

# Keywords for American Cultural Studies

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## Culture

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The concept of culture has had widespread use since the late eighteenth century, when it was synonymous with civilization and still indicated a sense of cultivation and growth derived from its Latin root, *colere*, which also included in its original meanings “inhabit” (as in “colonize”), “protect,” and “honor with worship” (as in “cult”). According to Raymond Williams ([1976] 1983, 87–93), the noun form took, by extension, three inflections that encompass most of its modern uses: intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development; the way of life of a people, group, or humanity in general; and the works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity (music, literature, painting, theater, and film, among many others). Although Williams considers the last to be the most prevalent usage, the extension of anthropology to urban life and the rise of identity politics in the 1980s (two changes that have left a mark on both cultural studies and American studies) have given greater force to the communal definition, particularly since this notion of culture serves as a warrant for legitimizing identity-based group claims and for differentiating among groups, societies, and nations. More recently, the centrality of culture as the spawning ground of creativity, which in turn is the major resource in the so-called new economy, has opened up a relatively unprecedented understanding of culture in which all three usages are harnessed to utility.

The meaning of “culture” varies within and across disciplines, thus making it difficult to narrate a neat linear history. Nevertheless, one can discern a major dichotomy between a universalist notion of development and progress and a pluralistic or relativistic understanding of diverse and incommensurate cultures that resist change from outside and cannot be ranked according to one set of criteria. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, universalist formulations understood culture as a disinterested end in itself (Kant [1790] 1952) and aesthetic judgment as the foundation for all freedom (Schiller [1794] 1982). Anglo-American versions of this universalism later linked it to

specific cultural canons: Matthew Arnold ([1869] 1994, 6) referred to culture as “the best which has been thought and said in the world” and posed it as an antidote to “anarchy”; T. S. Eliot (1949, 106) legitimated Europe’s claim to be “the highest culture that the world has ever known.” Such assertions, which justified US and European imperialism, are newly disputed in postcolonial studies (Said 1993), but they were already rejected early on by defenders of cultural pluralism and relativism, such as Johann Gottfried von Herder ([1766] 2002), who argued that each particular culture has its own value that cannot be measured according to criteria derived from another culture. This critique of the culture-civilization equation had its ideological correlate, first formulated by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels ([1845–46] 1972), in the premise that culture is the superstructure that emanates from the social relations involved in economic production; hence, it is simply a translation of the ruling class’s domination into the realm of ideas.

The view of culture—and the civilizing process—as a form of control is consistent with the turn in cultural studies and cultural policy toward a focus on the ways in which institutions discipline populations. In the post-Enlightenment, when sovereignty is posited in the people, the institutions of civil society deploy culture as a means of internalizing control, not in an obviously coercive manner but by constituting citizens as well-tempered, manageable subjects who collaborate in the collective exercise of power (T. Miller 1993; Bennett 1995). The universal address of cultural institutions, ranging from museums to literary canons, tends either to obliterate difference or to stereotype it through racist and imperialist appropriation and scientism, sexist exclusion and mystification, and class-based narratives of progress. Populations that “fail” to meet standards of taste or conduct, or that “reject culture” because it is defined against their own values, are subject to constitutive exclusion within these canons and institutions (Bourdieu 1987). Challenges to these exclusions generate a politics of representational proportionality such that culture becomes the space of incremental incorporation whereby diverse social groups struggle to establish their intellectual, cultural, and moral influence over each other. Rather than privilege the role of the economic in determining social relations, this process of hegemony, first described by Antonio Gramsci (1971, 247), pays attention to the “multiplicity of fronts” on which struggle must take place. The

Gramscian turn in cultural studies (American and otherwise) is evident in Raymond Williams's ([1977] 1997, 108–9) incorporation of hegemony into his focus on the “whole way of life”: “[Hegemony] is in the strongest sense a ‘culture,’ but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes.”

But hegemony is not synonymous with domination. It also names the realm in which subcultures and subaltern groups wield their politics in the registers of style and culture (Hebdige 1979). Indeed, in societies such as the United States, where needs are often interpreted in relation to identity factors and cultural difference, culture becomes a significant ground for extending a right to groups that have otherwise been excluded on those terms. The very notion of cultural citizenship implies recognition of cultural difference as a basis for making claims. This view has even been incorporated in epistemology to capture the premise that groups with different cultural horizons have different and hence legitimate bases for construing knowledge; they develop different “standpoint epistemologies” (Haraway 1991; Delgado Bernal 1998). The problem is that bureaucracies often establish the terms by which cultural difference is recognized and rewarded. In response, some subcultures (and their spokespersons) reject bureaucratic forms of recognition and identification, not permitting their identities and practices to become functional in the process of “governmentality,” the term Michel Foucault (1982, 221) uses to capture “the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed.” On this view, strategies and policies for inclusion are an exercise of power through which, in the US post–civil rights era, institutional administrators recognize women, “people of color,” and gays and lesbians as “others” according to a multiculturalist paradigm, a form of recognition that often empowers those administrators to act as “brokers” of otherness (Cruikshank 1994).

