

activity (environmentalism, welfare statism) with more radical anarchist, queer, antiracist models of refusal and demand. Global religious movements link anticapitalist (antipoverty) messages with a variety of assertions of local sovereignty against the abstract imperialism and general liberality of the modernist state.

Innovations in communication and transportation technology, most notably the Internet, have revitalized and even enabled new inter- and transnational movements and have often produced new understandings of citizenship (Dahlberg 2001; Graeber 2002; Poster 1999). Local determination is not a major stress point among Internet utopians: personal attachments across the globe are made possible by the speed of information transmission. The seemingly infinitely expanding possibilities of niche political developments and micromovements have reanimated citizenship as an aspirational concept in discussions of diverse communities, real and imagined. Thus, the nation-state as such has become only one player in struggles over political and social justice, so much so that many states feel threatened by the transnational flow of information and have responded with censorship. Still, the delocalization of citizenship has not made the world simply postnational. Corporations are like empires; both work transnationally to reshape national standards of conduct. So too the activity of ordinary people to force accountability and to imagine new possibilities for democratic collective life and the sovereignty of people—whether or not they are citizens—continues to revitalize the political sphere everywhere.

9 Class

Eric Lott

As an analytical tool and historiographical category, “class” has an important place in American studies and cultural studies, if only because so many people have thought it irrelevant to the study of the United States. Unlike Europe’s old countries, with their feudal pasts and monarchical legacies, the United States, it has often been said, is a land of unlimited economic and geographical mobility. Abraham Lincoln was only one of the most notable believers in “American exceptionalism,” the idea that the United States, uniquely among the globe’s nations, assigned its citizens no fixed class definition and afforded boundless opportunity to those who would only work hard and look beyond the next horizon. The reality is much more complicated, as scholars and critics have to some extent always known and over the past forty years have demonstrated in studies of U.S. class formation, cultural allegiance, and artistic expression.

Some form of class consciousness has existed in North America at least since white settlers arrived; John Winthrop’s (1630/1838) well-known sermon aboard the *Arbella*, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” in part justifies the existence of class differences by making them crucial to God’s plan of binding through charity the socially stratified community of Puritan believers. The descendants of those believers became an ever-rising post-Puritan middle class, as German sociologist Max Weber (1905/1958) famously suggested when he linked the “Protestant ethic” with capitalist economic energies. Simultaneously, the development of a specifically working-class or “plebeian” consciousness

came out of the early U.S. situation of class stratification, and the scholarly dilemma ever since has been how to account for such stratification historically, socially, and culturally.

Closely related to such categories as “station,” “status,” “group,” “caste,” and “kind,” “class” resonates with implications of value, quality, respectability, and religious virtue. Goodness is gilded in much U.S. cultural thought, and it has been difficult to pry capital loose from rectitude. A related difficulty is that class can seem a natural and fixed category; certainly one strain of social and historical analysis in American studies has been marked by a static account of class and class belonging, with discrete strata exhibiting characteristic habits and allegiances and existing in hierarchical formation. In one of the best theoretical accounts, Erik Olin Wright (1985) makes useful distinctions among class *structure*, class *formation*, and class *consciousness*. Class structure is that ensemble of social relations into which individuals enter and which shapes their class consciousness; class formations are those organized collectivities that come about as a result of the interests shaped by the class structure or system. As Wright sums it up, classes “have a structural existence which is irreducible to the kinds of collective organizations which develop historically (class formations), the class ideologies held by individuals and organizations (class consciousness) or the forms of conflict engaged in by individuals as class members or by class organizations (class struggle), and . . . such class structures impose basic constraints on these other elements in the concept of class” (28).

These distinctions help keep in view the fact that class and classification are dynamic processes, more the result than the cause of historical events. Class, as British historian and cultural studies scholar E. P. Thompson (1963) insisted, is a *relational* category,

always defined against and in tension with its dialectical others. In response to British cultural theorist Raymond Williams’s (1958, xvi) claim that culture should be defined as a “whole way of life,” Thompson (1961a, 33; 1961b) redefined culture as a “whole way of conflict,” structured in dominance and constantly contested by its various social actors. Work on class in American studies has done much to substantiate Thompson’s thesis, and the connections between Thompson’s historical reconstruction of British working-class formation, Williams’s influential model of cultural studies, and American studies scholarship focused on class have been often intimate.

This emphasis has battered time-honored and influential ideas about U.S. culture and society, such as Frederick Jackson Turner’s “frontier thesis” (1893/1920), in which westward-roving U.S. Americans continually reestablish the conditions for social mobility and rising wages, or Louis Hartz’s lament that a hegemonic “liberal tradition” rendered U.S. Americans incapable of thinking outside the contours of social consensus (1955). American studies scholars have shown, for example, how self-conscious, articulate, and combative early working-class or “artisan republican” ideologies were in waging rhetorical—and sometimes actual—war on what they termed the “nonproducing classes” or “the upper ten.” Sean Wilentz’s *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (1984b) is one of the finest studies of the former, while Stuart Blumin’s *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760–1900* (1989) is one of the best on the latter. Both capture how extensively the cultural and affective life of social class shaped democracy in the United States.

