

**"Exterminating Gestures: On
Linking the Coercive and Discursive
Moments of Power"**

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[NOTE: My apologies for the unfinished state of these thoughts. I wanted to stake out some ground for the conference, and this led me to venture pronouncements that are not fully developed or substantiated. I look forward to your help in completing and revising them. --DS]

EXTERMINATING GESTURES: NOTES ON LINKING THE DISCURSIVE AND COERCIVE
MOMENTS OF POWER

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Very rough draft: please do not circulate or quote without permission;
all responses are most welcome.

To judge, to condemn the work or the man on the basis of what was a brief episode, to call for closing, that is to say, at least figuratively, for censuring or burning his books is to reproduce the exterminating gesture which one accuses De Man of not having armed himself against sooner with the necessary vigilance....

Having just reread my text, I imagine that for some it will seem I have tried...to protect, save, justify what does not deserve to be saved. I ask these readers...to take the time to reread...

--Jacques Derrida,
"Like the Sound of the Deep Sea
Within a Shell: Paul De Man's War"

I.

My argument here starts from a truism: recent approaches to power have privileged the importance of discursive modes of power over coercive ones. Many of the sites, topics, and themes which dominated previous theoretical and empirical work on power, even as recently as fifteen years ago--the political economy of capitalist development, the role of elites and interest-groups in political decision-making, geo-political strategy, the social bases of revolutionary or authoritarian regimes, rape and sexual violence--have disappeared from view or lost their cultural capital in our reading lists and research projects.² Conversely, many of the sites, topics, and themes which preoccupy this conference, the work of its participants, and the larger community of discourse which it represents would seem bizarre, even scandalous, to the 'power types' of that earlier era: the circulation of media representations, the ideological constitution of the categories which organize the domain of the political, the formation of racial subjectivities, the role of gender in the colonialist discourse.

As a historical process, this shift from a coercive to a discursive problematic marked a sea-change in the development of social theory; it also signalled the emergence a new conjuncture for American academics and especially for the sectors of the academic left³ which have been its main agents. That conjuncture (I will call it "the '80s" in these notes) broached a series of intellectual and political openings for the academic left in the United States; these form part of the successes which have provoked the astonishing panic over "political correctness" on campus. At the same time, I think, the '80s narrowed our political efficacy and our analytical gaze in ways we need to explore. The 'discursive turn'⁴ is symptomatic of both aspects of this conjuncture, bearing the traces of new openings and new closures.

The concern of these notes is with the intellectual history, theoretical biases, and political limits of the discursive project. One way to map these, I think, is to revisit its "other": the handling of what could be called the coercive approach to power in current work. Even in the most influential theoretical voices of the new problematic--(our) Althusser, (our) Gramsci, (our) Foucault--the discursive/coercive contrast remains inscribed on the field of power as its organizing opposition. Within that field, the problem of coercion has not been superseded, but effaced and devalued; it remains present as the unmarked category, incompletely theorized, incapable of focusing scholarly projects or concentrating institutional energy.

The result has been an intensely revisionist, ground-breaking, but highly selective engagement with issues of power. Both politically and analytically, we need to reclaim the problem, and the problematic, of coercion: to offer our attention to the issues of state terror and popular riot, of strikes and labor migration, of sexual and racial violence, of how wars are fought and how weapons and soldiers are produced. This is doubly true in the conjuncture in which we now find ourselves: a moment of structural and legitimation crisis for American capitalism, yet at the same time of Western "triumph" in the Cold War; in which the bloc tectonics which organized international politics for fifty years, if not nation-state system itself, is collapsing; in which enormous resources, from military infrastructures to oil to finance capital to immense new reserves of labor-power are mobile, untethered, and up for grabs. The discursive turn has partially empowered us to understand and participate in these transformations, but only partially. For me anyway, it is hard to read the paper without a sense of how sharply our considerations of power were disciplined in and by the '80s: disciplined to turn our attention from certain kinds of settings, to frame certain kinds of questions and exclude others, to deform the answers we give.

In saying this, let me stress that these notes do not propose a wholesale critique of the "descent into discourse," offered in the name of a superior Theory of the Real.⁵ Discursive sites or modes of power are no less real, less effective, than coercive ones; understanding MTV is as essential to clarifying our situation as understanding the M-1 tank. Rather my critique comes from within the community of discourse. Its aim is not to refuse the space opened up by the discursive turn, but rather to open that space to themes and contexts which have largely been absent,

even excluded, from it. What difference does the M-1 tank make? what new differences does it make in a world of MTV? Let us find out, integrating the discursive and coercive faces of power, uncovering the multiple ways they work together. And in the process, we might start to undo the conditions which made it seem natural to divorce them.

II.

How should we map the shift from a coercive and to a discursive approach to power? What differences in theoretical category and research interest does it mark? In lieu of a full investigation, let me start with an anecdote and a document. The anecdote comes from a class during the first days of the Persian Gulf War. Like many faculty, my team-teacher and I set aside our usual plans and opened a discussion of the conflict--in this case, with a seminar of grad students in American Studies and English. What we heard was, in retrospect, not so astonishing as it seemed to me then: elaborate insights into the ways the war narrative was being framed by CNN; tactical arguments about whether antiwar activists should symbolically construct US soldiers as victimized or complicit; readings of how the video footage shot from those "smart bombs" interpellated the viewer as masterful warrior. What we did not hear was much discussion of the geo-politics of the conflict, the political agenda of Bush's New World Order, the political economy of the global oil market, or the effect of the war on Israeli, Arab, or Palestinian nationalisms. I say this not to fault the participants in that discussion--or indeed because I expected a programmatic analysis of the power issues involved. In the early days of that conflict, one could only feel confusion and anxiety. Yet it is telling that the class responded to that feeling--or warded it off--by claiming the terra firma of cultural studies, media analysis, the critique of ideological representations. Power, we all knew, was massively at stake; and this was the familiar ground for contesting it.

Nor is it useless territory to occupy. In the case of the Gulf War, the terrain of the discursive has offered us important resources for attacking the presentation of the war to the US public, for specifying how the public was insulated from information and decision-making power, for clarifying how left opponents and liberal skeptics of the war were silenced and delegitimized. It has not--though in a different milieu, it could have--helped to analyze the global economic stakes, the contours of policy struggles, the military strategies and resources which determined that and how a war would be fought. Nor (which might have been expected) have discursive approaches inspired new analyses of the political cultures, nationalist ideologies, and historic claims and grievances of the Iraqi, Kuwaiti, and Israeli regimes. If part of what we want from a theory of power is resources for the "analysis of the conjuncture," then the discursive turn has only partially asserted its potentiality.