These contemporary struggles over cultural citizenship and recognition can be traced to earlier battles over the attributes according to which anthropologists and sociologists in the 1950s and '60s cataloged certain non-European and minority populations as “cultures of poverty.” This diagnostic label, first formulated by Oscar Lewis in 1959, references the presumed characterological traits—passivity, apathy, and impulsivity—that in underdeveloped societies impede social and economic mobility. We see at

work here the narrative of progress and civilization that had been the frame within which anthropology emerged more than a hundred years earlier. Many anthropologists' methods had been comparative in a nonrelativistic sense, as they assumed that all societies passed through a single evolutionary process from the most primitive to the most advanced. Culture, which has been variously defined as the structured set or pattern of behaviors, beliefs, traditions, symbols, and practices (Tylor 1871; Boas 1911; Benedict 1934; Mead 1937; Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952) by means of which humans "communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz [1966] 1983, 89), was the ground on which anthropologists, even into the 1920s, sought to track the origins of all societies as well as their progress toward (European and/or Anglo-American) modernity.

In partial contrast, the relativist or pluralist cultural anthropology that arose in the 1920s and is often associated with Franz Boas (1928) began to critique the scientific racism that underwrote many of these accounts, to question the premise that any such accounting could be objective, and to argue that there were neither superior nor inferior cultures. Nevertheless, Boas and his US and Latin American followers (Kroeber 1917; Freyre [1933] 1956; Benedict 1934; Mead 1937; F. Ortiz 1946) believed that culture could be studied objectively, as a science, so long as description and analysis were not hamstrung by the anthropologist's cultural horizon. Many of the US studies were explicitly designed, in Margaret Mead's words, to "giv[e] Americans a sense of their particular strengths as a people and of the part they may play in the world" ([1942] 1965, xlii).

By the end of the 1950s (coincident with the rise of cultural studies in Britain and American studies in the United States), the Boasian legacy and other salient anthropological tendencies such as British structural-functionalism and US evolutionism waned, and other trends rose in influence: symbolic anthropology (culture as social communication and action by means of symbols; Geertz [1966] 1983), cultural ecology (culture as a means of adaptation to environment and maintenance of social systems; M. Harris 1977), and structuralism (culture as a universal grammar arranged in binary oppositions that rendered intelligible the form of a society; Lévi-Strauss 1963). These largely systemic analyses then gave way in the 1980s to a focus

on practice, action, and agency as the main categories of anthropological explanation and also to a self-reflexivity that put the very enterprise of cultural analysis in question. Self-reflexive or postmodern anthropology criticized the writing practices of ethnographers for obscuring the power relations that subtend the ethnographic encounter, the status of the knowledge that is derived from that encounter, the relationship of ethnography to other genres (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford and Marcus 1986), and even the analytical and political usefulness of the concept of culture itself (Abu-Lughod 1991; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; R. Fox 1995). Related developments in postcolonial studies focused on transnational hybridity in contradistinction to national cultural homogeneity. With the introduction of television and other electronic media, mass migrations from former colonies to metropolitan centers, and modern transportation and communications technologies, cultures could no longer be imagined as circumscribed by national boundaries. Metaphors such as “montage” and “pastiche” replaced the “melting pot” in accounts of Brazilian culture (Schwarz [1970] 1992; Santiago [1971] 1973), echoing “Néstor García Canclini’s description of popular culture as the product of ‘complex hybrid processes using as signs of identification elements originating from diverse classes and nations’” (Dunn 2001, 97, quoting García Canclini 1995; Appadurai 1996). More recently, García Canclini (2004) has added access to new information and communication technologies as another dimension to consider when weighing the effects that globalization has on culture-based understandings of difference and equality.

For many US scholars, this troubling of culture as a category of analysis opened up a critique of the ways in which culture expanded in the late twentieth century to serve as an almost knee-jerk descriptor of nearly any identity group. While this expansion responds to the political desire to incorporate “cultures of difference” within (or against) the mainstream, it often ends up weakening culture’s critical value. Especially frustrating for critics working in these fields is the co-optation of local culture and difference by a relativism that becomes indifferent to difference and by a cultural capitalism that feeds off and makes a profit from difference (Eagleton 2000). If a key premise of modernity is that tradition is eroded by the constant changes introduced by industrialization, new divisions of labor, and

concomitant effects such as migration and consumer capitalism, then recent theories of disorganized capitalism entertain the possibility that the “system” itself gains by the erosion of such traditions, for it can capitalize on the changes through commodity consumption, cultural tourism, and increasing attention to heritage. In this case, both the changes and the attempts to recuperate tradition feed the political-economic and cultural system; nonnormative behavior, rather than threatening the system in a counter- or subcultural mode, actually enhances it.

