the culture itself and the social divisions between skilled and unskilled in the labor movement? Until these questions are posed within the discourse of social history, until the relation of economic, political, and ideological spheres is investigated, we may take, for example, Gutman's careful, sensitive rendition of Paterson, New Jersey, working class radicalism in the 1870s or Wilentz's account of the origins of the New York workers' movement as methodologically interesting but historically incomplete, and not innocent.

NOTES

1. Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America,* New York, Alfred Knopf, 1976, especially the title essay in the collection. Gutman was particularly concerned to delineate a new methodology

of history that distinguished culture from society. For him, this distinction enabled the historian to discover not only the ways in which capital subordinates labor but the basis upon which workers resisted their subordination. Gutman argues that in the industrializing era, artisans brought to the factory a work culture that was, in the main, antithetical to the authoritarian modes of the capitalist enterprise, modes signified by industrial discipline as much as task rationalization. In effect, by naming "culture" a separate social category, he, more than any of Thompson's followers, drew methodological and theoretical implications for reexamining U.S. history in this essay.

2. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

3. See Antonio Gramsci, *Political Writings*, volume 1, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

4. For the best account in English of the culture of the German workers' movement at the turn of the twentieth century, see Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955.

5. In addition to Thompson and Gutman, already cited, see the work of George Rudé, especially *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959; Albert Saboul, *The Sans Coulottes: The Popular Movement and Revolutionary Government, 1793–1794*, Garden City, N.Y., Anchor, 1972; Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Cenutries*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1959. For American social history, see the work of David Montgomery, especially *Workers Control in America*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1981; David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era*, New York, Harper and Row, 1960; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1984; Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in the Nineteenth Century City*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964; and, for a pioneering work that was inspired by William Appleman Williams as much as Marxist historiography, see Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen and the Politics of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 25, 1968.

6. Among the best of these is the work of Melvyn Dubofsky; see especially his biography of John L. Lewis and his history of the IWW, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

7. Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, London, Verso, 1987; Michael Goldfield, *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987; William Serrin, *The Company and the Union*, New York, Random House, 1972; Hardy Green, *Strike at Hormel*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1990; Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism*, London, Verso, 1988. For recent work on women workers, see Ruth Milkman, *Women, Work, and*

Protest: A Century of U.S. Women's Labor History, Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985; Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework*, New York, Pantheon, 1982; the work of Alice Kessler-Harris; and Mary Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1780–1920*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1981. On Black workers, Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1981*, New York, International Publishers, 1981, and Herbert Hill's many writings on discrimination in the unions stand out among recent writings. See also William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987, in which issues of race are held to be subordinate to the position of Blacks in the social class system. For a critique of this position, see Steven Steinberg, introduction to *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*, updated edition, Boston, Beacon Press, 1989.

8. David Halle, *America's Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics among Blue-Collar Property Owners*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984; Craig Reinerman, *American States of Mind*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988; Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988.

9. The underside of a powerful working class culture has been discussed in Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, but British students of the working class have generally avoided delineating its conservative, inchoate aspects. Even the sophisticated work of Patrick Joyce and other (mostly) British historians, who in the 1980s have developed cultures of class more fully by exploring the historical meanings of work for both workers and their social environments as expressed in discourse and language, have avoided discussing this issue in detail. For outstanding exceptions, see John Rule, "The Property of Skill in Manufacture," and Maxine Berg, "Womens Work and Mechanization," in Patrick Joyce, editor, *The Historical Meanings of Work*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1987. Also see Maxine Berg, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy, 1815–1848*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

10. See especially Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981; Aldon Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985; Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1976.

11. Stanley Aronowitz, "Radicalizing Labor Education" in Steven London, Elvira Tarr, and Joseph Wilson, editors, *The Re-education of the American Working Class*, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1990.

12. Antonio Gramsci, "On Intellectuals" in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare, New York, International Publishers, 1971.

13. See Herbert Hill, "Black Workers and the Unions," *New Politics*, 2, 1986.

14. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955.

15. Dirk Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 1765–1780*, New York, Academic Press, 1977.

16. Hill, "Black Workers."

17. Herbert G. Gutman, 'The Negro in the United Mine Workers of America: The Career and Letters of Richard L. Davis and Something of the Meaning, 1890–1900," in Herbert G. Gutman, *Power and Culture*, edited by Ira Berlin, New York, Pantheon Books, 1987. Although obviously not all of the meaning, Herbert Hill's savage critique of this essay demonstrates fairly conclusively, to my mind, that Davis, a Black miner, was only a short-lived exception to the general rule that Black workers suffered exclusion from the middle and top echelons of the union leadership as well as discrimination in the mines.

18. J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975.

19. James Green, *Agrarian Socialism*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

20. Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1976.

21. Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All.*

22. Michel Aglietta, *Capitalist Regulation*, London, Verso, 1979; Christian Palloix, "Fordism and Post-Fordism" in *The Labour Process and Class Strategies*, London, CSE pamphlet no. 1, 1976.

23. Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1987; Claus Offe, *Disorganized Capitalism: Contemporary Transformations of Work and Politics*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1985.

24. Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1974; Michael Burowoy, *Managing Consent*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978.

25. Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1976.

26. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, edited with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, New York, Schocken Books, 1967.

The Cloakmakers Union is a no good union
It's a company union by the bosses.
The old cloakmakers and the socialist fakers
By the workers are making double crosses.

The Dubinskys, the Hillquits, the Thomases
By the workers are making false promises.
They preach socialism but they practice fascism
To save capitalism by the bosses.

(Old labor song with many variants, attributed to the Needle Workers Industrial Union, a rival of the ILGWU in the late 1920s)