The "common sense" to which that class turned in anxiety, this conference announces with bravado. Nothing registers our intellectual moment more clearly than the topics that have been included and occluded here. (I am working here from the original agenda and paper titles, not of course from the circulated work.) There are several papers on the circulation

of representations and the discursive construction of categories; several on the ideological context of intellectual practice; several on the construction of subjectivities in media or popular representations. At several points, 'older' sociological or institutional themes of power have been recast interestingly by linkage with new issues of ideology and culture: the role of representation in racial identity and hierarchy; the role of specularly in the Tudor regime. Nothing, however, on war, the military, or other sites of violence; a theoretical paper, but no empirical work, on modern state power; nothing on political economy or power relations in capitalist or state-socialist development. Again do not misunderstand: my point is stock-taking, not fault-finding. (And I certainly do not exempt myself from this account: I could easily have added my recent work on the bourgeois promenade as a ritual of class-formation in 19th-century New York.) But agendas map the current givens of the community, delineating the fluctuations in gravitational force which pull interest in some directions, divert it from others. And there is a relatively coherent gravitational field in this agenda: a privileging of the semiotics of authority rather than the dynamics of social processes; a privileging of the power to construct (or resist) categories and identities, rather than the power to transform (or contest) conditions and institutions; a privileging of notions of power as that which constitutes rather than that which determines; a privileging of representations rather than decisions as the modal product of power; a privileging of meanings over forces.

III.

Such a catalogue, however, offers only a sort of aggregative sketch, a 'topographical distribution' of the difference between discursive and coercive approaches to power. It embeds that opposition in a series of descriptive or topical contrasts: between the violent and the civil, institutions and ideologies, social forces and cultural forms. The implication is that theoretical approaches to power may be distinguished by the contents--the types and sites of power--which they foreground. Yet such empirical contrasts do not necessarily entail theoretical or analytical distinctions. It is clear that the effects of even the most coercive form of power--torture, for instance--are mediated by the discursive codes with which people interpret it; conversely, those codes can be activated only if they are embedded, reproduced, and circulated in material institutions and relationships.⁶ If these contrasts in content are not theoretically active, however, they are still symptomatically real; they map the effects of divergent approaches on the actual ways that power gets conceptualized and studied. To go beyond them, we need to excavate the generative assumptions which have constructed the field of power as an object of study in 'discursive' or 'coercive' ways. Let us sketch that archaeology by turning from the conference agenda to the intellectual history which prefigured it.

It is striking, in retrospect, how multiple the influences were on the discursive turn. During the late '60s and early '70s--well before the European texts which codified it were widely circulated in American universities--two different disruptions played key roles in opening up the space (and the need) to rethink where and how power worked. The most

important, in my opinion, was the women's movement. In subjecting even the most 'private' and 'intimate' relationships to political criticism, feminism made it possible to perceive what Foucault calls "the micro-physics of power," its permeation and interconnection throughout all the sites and bonds of social life. Not only did this transform the topography of power, subverting the idea that it 'naturally' inhabited the 'public,' formal, legal, institutional domain dominated by men and privileged by previous accounts of politics. It also reconceptualized the sort of effect which power named, from a force which acted on social agents from without, or a resource with which they negotiated conflicts with one another, to a determining medium which was embedded in, constitutive of, organized through, and reproduced by everyday life. At the same time, and most obviously, this generalization of power was not random or indeterminate, but patterned in specific social relations: in sexual inequality. '70s feminism did not, it seems to me, strongly differentiate the forms of that inequality in ways that we might classify as 'discursive' or 'coercive.' Indeed part of its force was in denying that difference. Its recasting of power applied as much to speaking patterns at left graduate-students meetings--as many men learned with pain--as to sexual violence; it led to a practice of both CR groups and self-defense groups. Nonetheless, it seems to me, '70s feminism played a key role in the emergence of the discursive turn. "The personal is political" made it thinkable to map domination and resistance in discourse, and conversely to subject the discursive to political critique.

The second disruption was less overtly political: the transformation of the academic disciplines whose project was the study of power. During the '60s and early '70s, many fields of social analysis saw positivist, functionalist, and institutional paradigms of power give way to cultural, cognitive, and semiotic approaches. The transformation of labor and social history, for instance, is well-known. Under the influence of Edward Thompson, Herbert Gutman, and others, U.S. historians abandoned the 'Commons-school' focus on unions' institutional incorporation into American industrialism. The 'new labor historians' not only emphasized the centrality of traditions, rituals, customary practices, and informal work relations as a terrain for asserting or contesting class power; they also recast class-formation itself as a cultural process of constructing solidarities and antagonisms.⁷ The very phrase "cultural construction" marks other moments in this disciplinary sea-change: within anthropology and sociology, a series of treatises--notably, Geertz's Interpretation of Cultures and Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality--attacked functionalist theories of social action in favor of accounts which stressed the collective production of meaning as the constitutive activity of social reality, and interpretation as the constitutive activity of social analysis.⁸ In contrast to feminist critique, this interpretivist move often had the effect of rendering issues of politics and determination invisible. Ironically, however, it made possible a dramatic rethinking of power, a possibility illustrated by the career of the phrase "social construction" itself: from a strictly epistemological coinage in Berger and Luckmann's text, it has acquired the connotative capacity to ideologically charge any object to which it gets attached. Indeed, within political science, the "shift from function to meaning" did radicalize accounts of power, most notably in Steven Lukes' manifesto

Power: A Radical View and John Gaventa's empirical application of it to the study of an Appalachian coal mining community. For Lukes and Gaventa, a "three-dimensional" theory of power had to take account of not only the distribution of resources which overtly determined decision-making (first dimension) and the latent institutional biases which conditioned it (second dimension), but also "the power processes behind the social construction of meanings" which shaped what counted as a legitimate decision, indeed what was decidable, in the first place.⁹

For all their disciplinary and theoretical differences, these works share a common moment--roughly, the decade between the mid-'60s and mid-70s--and a broad agenda. All were self-consciously conceived as critical or revisionist interventions against social-scientific traditions which looked for power in institutions, structures, or elites, which theorized its exercise around the metaphors of market negotiation, military force, functional efficiency, or Newtonian mechanics. Moreover (not unlike '70s feminist theory), they tended to enlarge the locale of "the political" by subjecting non-institutional and informal settings to analysis; to explore the ways power relations organized the solidarities, cognitive categories, and ideological assumptions within which social conflicts were waged; and conversely, to stress the role of meaning-making in the assertion, contestation, and negotiation of authority.

IV.