Critical responses to corporate and bureaucratic modes of multicultural recognition are useful, but they often lack a grounded account of how the expedient use of culture as resource emerged. Culture has increasingly been wielded as a resource for enhancing participation in this era of waning political involvement, conflicts over citizenship (I. Young 2000), and the rise of what Jeremy Rifkin (2000, 251) has called “cultural capitalism.” The immaterialization that is characteristic of many new sources of economic growth (intellectual property rights as defined by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization) and the increasing share of world trade captured by symbolic goods (movies, television programs, music, tourism) have given the cultural sphere greater importance than at any other moment in the history of modernity. Culture may have simply become a pretext for sociopolitical amelioration and economic growth. But even if that were the case, the proliferation of such arguments—in forums provided by local culture-and-development projects as well as by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, and the so-called globalized civil society of international foundations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—has produced a transformation in what we understand by the notion of culture and what we do in its name (Yúdice 2003). Applying the logic that a creative environment begets innovation, urban culture has been touted as the foundation for the so-called new economy based on “content provision,” which is supposed to be the engine of accumulation (Castells 2000). This premise is quite widespread, with the US and British hype about the “creative economy” echoing in similar initiatives throughout the world (Caves 2000; Landry 2000; Venturelli 2001; Florida 2002).

As should be clear, current understandings and practices of culture are complex, located at the intersection of economic and social justice agendas. Considered as a keyword, “culture” is undergoing a transformation that “already is challenging many of our most basic assumptions about what constitutes human society” (Rifkin 2000, 10–11). In the first half of the twentieth century, Theodor Adorno ([1970] 1984, 25) could define art as the process through which the individual gains freedom by externalizing himself, in contrast to the philistine, “who craves art for what he can get out of it.” Today, it is nearly impossible to find public statements that do not recruit art and culture either to better social conditions through the creation of multicultural tolerance and civic participation or to spur economic growth through urban cultural development projects and the concomitant proliferation of museums for cultural tourism, epitomized by the increasing number of Guggenheim franchises. At the same time, this blurring of distinctions between cultural, economic, and social programs has created a conservative backlash. Political scientists such as Samuel Huntington have argued (once again) that cultural factors account for the prosperity or backwardness, transparency or corruption, entrepreneurship or bureaucratic inertia of “world cultures” such as Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Huntington 1996; Harrison and Huntington 2000), while the Rand Corporation’s policy paper *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts* has resurrected the understanding of culture as referring to the “intrinsic benefits” of pleasure and captivation, which are “central in . . . generating all benefits deriving from the arts” (McCarthy et al. 2005, 12).

This complexity is heightened by other considerations deriving from the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data; they have already been part of the transformation of how we produce, receive, and interact with traditional culture industries such as music, film/video, books, and the news. And, of course, the transmission of beliefs, customs, and behaviors constitute a major idea of culture. How we understand culture when we speak to/with “intelligent” virtual assistants like Alexa in the environment of the Internet of Things/Everything or when our music and other tastes are “curated” by algorithms, which also involve and ratchet up the notion of a society of control, especially because biases make their way into these technologies



(Angwin et al. 2016), is no longer a matter of science fiction. How do we practice the critical study of culture in this new AI-driven era of “disorganized” capitalism (Yúdice 2018)?

The challenge today for both cultural studies and American studies is to think through this complexity, especially as the notion of cultural citizenship has hit (or built) a wall with the rise of Trumpism in the United States, Brexit in the United Kingdom, and the populist Right in many European countries. This rightward and “anticultural” turn has sparked progressive opposition, but it is not clear whether existing political parties or cultural strategies can take that opposition in an effective direction. In an earlier moment, one could base rights claims on cultural difference; from the perspective of the populist Right, that cultural difference is the basis for restricting rights. And crucial institutions like the Supreme Court are being stacked with justices who will likely strike down more than a half century of precedents consecrating the usefulness of the principle of cultural difference. Yet it may be too soon to make a definitive statement about action and agency oriented toward progressive politics and the role that culture plays in it.

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## Labor

Marc Bousquet

In April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated while organizing mass protests in support of an illegal strike by Memphis sanitation workers. Like many activists of his day, he saw a series of connections among discrimination by race, sex, and workplace exploitation. He asked, “What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn’t earn enough money to buy a hamburger and a cup of coffee?” (1968). In response to intersecting modes of oppression, King and others believed that liberatory social movements needed to pursue shared goals. The long tradition of such intersectional labor analysis includes the oratory of Frederick Douglass (2000) and the sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois (1995a, 1995b); the feminist anarchism of Lucy Parsons (2004) and Emma Goldman (1969); the revolutionary communist poetry of Langston Hughes (1973) and Amiri Baraka (1999); and the socialist feminism of Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2006), Donna Haraway (1985), Angela Davis (1983), Barbara Ehrenreich (2001), and Leslie Feinberg (1993), among countless others.