Each of these studies exemplifies a body of historiography that first emerged in the 1960s to explain the shape and nature of various class

formations. Wilentz is the beneficiary of the “new social history,” of which Herbert Gutman (1976) was perhaps the chief U.S. representative. Subsequent studies of the labor process, shop-floor cultures, workers’ leisure activities, and other matters have decisively demonstrated the tenacious, conflictual character of working-class belonging—even, or most particularly, when that belonging is overdetermined by being African American or female (Peiss 1986; Kelley 1994). Meanwhile, extensive studies of bourgeois or middle-class cultural formations in major books by Warren Susman (1984), Jackson Lears (1981), and many others have shown how ruling-class desires and cultural investments have influenced everything from modern art to modern therapy, as well as the degree to which such canonical ideas as the “American character,” “American progress,” and the “American Dream” are inflected by class. Perhaps most illuminating have been studies by such scholars as Christine Stansell (1986), Richard Slotkin (1985), Hazel Carby (1987), Alan Trachtenberg (1982), and Lizabeth Cohen (2003) that examine the complex interrelations among various class fractions and formations.

One of the common findings of the latter sort of study is how often cross-class interaction works not to dissolve class boundaries but to buttress them. Examples include middle-class philanthropic enterprises that wind up solidifying bourgeois formations and alienating their would-be working-class wards, and African American strategies of racial uplift that too often demonize the black working class. For this reason and others, the category of class has been immensely useful in American studies as an analytical tool capable of unpacking the sometimes surprising dynamics of cultural and textual processes and products, from social clubs and theatrical performances to dime novels and Disney films. The

class segregation of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. theaters, for example, has earned a whole tradition of scholarship, with its attention to class-bound characters, plots, settings, and themes; much the same has been done for the history of U.S. fiction, which has, scholars argue, differing trajectories based not only on plot, character, and outcome but also on mode of production and distribution. Cultural forms hardly recognized at all under erstwhile rubrics of U.S. cultural expression—balladry, mob action, table manners, amusement parks—have found a place in scholarly debates precisely as classed forms of cultural life. The saloon is now recognized no less than the literary salon as a space of cultural and social self-organization.

Just as importantly, quintessential public artifacts of U.S. culture such as New York City’s Central Park need to be understood as complex mediations of conflicting class, party, and historical factors. Witness too studies of U.S. newspapers, in which various class accents have been seen to vie for control of a given editorial tendency, newsworthy event, or style of audience address. The key, and often exhilarating, emphasis in such studies is that U.S. cultural forms do not so much belong to a given class or class fraction as they become sites in which class struggles are fought out. In recent years, studies of American “hemispheric” and global class struggles have moved to the fore, whether focused on the emergence of internationalist social movements (Reed 2005), the character and function of manufacturing sweatshops (Ross 1997), or the place of U.S. cultural formations in the world system (Denning 2004).

At their best, class-sensitive versions of American studies and cultural studies are animated by the attempt to grasp the complex dialectic of work and leisure—the structuring of U.S. society by the unequal and uneven social relations of labor and the ways in which those relations give rise to a vast array of cultural

forms. The social location of the artist, the assembly-line production of films and cheap fiction: whatever the case, class analysis has immeasurably benefited our understanding of the cultural scene. The United States may be an exceptional place—what country is not?—but it has seen its fair share of class conflict in the sphere of culture, conflict that is intense, productive, and ongoing.

10

Colonial

David Kazanjian

“Colonial” has very old roots. The Latin word *colonia* was used during the Roman Empire to mean a settlement of Roman citizens in a newly conquered territory. Often these citizens were retired soldiers who received land as a reward for their service and as a display of Roman authority to the conquered inhabitants. For Roman writers, *colonia* translated the Greek word *apoikia*, which meant a settlement away from one’s home state, as opposed to the *polis*, meaning one’s own city or country as well as a community of citizens, or the *metropolis*, literally one’s mother city or mother country.

Despite these etymological ties to the violence and power of conquest, the English word “colony” was until the eighteenth century as likely to mean simply a farm or a country estate as a settlement in conquered land subject to a parent state. The cognate “colonial” was not coined until the late eighteenth century (it is not in Samuel Johnson’s 1755 dictionary), when it was used as an adjective to mean “of a colony” and as a noun to mean “a person from a colony,” most often referring to Europeans who conquered and settled in North America and the West Indies.

This eighteenth-century usage acquired an important and odd wrinkle in the United States, one that is particularly relevant to U.S. variants of cultural studies: “colonial” and “colonist” have often been used as if they were simple descriptors for early Americans and unrelated to conquest. For instance, while the recent popular dictionary *Colonial American English* does not include a definition for the word “colonial,” it does define “colony” as “a government in which the