During the '80s, these political and intellectual shifts were codified, extended, and redirected by the theoretical Great Migration with which groups like CSST have contended. As is well-known, two different European theoretical "ensembles" proved especially influential on the maturing of a discursive approach to power. At the same time, it is important to stress, the discursive turn drew on a particular and quite selective re-reading of these theoretical and political influences. Although nearly all the key texts of the new problematic were produced earlier--sometimes decades earlier--this re-reading made them historical phenomena of the conjuncture within which the American academic left appropriated them. The "Gramsci" of this archaeology is not a historic figure--leader of the Turin workers' councils, political prisoner of fascism--who handed down scriptural pronouncements on power to the '80s; 'he' is a nexus of texts, lexicons, and interpretations constructed in and of the '80s.

What theoretical encounters, then, were used to codify the discursive turn? First of all, the rediscovery of continental neo-Marxism, and its reinterpretation by such figures as Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and Fredric Jameson. This tradition is by no means assimilable to a single set of arguments, but a few categories and themes stand out as central to its reconceptualization of power. Most influential were Gramsci and Althusser, who each offered new means of theorizing the interfiliation of politics and culture begun the decade before. Both thinkers asserted that power relations not only influenced symbolic representations of social life but constituted them in the first place; both argued that the production and dispersion of representational forms comprised a key condition for the reproduction (or disruption) of social relations, the

legitimation (or subversion) of hierarchies of power, the masses' assent to (or refusal of) their subordination. For Gramsci (especially as read by British cultural studies) this analysis pointed toward a critical sociology of representations and the role of cultural discourses in social conflict and crisis. His category of hegemony named a mode of power relations in which leading groups sought to ventriloquize the "common sense" of the social formation as a whole, circulating values and symbols which might colonize the traditions and ethical consciousness of "subaltern" groups. Such an "organization of consent," Gramsci argued, was especially important in capitalist societies with a complex and autonomous civil sphere; indeed it was a precondition for taking and maintaining political authority.¹⁰

In Althusser the category of ideology did parallel work. Where Gramsci stressed the cultural investigation of conjunctural political struggles, Althusser focused his analysis on the institutions which promulgated dominant representations: "ideological apparatuses" like the church, the press, and especially the educational system, whose function was to reproduce the social formation as refracted by the ideology of the ruling groups. Moreover, he argued that ideology shaped not only cultural values and assumptions but the very formation of subjectivity itself; as his famous maxim put it, "ideology interpellates individuals as subjects," endowing them with particular, socially constructed identities by addressing them in/as certain discursive positions. This formulation has been decisively influential on the new problematic of power. Like feminism, it politicized the most apparently private and secure realm of experience, eliding the individual's 'interior' process of becoming a subject with his or her subjection in and to 'external' structures in dominance.¹¹

Gramsci and Althusser offered (different) accounts of how power relations produce representational discourses, which in turn work to reproduce power relations. At the same time, another neo-Marxist tradition, that of Bakhtin and his collaborators, was used to map the power-meaning circuit in the opposite direction; it offered ways of analyzing linguistic and literary production as a social and socially contested process. The "Bakhtin circle" provided the '80s with two important resources. First, the account of the carnavalesque as a mode of representational excess by which lower classes symbolically subvert the social order mandated by their betters. Secondly, the analysis of signification as a dialogical process in which meaning is always produced through active negotiation and resistance; in which utterances are "shot through" with multiple semantic possibilities which get actualized by the differential social (class, gender, occupational) resources of the actors appropriating them.¹² Although derived from distinct projects, these two categories have been put to generally similar work within the new problematic. They each sociologize the category of meaning and suggest the need for a political ethnography of representations: an analysis of the ways in which social hierarchies get inscribed on the signifying process and social conflicts get played out in its products. Moreover, both categories underscore the historically specific, contingent quality of language as a social practice: its constitutive openness and incompleteness as a site of discursive power. In contrast to Althusser and even Gramsci, then, the Bakhtin circle conceived the study of

representations as a mapping of plurality and contestation, rather than of domination or incorporation. Within a discursive approach to power, it has been used as warrant for the excavation of "contradictory meanings" and "oppositional moments" within even the 'flattest,' most commodified and apparently univocal of texts.¹³

The other great theoretical influence was post-structuralism. Even in its seemingly apolitical variants, it has proven indispensable to the discursive recasting of power. Derridean deconstructive strategies, for instance, have been mobilized to show how representations efface the conditions of their own making and the social or ideological tensions to which they are a response. Given its stress on the indeterminacy of categories, its problematizing of the stability of the subject, and its debunking of the dream of total or transparent meaning, post-structuralist linguistic and interpretive theory lent itself to a mode of ideological demystification which has been one of the key political practices of the discursive turn. Not surprisingly, it has shown its political "edge" most when deployed against ideologies in which social life is presented as inert, self-evident, or natural: for instance, in denaturalizing critiques of social relations like Scott's Gender and the Politics of History or Gates' "Race," Writing, and Difference.¹⁴

The most important post-structuralist influence has of course been Foucault. He has rewritten both the vocabulary and thematics of power in ways which both recall and transform the other figures I have described. In many ways, for instance, Foucault's discourse does similar theoretical work to categories like hegemony and ideology; it has the task of theorizing a politics of representations, eliding political and epistemological fields of analysis. Yet discourse here is not figured as a stream of social-situated symbolic forms, nor as a pattern of dominant meanings; it is rather a 'molecule' of power and knowledge, a specific technology of power which institutes a domain of knowledge whose codification in turn reproduces and extends a regime of power. Foucault is most interested in the historical project of understanding what he sees as the peculiar knowledge/power of modernity: the "disciplinary discourses" which make up a regime of universal surveillance and bodily regulation. Like Gramsci, he sees modernity as characterized by the circulation and permeation of power throughout every interstice of social life. Like Althusser and feminist theory, he sees it as reconstituting even the most 'private,' seemingly ahistorical sites of human experience: not only the individual subject but the body itself. Finally Foucault grounds these ideas (the "capillary" circulation of power throughout the whole social body and its "investment" of the individual body) in a concept of power not as primarily constrictive, limiting, negative--coercive--but as compulsive, inciting, positive. Power in its modern modality is not to be understood as a force which acts on, and against, social agents. It is an ensemble of techniques and strategies which "invests them, is transmitted by them and through them," inscribing bodies with identities, desires, physical regimens, and in the process subjugating them to the disciplinary regime.¹⁵

Of course, this sort of quick-and-dirty intellectual history of the discursive turn conceals all sorts of discontinuities and disagreements: differences over the integrity of the subject, for instance, or the role

of human agency in history, or the usefulness of the Marxist analysis of capitalist society. No 'unified field theory' of power was constructed during the '80s. But there were common themes which organized the earlier openings into a relatively coherent problematic. Three such themes seem paramount. First, in contrast with an impulse to localize the 'habitations' of power--elites, institutions, the state--and map the means by which they act on other sites of the social formation, the discursive turn has tended to propose a generalized topography of power (especially modern power), its extension throughout social life and permeation of even the most sequestered sites of human privacy, subjectivity, and physicality. Secondly, in contrast with a view of power as a vector of force or a market resource whose directionality or scarcity gets mobilized against social agents, the discursive turn has modeled it as proliferating and productive. Power is not what constrains or canalizes social processes (relationships, identities, ideologies, desires) across a fixed landscape, like the interaction of balls on a billiard table, but what constitutes the landscape from the start. As Foucault states it: "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes,' it 'represses,' it 'censors,'...it 'conceals.' In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth." 16 Finally (and as a consequence) the discursive turn has theorized the modal activity of power not as the dynamic determination of outcomes or decisions but as the relational construction of meanings, ideologies, representations, objects of knowledge. Power discursively constitutes the field of "the social"--with its seemingly self-evident architecture of solidarities, interests, institutions, necessities--on which outcomes can be negotiated or contested. Power produces and gets inscribed in discourses; discourses organize and reproduce the domain of power.