The intersectional view of power exists in significant tension with common uses of the term “labor” to name a distinct or “special” interest group. In mainstream journalism and school curricula, the word most commonly refers to organized labor, especially politically influential trade-union membership. For many people, this mainstream usage calls up images of sweat and industrial grime, especially the meatpackers, miners, and autoworkers in films such as Paul Schrader’s *Blue Collar* (1978) or Barbara Kopple’s Oscar-winning documentaries *Harlan County, U.S.A.* (1976) and *American Dream* (1990). The problem with this usage is that it obscures a far more diverse reality. At present, the most unionized US occupations are education and civil service (about 40 percent), as compared to 10 percent of miners and factory workers (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011). If image reflected reality, our notion of a typical union member might be fiftyish and female, an Inuit teacher, a Puerto Rican corrections officer, or a Korean American clerk at the

Department of Motor Vehicles. The gulf between simplistic media imagery and diverse reality raises critical questions regarding the tendency to stereotype labor as a chiefly white and male, well-organized, “blue-collar” special interest group characterized by a culture of rough, manly, almost effortless solidarity.

Associated with agricultural or mechanical toil and modest social standing in earlier usages dating from the Middle Ages, “labor” emerged as a keyword in the nineteenth century for critical theorists and social reformers addressing questions of political and economic modernity. Along with the democratic revolutions and emergence of a capitalist economy, the rising self-organization and social consciousness of individuals who worked in order to live produced a new social category: “laborers.” This category—and the lived experience that enabled it—led to the recognition by social theorists that organized workers constituted a powerful, socially transformative class of persons. A wide array of theorists, both radical and conservative, recognized that this class embodied interests that were clearly distinguished from those of people whose incomes derived from ownership rather than their own efforts (the possessors of capital, or the capitalist class; Blanc 1839; Marx and Engels [1848] 1976).

Critical to understanding any deployment of the term “labor” during this period is the revolutionary “labor theory of value.” Plainly put, this theory is based on the idea that the value of goods derives from the labor necessary to their production (Adam Smith [1776] 1937; Ricardo 1817; Marx 1844, [1867] 1976; Mandel 1974). Karl Marx praised capitalism for its “constant revolutionizing of production” and agreed that it was generally an improvement for many ordinary workers over previous forms of economic organization. But he also observed, drawing on the sensationalist working-class literature of the period, that the system operated vampirically; it diverted a large fraction of labor-generated value to persons who owned the industrial means of production (i.e., the investing class that purchases machinery and factories, hires the brainpower of inventors and engineers, pays workers in advance of sales, and so on). In this sense, capital is nothing more than dead labor, as Marx put it, thriving and accumulating “by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks” (1848).

This usage by Marx and other early social theorists emerged in connection with labor's militant self-organization in the nineteenth century. The labor movement's understanding of itself as a socially transformative class or group is broadly evident in the newspapers, essays, dialogues, and plays produced by workers in labor fraternities and working women's associations. Women in New England mills built some of the earliest and most militant working-class organizations in the country and, like their male counterparts, produced a countercultural literature of dissent, provocation, and solidarity ("Women Working, 1800–1930" n.d.). This literature-from-below described a profound antagonism between labor and capital, describing laborers' working conditions as the return of slavery, the end of democracy, and the return by stealth of aristocracy to North American soil. Between the middle of the nineteenth and the middle of the twentieth century, countless workers drew on this literature as they developed that "one big union" model of industrial unionism, as practiced by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or Wobblies), the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and the pioneering Knights of Labor.

Influenced by E. P. Thompson and the Birmingham school of cultural studies, US scholars such as Stanley Aronowitz (1974), Sean Wilentz (1984b), David Montgomery (1987), and Paul Buhle (1987) aligned themselves with these activists and reformers as they produced a "new labor history." What was new about this history was its understanding of working people as cultural producers, not merely the consumers of cultural artifacts produced for them by others. Extending this legacy, the cultural historian Michael Denning (1997) chronicles how the rich and complex culture produced by and for union members—often dissident or radical union members seeking to change the culture of their unions for the better—shaped the broader culture and its politics, most notably in the left-wing popular art of the 1930s and '40s. Until the campaign of repression launched by McCarthyism, most unions, mainstream and radical, had significant membership crossover with socialist, communist, or anarchist movements aimed at revolutionary working-class liberation, typically adopting an intersectional view toward oppression by race and sex (Maxwell 1999; Rabinowitz 1991; Coiner 1995; Kelley 1994).

Largely as a result of feminist activism and research, the activities that we understand as labor have expanded enormously since the early 1970s. Pointing out that the creation, training, and care of (traditionally) male wage workers depends, all over the globe, on the often unwaged, traditionally female “labor of reproduction,” Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa (1972) led an innovative “Wages for Housework” campaign and radicalized our understanding of the labor process. James and Dalla Costa objected to the common understanding of “reproductive labor” as referring to the generally unwaged activities of child rearing by parents and other caregivers in the family and community. Instead, they usefully expanded the insight that capitalism’s visibly waged activities depend on an elaborate supporting network of unwaged effort. This insight altered a long-standing agreement between radical and conservative nineteenth-century theorists that the political-economic analysis of capitalism should focus only on wage labor, particularly labor that led directly to the employer’s profit, such as factory work.

As a result of this feminist intervention into labor history and politics, new areas of analysis came into focus: unwaged labor, as in child rearing and housework; donated labor, as in volunteerism or internship; waged labor in the nonprofit sector, such as teaching, policing, and civil service; free creative or intellectual work; subsistence labor in small agriculture; forms of forced labor such as slavery, indenture, and prison labor; labor in illegal or unregulated circumstances, as in sweatshops or sex work; and working “off the books” in otherwise legal activities such as babysitting and food service. Underscoring all the teaching, feeding, nursing, transportation, clothing, and training involved in “producing” an industrial worker, feminists and analysts in the Italian autonomist tradition, such as Paolo Virno and Tiziana Terranova, argued that the value represented by consumer goods is produced in a “social factory,” a vast web of effort that intersects at the point of assembly but is not limited to it (Virno 2010).

This is not just a critical or theoretical observation. As any college student or recent graduate can attest, nearly all forms of contemporary enterprise are restructuring the labor process to maximize the contributions of unwaged, underwaged, or donated “labor”: from volunteers, students, apprentices, and interns; from regular wage workers who communicate by email and take

phone calls at home or in transit; from local government, which pays for worker training and security services; from permanently “temporary” workers who are not entitled to benefits; or from outsourced workers who are superexploited by contractors, often in another country. The persons who contribute much of this unaccounted-for labor include women, students and teachers, migrants, guest workers, the undocumented, workers in the service economy, clergy, and civil servants. Many of them are seduced into donating or discounting their labor by canny management that portrays the discount as a fair exchange for workplaces that are perceived as fun, creative, or satisfying (Ross 2004, 2009). Persons in all of these intensely racialized laboring groups played a leading role in the worldwide revolutionary ferment of the 1960s. While they often intersected with each other in both planned and spontaneous ways, the new social movements they participated in were largely independent (or “autonomous”) of traditional sources of power to shape the course of the state, such as political parties and the dominant trade unions. The school of thought that came to be known as autonomism emphasizes their power independent of organized political parties and trade unions and the intersection of workers’ interests across economic sectors and national borders.

Grasping labor as social productivity includes the crucial understanding that contemporary capitalism captures profit from many activities not generally understood as labor. Consider social media as an example. Many kinds of businesses directly monetize recreational or self-expressive social activity, as in the social sourcing of revenue-producing content on YouTube, the Huffington Post, and other media-sharing sites. Users also make a second, less obvious gift of countless related activities—the labor of rating content, publicizing it (by passing links along), and surrounding the content with entertaining commentary. This phenomenon was notably described by Maurizio Lazzarato (1996) as “immaterial labor,” a kind of labor previously reserved to privileged or professional tastemakers such as professors, critics, public-relations and advertising workers, and journalists. The breadth of this social productivity includes students’ low-wage, underwaged, and donated labor in work-study or internship arrangements. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. Students create value for campuses in myriad ways, from athletics and performance to donated journalism, service learning, running

extracurriculars for other students, and so on. Facebooking one's social life or working out in the fitness center can be understood as making a donation to the campus brand (Bousquet 2008, 2009).

Where capital cannot seduce labor, it seeks to rule by other means. The capitalist reaction to labor insurrection worldwide has been state adoption of economic neoliberalism and the steady globalization of the production process (Harvey 1989). This means that much of the work involved in producing goods consumed in the United States—even putatively “American” brands such as Apple, Levi's, and Harley-Davidson—is the labor of Chinese, Mexican, Indonesian, African, and Indian workers. Organizations such as China Labor Watch and films such as *China Blue* (2005) document, across industries, persistent patterns in Chinese manufacture: typically hiring primarily young, single, female workers between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, who will burn out or be fired because of worker abuse ranging from violence and toxic chemical exposure to eighty- and ninety-hour workweeks, often with net salaries (after deductions for employer-provided dormitory housing, food, and other necessities) of less than thirty cents an hour. In response to the domination that many workers experience in capital's globalization-from-above, it seems inevitable that laborers will have to build a worldwide solidarity in self-defense—a visionary workers' globalization-from-below.