V.

During the '80s, then, European social and interpretive theory helped to codify previous work into a new, revisionist problematic, a 'discursive' account of power in tacit opposition to a 'coercive' one. At the same time, there were two important ways in which the discursive turn marked a departure from, even a break with, earlier work. These discontinuities measure both the strengths and the limits of the new problematic; they are symptomatic of the contradictory situation of left academic culture in the Reagan years.

The first difference is the enormous prestige accorded to theory itself. Earlier explorations of a discursive approach viewed "theoretical formulations," in the words of Clifford Geertz, as "hover[ing] so low over the interpretations they govern that they don't...hold much interest apart from them." 17 Thus key theoretical interventions emerged out of, and remained embedded in, concrete cases of political or scholarly practice: Geertz' reading of the Balinese cockfight, the telegraphic manifesto with which Thompson opened The Making of the English Working Class. Since the early '80s, however, much of the academic left has pursued a mode of scholarly work in which theory is increasingly divorced from immediate political or empirical projects. Indeed the weight of interpretive authority has shifted so much that a citation from Althusser

or a category from Volosinov has come to replace the warrant once derived from archival evidence. Ironically, this investment of theory relies on a selective appropriation of the theoretical sources on which it is grounded. Many of the canonical influences on the new problematic freely mix theoretical, empirical, and political analysis. It has taken active (sometimes head-pounding) work to disengage a usable account of hegemony from Gramsci's musings on the Risorgimento; or to extract Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia from his specific reading of novelistic discourse. This shift of concern from a theory of power to the power of theory needs itself to be subjected to a discursive critique which would be both theoretical and historicizing; we need to clarify what ideological and institutional factors have made it seem the 'natural' way to use these materials.

Secondly, and more relevant here, the '80s brought a much more rigorous dichotomization of discursive and coercive approaches to power, and a more polemical privileging of the former. The political and intellectual openings of the '60s and '70s often sought, it seems to me, to engage the two approaches, however eclectically and unsystematically. Interest in the cultural politics of cognitive or symbolic representations, for instance, or the micro-politics of everyday social relations tended to recast, but not reject, the 'classic' power issues of violence, material inequality, institutional or state prerogatives. Thus '70s feminism sought to link the discursive reproduction of male dominance with sexual violence and female economic dependency. Similarly the new labor history explored the interrelationship between working-class communal, movement, and work cultures and the productive forces and social organization of capitalist development. Even an anti-positivist manifesto like The Social Construction of Reality organized itself around the problem of how a fundamentally intersubjective process of social construction gets congealed--"institutionalized"--into a hard, resistant, "objective reality." As Berger and Luckmann ask, "How is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities?"¹⁸

These efforts at integrating "meanings" and "facticities" were often unsatisfactory; they tended to rely on dualisms--Berger and Luckmann's "objective" versus "subjective" reality, Thompson's distinction between "social being" and "social consciousness"¹⁹--which remained unworked-out and metaphysical. Indeed part of what made the discoveries of neo-Marxism and post-structuralism so exhilarating was the promise they held out of displacing the binaries--materialism/idealism, culture/society, domination/consent--within which social, political, and interpretive theory seemed trapped. Thus the codification of a discursive approach to power has tended not merely to decenter issues of coercion, repression, state and military authority, and social determination, but to radically displace them. And it has tended to problematize as ideological, exclusionary, and unstable the central categories--class, sex, race, even "the social" itself²⁰--around which those issues were analyzed.

This marginalizing of the themes and categories of 'the coercive' is most evident not among the ur-theoreticians of the discursive turn, but in the work which has put them to use. In Laclau and Mouffe's Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, for instance, Gramsci's exploration of the centrality of "hegemonic" cultural authority to the organization of social blocs and

the waging of political struggle gets condensed into a theory of the relational articulation of interests and solidarities so pristine that it dissolves away any notion of determinate social forces or coherent social formations. Henry Louis Gates makes a similar de-essentializing move when he places quotation marks around "race," recasting the category as an ideological construction with no 'real' grounding in natural or somatic difference. Even Foucault's work on prisons and clinics, it seems to me, has been most actively and imaginatively deployed in the study of representational 'regimes' rather than institutional ones. John Tagg and Mark Seltzer have used it, for instance, to retell the history of late 19th-century reform photography and urban narrative; but there has been little Foucaultian investigation of such straightforwardly 'disciplinary' settings as the school system and the military.²¹

Thus the most illuminating instances of the discursive approach have tended to array issues of power within topical and conceptual hierarchies. Textual and representational sites of analysis get privileged over social and institutional ones; themes of semiotic or ideological construction over those of social conflict and determination; a politics of demystification and critique over one of solidarity and engagement. As I noted above, this pattern of energy has more to do with the ways we have appropriated the theorists of the new problematic than with the full range of their texts. As with the divorce of theory from conjunctural practice, the foregrounding of discursive modes of authority and the marginalizing of coercive ones has been a phenomenon of the '80s. It has required a rigorous but selective re-reading of the 'authorities' themselves.

VI.

For it is striking how frequently 'coercive' topics, categories, and readings appear in such influential figures as Gramsci, Foucault, and Althusser; how persistently these thinkers constitute the domain of power around the opposition of coercive and discursive modalities. Althusser's celebrated essay on ideology, for instance, is grounded in a typological distinction of "ideological" from "repressive" apparatuses.²² The Prison Notebooks elaborate an analogous series of analytical binaries by which Gramsci restates and explores the discursive/coercive relationship: war of position versus war of maneuver, leadership (direzione) versus domination (dominazione), consent versus force. "Hegemony," far from serving as a purely cultural or ethical category, is most often used to name the dialectic between these two 'moments' of power in the maintenance of a ruling bloc: "The 'normal' exercise of hegemony... is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally..." Similarly Gramsci's investigations into European history stress the conjunctural importance of military force and strategy in political struggle.²³

With Foucault, the case is more complex. His programmatic statements often call for the collapsing of the dualities I am mapping here: "To analyze... the microphysics of power presupposes," he argues in Discipline and Punish, "that one abandons... the violence-ideology opposition..." His concrete analysis, however, constantly reinstates

such oppositions, precisely to focus its energy, like sunlight in a magnifying glass, against the conventional notions of power it seeks to subvert; thus the account of panopticism turns on the contrast between the internalized (self-)regulation it induces and physical coercion:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power...; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles... By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporeal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound, and permanent are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation...

The theoretical syntax of Foucault's analysis of power is relentlessly dualistic, dependent on projecting a 'coercive other' against which it gains its polemical edge. This dualism is repeatedly inscribed in the syntax of the prose itself, its endless parsing of distinctions: "Far from being an art of unbearable sensations punishment has become an economy of suspended rights." "The expiation that once rained down upon the body must be replaced by a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations."²⁴

Coercive power thus remains a problem--not residual, but constitutive--for each of these theorists. It serves all of them as an analytical presence against which they launch their interventions. Yet this presence is uneven and incomplete, subordinated to the discursive issues which each foregrounds as the central, captivating problem of power. Thus in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Althusser introduces the "repressive apparatus" mainly as a boundary concept. He describes it rather straightforwardly, as the organized public agencies--police, army, administration--which "function by violence" to ensure social reproduction; the implication, especially in contrast with the elaborate revision of the category of ideology, is that the meaning of "the repressive" is self-evident and unproblematic.²⁵ In Foucault's work, this displacement is not only analytical but chronological. It is in the past, in the ancien regime, that he most clearly portrays the elements of the coercive problematic at work: a "sovereign" in whom power is localized, set against a "society" over which he seeks to impose his authority through ritualized violence. Conversely, what characterizes modernity is the dispersal and effectivity of discursive power/knowledge. Foucault does not go on to reconsider what place coercive power might hold in the modern regime: what role physical violence yet plays in disciplinary settings, for instance, or whether "the repressive hypothesis" retains a partial usefulness in explaining the historical invention of sexuality.²⁶ Like Althusser's "repressive apparatus," these issues simply drop from view.

With Gramsci, the story is a bit different. He does not programmatically seek to displace the problem of coercive power; his aim is precisely to explore the dialectical interaction of the two modes. Yet in practice, in the texture of his investigations, he does tend to slip into the same pattern. In contrast, for instance, to the definition of "hegemony" as the successful articulation of coercive and discursive power--"the

combination of force and consent"--Gramsci will often use the word to foreground the ethical, ideological, consent-making component of rule. Thus he insists that political parties must combine "the levels of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization..."²⁷ The slippage in his diction is telling. For it is hard to work through the Notebooks without sensing that what truly engages Gramsci--as it engages us in his work--is the discursive understanding of power opened up by "hegemony" and related concepts.

For each of these theorists, then, the coercive remains thematically subordinated. And yet there is a final point to make about its presence in their work: the persistence with which it turns up symptomatically within the conceptual and rhetorical economy of their 'discursive' arguments. Traces of the coercive paradigm--power conceived as unitary, forceful, deployed in and by institutions, reproduced in and by outcomes, differentially possessed by subjects in history--reappear even as, and in the way that, these thinkers recast power as fragmented, diffused, deployed in and by ideologies, reproduced in and by representations, and constitutive of subjects in history. In Althusser's essay, for instance, we can see this phenomenon in the privileging of the state as the site of the apparatuses which produce and circulate dominant ideologies. To be sure, his argument works to problematize our conventional notions of "the state" as a site of power, pointing toward its revision from an institutional and empirical category to a functional and theoretical one. Nonetheless, the very process of enlarging the domain of "the state" implicitly reinstates the idea of a central, integral subject of power, exercising it strategically over the whole social formation in the interest of reproducing the dominance of the ruling class.²⁸ In The Prison Notebooks, the trace of the coercive is neither so systematic nor so functionalist. It occurs in the obsessively military rhetoric with which Gramsci analyzes political contestation: the naming of the lower classes as "subaltern," the constant comparison of parties to armies, the characterization of class struggle undertaken in periods of stabilized social antagonisms as a "war of position." As with Althusser's use of the state, this metaphorical discourse has a recursive effect: it disrupts the category of "the military," suggesting the need to re-examine it as a discursively constructed, ideologically productive institution. Yet it also marks, I think, what could be called a sort of conceptual nostalgia: the impulse to ground the analysis of power on the 'hard,' localized, determinate, familiar ground of battle, a terrain where distinct collective subjects with discrete interests and aims can be watched mobilizing their forces against one another.²⁹

Both of these impulses--to militarize and to totalize the treatment of power--are latent in Foucault's work as well. Like Gramsci, he is drawn to metaphors of games and battles--strategy, tactics, deployments, the massing of forces--although somehow he manages to get these to stand for agent-less processes and techniques. More importantly, he tacitly projects a view of the modern regime as unitary, concentrated, and homogeneously oppressive, even while insisting on its fragmentation, "capillary" dispersal, and individuating effect. This projection is not situated in any one conceptual locale, like Althusser's invocation of the state. Rather it is itself a 'dispersed' effect of Foucault's narrative presentation: the sense he elicits of our inhabiting a closed and airless

modernity in which all resistances and heterogeneities are massively recuperated by power. At the same time, this tension between his overt argument and the affect it produces is not simply atmospheric. It is also inscribed in the most important and influential of his figures for the modern regime: the Panopticon. Here is a contradictory representation of power if there ever were one: an emblem of the endless proliferation and internalization of (self-)regulatory discipline, but at the same time, a paranoid fantasy of a single, central, omniscient locus, external to everything it subordinates, from which all power emanates--the State, the Law, the Father. It is this highly cathected figure of a unitary, coercive power, I think, which gives Foucault's account such force.³⁰ As with the deployment of "the state" in Althusser and "the military" in Gramsci, it represents not only a discursive recasting of power, but a symptomatic re-inscription of its coercive effects: a nostalgia for the clarities of the paradigm being displaced: a return of the repressive.

VII.