2014



# Nation

Alys Eve Weinbaum

“Nation” has been in use in the English language since the fourteenth century, when it was first deployed to designate groups and populations. Although the concept of “race” was not well defined in this period, the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* retrospectively refers to such groups and populations as “racial” in character. In the modern period, the *OED* continues, the meaning of “nation” came to refer to large aggregates of people closely associated through a combination of additional factors, including common language, politics, culture, history, and occupation of the same territory. Though it appears that an initial racial connection among nationals was later supplanted by a widened range of associating factors, the early understanding of “nation” as based in race and “common descent” remains central to discussions of the term to this day, either as a retrospective imposition of the sort orchestrated by the *OED* or as a “natural” grounding. An important contribution of American studies and cultural studies has been to interrogate race as a description and sometimes a synecdoche for “nation” and to insist that an uncritical conflation of race and nation constitutes a pressing political and theoretical problem. Indeed, as numerous scholars argue, ideas of race and racist ideologies continue to subtend the expression of nationalism in the United States, which is unsurprising given that the founding and consolidation of the nation was pursued as a project of racial nationalism that arrogated full belonging (if not citizenship) to whites or, in nineteenth-century parlance, to people of Anglo-Saxon descent.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, when “nation” first accrued consistent political usage and “national” became a routine noun used to designate individual subjects, the constitution of political units (nation-states) composed of so-called nationals began to center on the identification of the factors that would ideally cohere large aggregates and bestow belonging on individual members of such groups. During the nineteenth century, generally referred to as the century of modern nationalism, principles of inclusion and

exclusion were hotly debated by political pundits favoring immigration restriction or curtailment and various population-control measures that, over time, profoundly shaped the racial, ethnic, and class composition of nations by designating those who could rightfully belong and by circumscribing that belonging through restriction on the reproductive pool and designation of the progeny of “mixed” unions as “illegitimate” or “foreign.” Such nineteenth-century debates exposed nation formation as deeply ideological—as involving processes of self-definition and self-consolidation as often dependent on the embrace as on the persecution of differences, especially those construed as racial in character.

Even as nationalization centers on the construction of a people, it also raises questions of land and territory. In the case of settler-colonial nations such as the United States, South Africa, and Israel, nationalization has depended on the transformation of a territory into a “homeland”; on the defeat, enslavement, and genocidal destruction of “natives”; and on the subsequent expropriation of land from people already inhabiting it. In this sense, nation building and imperialism ought to be seen as closely and historically allied. As Seamus Deane (1990, 360) eloquently explains, “Nationalism’s opposition to imperialism is . . . nothing more than a continuation of imperialism by other means.” Imperialism arises contemporaneously with modern nationalism because the two forms of power have needed each other. The ideology of racial, cultural, and often moral superiority that is used to justify imperialism is also always at least in part national, and vice versa. Like imperialism, nation building is an ideological and material project that involves continuing reorganization of space, bodies, and identities. It is at once individual and collective, internally and externally oriented, destructive and productive, and all too often brutally violent.

Although philosophers and political scientists writing in the transatlantic context tend to agree on the range of factors that may be used to identify nations and the nationals belonging to them, they continue to argue over the nature of the elusive glue that binds individuals into nations. Ernest Renan ([1882] 1990) suggests in his famous lecture “What Is a Nation?,” first delivered at the Sorbonne and often regarded as the gambit that inaugurated contemporary debate, that language, culture, and territory are not in and of themselves enough to constitute a nation. Rather, to all these must be added a

common substance capable of binding disparate individuals into a people. And yet, paradoxically, this substance is far too ephemeral to be readily or decisively distilled. Approximating religious faith or spirituality but not reducible to either, nationalism, Renan suggests, is nothing more or less than an inchoate feeling, albeit an extremely consequential one. By contrast with citizenship, a set of political and civil rights guaranteed to nationals on the basis of their legal belonging within the nation, “nationness” and feelings of national belonging are far harder to pin down.

This vexing question of what binds nationals to one another has led contemporary theorists to argue that nations are fictions given solidity through political and juridical processes that transform them into material practices, including population control and eugenic containment, immigration restriction and curtailment, and full-scale genocide. As a materialized fiction, national belonging may thus be understood as what Raymond Williams ([1977] 1997, 128–35) has labeled, in a different context, a “structure of feeling”: an emergent sentiment not easily articulated but so deeply and fully inhabited by individuals and collectivities that it appears to them as primordial, inevitable, and enduring. Thus on the one side (commonly denoted as uncritically nationalist, often jingoistic), we find the nation discussed as a “natural” formation. On the other side (which holds itself above nationalism or opposes it in the form, for instance, of socialist internationalism or Enlightenment cosmopolitanism), we find the nation posited as a harmful construction. In this latter view, nationalism is seen as fomenting dangerously partisan solidarities, and the nation is seen as a fiction that is made to cohere through ideological pressures that masquerade as “natural” but are in fact self-interested, self-consolidating, and ultimately driven by capitalist and imperialist imperatives. As world-systems theorists such as Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) argue, nations can be regarded as racialized economic and political units that compete within a world marketplace composed of other similar units. As the globe divided into core and periphery, into regions made up of those who labor and those who exploit such labor, nations located in the core often rationalized their economic exploitation of those of the periphery by racializing it.

Although individuals may move from one nation to another, thus losing or being forced by law to forgo one form of citizenship for another, feelings of

national belonging cannot be forcibly stripped away. Indeed, such feelings are often willfully carried with individuals and groups as they migrate. In the United States, the bipartite, sometimes hyphenated, identities of some nationals—Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Polish Americans—express such national retention or carryover. In these instances, which must be contextualized within a framework of voluntary migration, the designations “Italian,” “Irish,” and “Polish” indicate a desire to retain a previous national identity now regarded as cultural or ethnic. In other instances, self-constituting invocations of national identity have been transformed into a critique of dominant nationalism or into an alternative imagination of “nation,” as with the forms of insurgent third world nationalism examined by the theorist of decolonization Frantz Fanon (1963). In such instances, the new or invented nationalism competes either to exist alongside or to displace the dominant national identity, which is viewed as a violent imposition. In the Americas, this is perhaps most evident in movements for Native sovereignty that work to build tribal nations or in the form of Chicano nationalism that claims Aztlán as both a mythical homeland and a name for the portion of Mexico taken by the United States after the US-Mexico War of 1846–48.

In the case of modern diasporas, we witness yet another form of oppositional nationalism, one occasioned by forced displacement and shared oppression. In those instances in which a homeland no longer exists or has never existed, or in which a diasporic people seek to constitute a new nation unconstrained by the dictates of geography, ideas of nation and national belonging come into sharp focus. Consider the black nationalism that had its heyday in the United States and the decolonizing world in the 1970s, or Queer Nation, an activist organization that gained prominence in the United States during the 1980s and early 1990s. Although very different in political orientation, both movements appropriated the idea of the nation to contest dominant forms of nationalism and to reveal the constitutive exclusions that enable national hegemony. Somewhat paradoxically, the imaginative creation of these collectivities revealed, even as it mimicked, the constructed nature of hegemonic nations formally recognized as political states.

This idea of hegemonic nations as ideologically constructed or “imagined communities” is most famously elaborated by Benedict Anderson, who, in the early 1980s, theorized the emergence of the modern nation out of the

nationalist revolutions that took place throughout the Americas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As Anderson (1983, 19) argues, nations are brought into being by peoples whose access to print culture enables collective imagination of involvement in a political and cultural project that extends back into an “immemorial past” and “glides into a limitless future.” Anderson built his theory on modern European historiography (especially Eric Hobsbawm’s work; 1983) that argued that nations produced themselves by inventing traditions that enabled them to constitute populations as historical and cultural entities meaningfully joined over time and in space. Anderson is also indebted to critical theorist Walter Benjamin ([1950] 1968, 262), who theorized the “homogeneous, empty time” characteristic of modernity—a temporality that Anderson regards as necessary to national imagining and that he calibrates to a set of technological developments, principally the invention of the printing press and the tabloid newspaper. Together, print culture and the thinking of “nation time” that it enabled allowed people living in a given territory and speaking and reading a similar language to materialize connections to one another in a synchronic and cohesive manner that was previously unthinkable.

Numerous scholars of third world nationalisms have taken issue with Anderson’s Eurocentric and teleological view of national development and have called attention to his overemphasis on print culture, thus exposing his theory’s dependence on the application of European-style nationalism throughout the world and on the presupposition of universal literacy as a requirement of national development. Yet others have used the idea of the nation as an “imagined community” to argue for the special relationship between nationalism and print culture and between nation and narration more generally. As postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1990b, 1) avers in a formulation self-consciously indebted to both Renan and Anderson, “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye. Such an image of the nation—or narration—might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from . . . political thought and literary language that the nation emerges . . . in the west.”

The idea that nations need narratives to exist—that they need to be narrated into being—has resonated for an entire generation of American

studies scholars. Their research suggests that elite and popular cultural texts, including public spectacle and performance, are and have been used to consolidate and contest various nationalist projects. Some of these scholars focus on texts manifestly intent on nation building (e.g., the *Federalist Papers*) or on offering alternatives to hegemonic nationalism (e.g., W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* [(1903) 1997]), while others dwell on those that are less transparent in their ideological commitments but that may be read against the grain to expose the processes through which nationalist sensibilities are generated and torn apart (e.g., Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* [(1925) 1995] and Américo Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* [1990]). Literary scholars working on US culture from the Revolutionary War through the present have been at the forefront of such inquiry, focusing on canonized traditions and on texts authored by those who have been historically minoritized within the nation. Such writings frequently expose the ideologies of racism, sexism, and heterosexism that lie at the heart of US nationalism (Berlant 1991, 1997; D. Nelson 1992, 1998; Wald 1995; Lowe 1996).