Two sorts of question follow from this intellectual history. First of all, why did these thinkers persist in organizing the field of power around the discursive/coercive opposition? Why, given their core interests, did they recur to coercive themes, settings, and categories, even re-inscribing these conceptually and rhetorically in their accounts of discursive power? Answering this question properly would entail a complex effort of historical and political contextualization. Thus we might link the militarization of Gramsci's rhetoric and analysis to the conflicted history of Italian state-building and the role of armed force in organizing the fascist regime which imprisoned him. Again, we might view Althusser's privileging of the state in light of the centralized development of the French state, especially its dominance of education, the "Ideological State Apparatus" which interests him most.³¹ Such a contextualization would be essential to analyzing these thinkers, but I would like to be excused from pursuing it here. I want to treat their re-inscription of the coercive more simplistically: as the trace of "something true." The problem of coercive power keeps recurring, it seems to me, because they could not think power without it. Sometimes (as with Foucault) this recurrence marks a theoretical or interpretive necessity: it is against the typological or chronological foil of the coercive that his discursive topography of power composes itself. Sometimes (most strongly with Gramsci) it marks a political or historical imperative: the project of constructing a 'theory and politics of the discursive' remains unfinished until articulated with a (revised) 'theory and politics of the coercive.'

My own sympathies, it should be clear, lie with the second claim, with 'Gramsci' rather than 'Foucault.' But whichever way we account for the persistence of the coercive in these texts, it makes the second question more pointed. Why have we persisted in ignoring it? Posing the question this way assumes two things. First that there is a "we" integrally committed to (in fact, organized by) the intellectual and political project of understanding power in new, discursive ways: a community of discourse that we call "culture-and-power-types" or "cultural studies" or

sometimes here at UM, "CSST." Secondly the question assumes that "we"--the foot soldiers of the discursive turn--have not only repeated the subordination of the coercive performed in the influential texts, but done it more completely.

This erasure has been both analytical and empirical. On the one hand, while many seminars and sleepless nights have been devoted to figuring out the meaning and utility of concepts like "hegemony," "subject-position," "specularity," and "heteroglossia," we have not spent much energy (not programmatically at least) revisiting the problematic of coercive power. How should we rethink its typical themes, concepts, and issues--sovereignty, repression, insurgency, subsistence, social interests, state power, imprisonment, war--not instead of, but in light of the discursive turn? How do these questions in turn disrupt and recast the agenda of a discursive approach? On the other hand, as my earlier glance at the CSST conference program suggested, our research interests have tended to institutionalize this theoretical bias. I think that I speak for "us" in saying that the most inspiring and influential recent work on power has concerned such issues as the ideological construction of racial and gender identities; the popular reception and appropriation of commercialized representations; the ethnography of symbolic or everyday resistance; the transgression or destabilization of dominant sexualities; the articulation of sexuality with colonialist or nationalist ideologies; the role of cultural rituals in the construction or contestation of hegemonic blocs--all of these richly influenced by the thinkers I have been discussing. We have not seen much work, equally suggested by 'the authorities,' that revisits such topics, settings, and narratives as state-building, work discipline, labor insurgency, the dynamics of political mobilization or incorporation. Nor have we paid close attention to the claims of new 'coercive issues' whose historical emergence has coincided with the discursive turn: the crisis of the international state system; the end of the Cold War; the global spread of environmental crisis; the proliferation of 'terrorism' and 'low-intensity warfare'; the accelerating global mobility of capital and labor-power; the economic reorganization described by categories like 'postmodernity' and 'late capitalism.'

To catalogue such gaps is not to call for a reversal, a return to some Good Old Cause--whether Marxist political economy, modernization theory, or social history. It is simply to note where we have missed the opportunity to extend the new paradigm, and politicize it in different ways, by engaging it with its 'other.' Why, then, these silences? Or rather: why have these silences seemed so natural? Answering this question means returning from the history of theoretical influences on the discursive turn to the history of the situation within which they have been appropriated--returning to the conjuncture of the '80s. By way of sketching a little of that history, I would underscore the importance of three particular conditions of our recent intellectual work.

First, it is clearly crucial that the discursive turn has coincided with a radical transformation in the production and circulation, volume and velocity, and ideological effectivity of cultural representations. This revolution in media technology and mass cultural forms intensified the processes by which the consumer economy was 'put into discourse' and,

conversely, those by which information, news, and other representations were commodified. It proceeded in two complementary directions. On the one hand, the '80s brought an intensive saturation of social life by media discourse. The proliferation of new circuits of representation (cable TV, VCR's) and the consolidation of entertainment conglomerates (Sony, Time-Warner) arrayed technical, institutional, and market networks through which commodity-representations could ramify and circulate faster and longer than ever. To take only one current example: a blockbuster movie, technically dependent on special-effects capacities only a few years old (The Addams Family), both disseminates and is advertised by an MTV hit ("Addams Groove") performed by a commercial rapper (Hammer) who has already spun off his own children's cartoon and action-figure toys, and whose other current hit ("2 Legit 2 Quit") became the signature tune of a professional sports team (the Atlanta Falcons) owned by the cable-TV magnate (Ted Turner) who founded CNN. This ever-more-total permeation of mass-mediated cultural discourse throughout social life is both reversed and reinforced by an ever-more-total appropriation of 'real' social life as 'signifying material' to be magically transformed into commodified spectacle: hence the amazing popularity of phenomena like "court TV," "unsolved mysteries," and "home-video blooper" shows.³² On the other hand, the '80s brought the extensive globalization of mass culture. The pace and precise timing of this change came home vividly to me in the summer of 1988, when I took my first trip to Europe in six years. One sleepless night in a hotel room in Hungary--two years before the fall of the Communist regime--I found myself watching French soap opera, German police shows, the BBC news, and a live feed of the Republican National Convention from C-SPAN.

This discursive transformation has had contradictory political effects. The same process of cultural saturation which produced Time-Warner and Hammer, after all, provoked (and commercialized) the counter-practice of 'gangsta rap.'³³ The '80s began with the demand of Polish Solidarity that its Gdansk negotiations with the Communist regime be broadcast live; it saw the emergence of the fax machine and the e-mail network as key tools of both transnational capitalism and democratic internationalism; it ended with the demolition of the Berlin wall--already breached by consumer appeals from West-German TV--and the flooding of East Berliners into the western sector to buy chocolate. My point is not to sort out the play of these hegemonic and counter-hegemonic effects (personally, I put buying chocolate on the 'counter-hegemony' list). It is simply to note that, in the face of them, it has perfect sense to privilege discursive power. We have been living a transformation which confirms every day the thematics of the new approach: the proliferation of apparatuses of spectacle and surveillance, the dispersal and effectivity of representations, the politics of interpretive struggle, the power of discourse to destabilize, transgress, and reconstitute the boundaries of social life and political affiliation. To paraphrase Marshall Berman's great slogan, post-modernism is the realism of the late-20th century.³⁴