Central to this scholarship is an understanding that, in the United States and elsewhere, the relationship between nationalism and racism can be characterized as one of historical reciprocity in that modern nationalism expresses itself as racial (Balibar 1994). With the centrality of this relationship in mind, researchers have focused on histories of Native American genocide, African American enslavement, and immigration to the United States over the past three centuries. As such work attests, westward expansion of the frontier in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was facilitated by racist ideologies that viewed Indians as “lesser breeds” whose removal or extermination was necessary to the establishment of Anglo-Saxon civilization (Horsman 1981; Hietala 1985; Rogin 1996). Four hundred years of enslavement and disenfranchisement of Africans was the steep price paid for the creation of whiteness as a form of “status property” (C. Harris 1993, 1714) that functioned as a guarantor of national belonging and citizenship rights. After the Civil War and well into the twentieth century, the nativist and restrictionist policies toward immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and Asia allowed for further consolidation of the United States as a white nation whose population could be imagined as principally Anglo-Saxon and thus as free of the taint of “foreign blood.” As detailed case studies have

demonstrated, ethnicized immigrant groups have shed the taint of their otherness through expressions of various forms of racism. Indeed, entrance into the national fold has invariably depended on a group's ability to differentiate and distinguish itself as white and free (Roediger 1991; Theodore Allen 1994; Jacobson 1998). Central here are both internally directed racism, responsible for keeping the national body "pure" by separating "true" nationals (free whites) from nonnationals (slaves and natives), and externally directed racism, or xenophobia, which clearly defines the nation's borders and keeps "undesirable" immigrant populations (those deemed "unassimilable") out.

Feminist and queer scholarship has further complicated our understanding of the dialectic between race and nation by demonstrating that men and women participate differently in nation building and that reproductive heterosexuality plays a decisive role in the creation of nationalist ideologies, which are, in turn, deeply gendered and heteronormative. As such scholarship makes plain, it is misguided to study nations and nationalism without bringing to bear a theory of gender power and an understanding of the historically sedimented relationship of nation building to reproductive politics (A. Parker et al. 1992; McClintock 1995; Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem 1999). Women commit themselves to and are either implicitly or explicitly implicated by others in the production of nations, nationals, and nationalism in a number of ways: as active participants in nationalist struggles for liberation; as mothers, the biological reproducers of subjects and national populations; as upholders of the boundaries of nations through restrictions on reproductive sexuality and the circumscription of marriage within ethnic and racial groups; as teachers and transmitters of national culture; and as symbolic signifiers of nations (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989).

Though often overlooked, the reproductive dimensions of the idea of nation are embedded within the term (derived as it is from the Latin root *natio*, "to be born"). Likewise, the idea that nationals are literally reproduced has been naturalized and rendered invisible within many national cultures. In the United States, birth to a national is one of the principal bases on which both national belonging and citizenship are granted (Stevens 1999). In practice, the idea that national populations are reproduced by racially "fit" or "superior" mothers has been used to justify a range of eugenic policies that

allow some women to reproduce while restricting others. Nazi Germany is the most glaring example of such eugenic celebration of national motherhood and of the control of reproductive sexuality. However, it is too seldom acknowledged, particularly when the Nazi example is invoked, that the mainstream eugenics movement of the early part of the twentieth century emerged not in Europe but in the United States, where it was widely celebrated as a means to “strengthen” the national populace by “breeding out” so-called degenerate members of society, including immigrants, people of color, homosexuals, and the “feeble-minded” (Ordovery 2003).

The idea that nationals and nations are reproduced is not only or simply a material reality but also an elaborate ideology positing that the essence of nationality is itself reproducible. Within this ideology, protection of the “naturalness” of heterosexual reproduction becomes central, as does the construction of women’s wombs as repositories of racial identity (Weinbaum 2004). Buried within the ideology of national reproduction is a concept of the female body as the source from which nationals spring and the related idea that national populations are racially homogeneous and can be maintained as such only if sexual unions that cross racial and ethnic lines are carefully monitored and even more carefully represented. Significantly, in the United States, it was not during the antebellum period that interracial sex was most forcefully legislated against and a mixed nation (a so-called *miscegenation*) vociferously denounced but, rather, after the Civil War, emancipation, and the incorporation of African Americans as citizens. In other words, although master-and-slave sex was routine, it was only after black people began to be regarded as nationals and were granted at least some of the rights held by other (white) citizens that sexuality across racial lines was deemed threatening to the national body.

The continuous policing of reproductive sexuality that is characteristic of most forms of modern nationalism ought to lead us to the realization that just as nationalism is an ideology inextricably intertwined with racism, so too are racism and nationalism bound together with sexist and heterosexist reproductive imperatives. From this perspective, it becomes clear that in order to fully limn the idea of nation, it is necessary to refocus the study of the keyword on discussions of the ideological and material processes that exploit existing racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies in the production of



nations, nationals, and feelings of national belonging. Such a reorientation ideally should begin with the idea that the nation is differently produced in each instantiation and historical conjuncture and within the context of each raced, gendered, and sexualized social and political formation.

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