The second factor which has conditioned the discursive turn concerns the 'subject-position' from which we have observed, experienced, and analyzed these transformations: that of the academicized left. Here, too, it seems to me, the '80s were a time of contradictory effects. Especially after the crisis of the academic labor market the decade before, they

brought a measure of institutional stability and authority to a cohort of intellectuals who were radicalized by the '60s and professionalized in its aftermath of its demise. The situation of the academic left in the '80s reflected this mix of political mobilization and 'inward mobility': the successful construction of an enclave inside the academy which has at once protected, empowered, and contained its intellectual culture. As university faculties became a generational refuge within an inhospitable political landscape--one of the few settings where it could truly be said the left maintained its presence--intellectual work has increasingly been seen as an important site of contestation; transforming the disciplines has come to seem crucial to resisting "discipline" itself. Lest we think this idea mere narcissism (as I sometimes do), it was strikingly affirmed by the right's recent counter-attack on "political correctness." It is this situation of autonomy and insulation that has invested "theory"--especially theories stressing the subversion and denaturalizing of categories--with the prestige which I mentioned as the one key aspect of the '80s. And it has given the political practice of the discursive turn its characteristic difference from the populism of the academic left in the '60s and '70s: a practice of demystification rather than alliance-building, of ideological critique rather than solidarity work, of creating cultural-studies journals rather than public-history exhibits. Nowhere is the distance between intellectual and movement politics more evident than in CSST. We have never, in the three years I have been an enthusiastic participant, connected our interest in the 'politics of the discursive' with either current crises like the Gulf War or campus issues like multi-cultural teaching or the resurgence of racism and anti-Semitism. Many of us work on these issues 'elsewhere'; CSST seems a place for something different, we say when the problem is raised; which is exactly the point.

There is no question here of a moral or strategic failing. Discursive power is real, and our intellectual work has helped produce important advances in understanding, contesting, and using it. Yet if the new problematic reflects an appropriate, even empowering response to the situation of the '80s, it also marks the limits and constraints of that situation; most of all, it marks the ascendance of American conservatism everywhere else except the universities. This is, I think, the third factor which has decisively conditioned the discursive turn. Given the right's historic achievement, it was 'natural' to retreat, rethink, and problematize, to reappropriate texts (in ways) that could help sanction cultural contestation and intellectual critique, to discover 'the oppositional' in sit-coms and music videos; it was natural because there was nothing else to be done; or rather because there was just too much else to be done. Perry Anderson, in a brilliant intellectual history of Western Marxism, argues that its "hidden hallmark" was being "a product of defeat." Given the failure of socialist revolution in the West and the successive triumphs of fascism and bourgeois democracy, he writes, the Marxist tradition abandoned its traditional concerns with economic, political, and conjunctural analysis and 'retreated' into a (ground-breaking) reconsideration of culture and aesthetics. Without wanting to second Anderson's celebration of 'classic Marxism,' it seems to me that something similar can be said of the discursive turn. For all the power of its insights into the politics of representations, and for all the space it has won within the academy--the very space of this conference--

it has been marked by the pathology of defeat. As another practitioner of counter-discourse, the satirist Tom Lehrer, states it:

Remember the war against Franco
That's the kind where each of us belongs
Though he may have won all the battles
We had all the good songs.³⁵

VIII.

Let me conclude these notes by sketching where their implications seem to me to lead. Three other claims follow from what I have written; in fact, my argument depends on them. The first is that, despite the profound insights of the discursive turn--insights which have transformed my own work and which I want formulaically but with utter conviction to honor here--the partiality with which we have pursued it has deformed our understanding of power. I had originally planned to illustrate some of the effects of that deformation through two examples: the response of the intellectual left to the Gulf War and the contention over Paul de Man's youthful writings in Nazi-occupied Belgium. In lieu of a full treatment, let me just say that the first case seems to me to illustrate the constraints of the discursive approach to power on our research program, on the scholarly division of labor. We have not equipped ourselves to understand much of what we need to know--concerning military technology and strategy, for instance, or the global oil market or the history of mid-East national movements--in order to contest Bush's New World Order. One result is that there has been, to my mind, no critical exploration of the causes, issues, conduct, or effects of the war--an analysis which would cry out for an integration of discursive and coercive approaches. The second case does not involve empirical gaps, but conceptual ones. It illustrates the deforming effects of disengaging these two approaches to power, of narrowly privileging either one, on the process of analysis itself. Thus, to one side, we see the spectacle of left-wing anti-deconstructionists (most notably, Jon Weiner) gesturing toward the implication that the contorted anti-Semitic utterances of the young de Man represent prefigurations of poststructuralism. To the other, we see de Man's friends (most notably, Jacques Derrida) displacing the moral accusation back on to his attackers: "To judge," Derrida writes in the essay from which I drew the title and epigram to this paper, "is to reproduce the exterminating gesture" of the Nazi's themselves, mirroring the 'totalitarian logic' of their regime in a 'totalizing' reading of the wartime journalism.³⁶ It would be an understatement to say that neither position sheds light on Paul de Man's war--on the fields of power which those ugly articles inscribe--or on the politics of post-structuralism.

How then to integrate discursive and coercive understandings of power in ways which could clarify what actually happened in Kuwait last year or Belgium fifty years ago? This is the second theme left hanging in my argument. Again, in lieu of a full discussion, let me sketch a few points. Most important is the understanding that "the coercive" and "the discursive" do not name distinct types of power or distinct settings in which it is exercised, as if it were a matter of 'accessing' the right problematic for a particular context. Rather they name two different

moments or modalities of power, always co-present and co-efficient in its exercise. Thus, as I noted earlier, even the most extreme deployment of coercive power--say, torture--is discursively organized and interpreted; while conversely, even the 'thickest' scene of discursive authority--say, a conference meeting room--is structured by such coercive effects as the segmentation of the academic labor market, differential command of capital resources, even the policing mechanisms which regulate access to the room itself (all of which effects are themselves discursively mediated...). Every practice, event, conflict, or relationship--a rape, a wage contract, a battle plan, a paper assignment--has both discursive and coercive dimensions. Indeed this truism has been implicit in the way I have been distinguishing the two moments of power all along: as an opposition between that which constitutes social phenomena (bodies, subjectivities, communities, institutions, relations) and that which determines how social phenomena (bodies, subjectivities,...etc.) interact as constituted. For what it means to say that social phenomena exist in history is precisely that they are both always already constituted in a field of coercive determinations and always being reconstituted in a field of discursive articulations. These fields of effect dialectically affect each other. Every conjuncture is in the process of determining outcomes, which discursively recast the conjuncture, within which an array of possible new outcomes gets opened; every conjuncture is produced by, and productive of, a combination of coercive and discursive effects.

Moreover it is possible, without being overly formulaic, to begin to describe the 'combinatory logic' by which these effects tend to work together. That logic is grounded in the fact that each of these modes of power has its own particular type of effectiveness and at the same time its own particular ineffectiveness; each tends to undermine itself in the process of being exercised. Coercive power has the advantage of its coerciveness: it dictates and specifies, canalizing ambiguous situations into determinate effects that are one way and not the other. When a female worker follows the arbitrary directives of a male manager, for instance, all kinds of ideologies--legal, sexual, economic--discursively organize and 'moralize' the hierarchy; but it is his power to institute the situation of "being-fired" that finally enforces her deference. Yet, while such coercive authority can compel outcomes, what it cannot do is to elicit the consent of the subordinate to the 'OK-ness' (if not the justice) of their subordination; and as the theorists of the discursive turn compellingly argue, this consent is necessary to the ongoing, active reproduction of social life. Exercised in isolation, then, coercive power loses not only its legitimacy but its efficacy, provoking countervailing forms of coercive resistance: the worker quits, or strikes, or quietly sabotages her work. Its effectiveness depends on constant mediation by ideological discourses which sanction the manager's authority and interpellate the worker as rightfully subject to it: symbolic dramas which constructing the workplace as a patriarchal family, for instance, or folk-theories about the necessity of managerial autocracy to the efficient functioning of capitalism.

At the same time, the special effectiveness of discursive power--its capacity to moralize relationships, to constitute social identities, to solicit consent--is itself intrinsically unstable. It depends on the production of representations which are always, in Barbara Fields'

wonderful phrase "promiscuous critters": unfixed, multivalent, open to recombination with other representations, available for oppositional or alternative uses. (If the workplace is supposed to be one big happy family, after all, the aggrieved worker has a powerful language with which to make material claims on her boss, or moral appeals to third parties.) This is where the coercive comes back in. It is coercive power which disciplines the "promiscuity" of this process, arresting the play of discourses in some determinate (although provisional and short-lived) array. Thus as the manager and the worker struggle over what "we are all a family here" means, the negotiation is not, can never be, purely discursive; it is underwritten by his capacity to fire her, by her capacity to sabotage or strike, by the subtle or overt means they use to coerce one another. If discursive power saves coercion from its own illegitimacy, coercive power saves discourse from its own indeterminacy. The discursive moment in power is what sanctions a situation; the coercive moment is what guarantees it.

These propositions--that power has two modalities, that they are always co-present, that they combine in ways shaped by their special efficacies and lacks--may help to open the investigation I am advocating here. Yet they cannot not push it very far. For the dialectic of coercive and discursive power cannot be mapped in theory, only in the particular analysis of specific situations. That is the third truism with which I want to conclude. I had originally thought to end by citing some recent work which seems to me indicative of new directions in the concrete analysis of power, work which both incorporates and exceeds the insights of the discursive turn: Elaine Scarry's searing analysis of the structure of torture and war; Ava Baron's anthology on the 'gendering' of U.S. working-class history; Roger Rouse's use of postmodernism to explore of the lives of illegal migrant families circuiting between rural Mexico and northern California; Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski's study of state terror and popular rioting in contemporary Venezuela as a rupture of both the nation-building projects of the country's elites and the material social compact fueled by its oil boom.³⁸ These works point in wildly divergent, perhaps even incompatible directions. Yet each appropriates different resources of the discursive turn to revisit 'coercive' topics--violence, work, migration, state repression--which have tended to be downplayed. Moreover they do so in ways which engage themes and issues that are emergent in our situation right now: the effect of the global mobility of labor on notions of community, the effect of the Third World debt crisis on political culture and national ideologies, the effect of nuclear proliferation on the structure of war and state violence. Such problems not only invite but require the rethinking of power. And that is the final point I want to make. The most urgent reason to go beyond the discursive problematic (and to carry it along with us) is that the historical moment in which it emerged has given way to something new. The '80s, thank God, are over.

ENDNOTES

1Critical Inquiry 14 (Spring, 1988), 651.

2This is the first of a series of blanket pronouncements that I will make and not document in this draft. Since I developed the argument here more as an "intervention" than a study, I have not yet done the sort of bibliographical footwork that at several points it requires and that it will get in revision. I mean the blanket pronouncements to be generally correct, of course, and I'll be interested in any responses to their accuracy.

3Throughout this paper, I use the phrase "academic left" to specify the interpretive community which has used discursive theory to recast the study of power. It is in many ways an unfortunate construction: on the one hand, because there are proponents of the discursive turn who do not necessarily see themselves as part of (any) 'left'; on the other, because they are huge numbers of left-wing academics and students who are not proponents of the discursive turn--who are, in fact, deadset against it. Nonetheless I have not been able to come up with a better way to name the combination of intellectual and political commitments that defines this grouping; and it seems true that the phrase adequately describes the biographical trajectory and political self-identification of the preponderance of scholars engaged in this rethinking of power.

4As with "the academic left," the phrase "discursive turn" seems problematic but unavoidable. It is problematic partly because it alludes to a much broader transformation than simply the emergence a new approach to power and social analysis; it is rightly taken to refer, for instance, to changes in intellectual history, literary studies, and other interpretive fields. While all of these transformations draw on a common body of themes and influential texts, let me specify that the 'region' of the discursive kingdom being mapped only concerns its recasting of power; my genealogy and analysis will be biased accordingly.

5For such a critique, at once polemically clear and fair-minded in its exegesis, see Bryan Palmer, Descent Into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History (Philadelphia, 1990).

6For a brilliant analysis of the discursive structure of modern political torture which never reifies its horrific effects, see Elaine Scarry, The Body In Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World (New York, 1985), 27-59.

7For a brief tour through this work, see Edward Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York, 1963); Herbert Gutman, Work, Culture, and Society In Industrializing America (New York, 1976); David Montgomery, Workers' Control In America (New York, 1979); and the essays gathered in Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz (eds.), Working Class America: Essays On Labor, Community, and American Society (Urbana, Ill., 1983).

8See Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973), especially "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," 3-30, and "Deep Play: Notes On the Balinese Cockfight," 412-53; and Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise In the Sociology of Knowledge (New York, 1966).

"Thick Description"; Berger and Luckmann

9See Steven Lukes, Power: A Radical View (London, 1974), which first used the "three dimensions" typology; and John Gaventa, Power and

Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley (Urbana, Ill., 1980). The quoted phrase is from Gaventa, 15.

10See Antonio Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks (New York, 1971), especially "The Modern Prince," 123-205, and "State and Civil Society," 206-276, for many of the locations where "hegemony" is discussed. For commentaries on this fragmentary and difficult text, I have found helpful Walter L. Adamson, Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory (Berkeley, Cal., 1980); as well as the less exegetical and much more influential re-readings of Gramsci undertaken within the British cultural studies movement. See especially Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (New York, 1977); and Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcher Among the Theorists," in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (Urbana, Ill., 1988), 35-57.

11See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (New York, 1971), 127-186. Goran Therborn offers an indispensable gloss and development of Althusser's account of ideology in The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology (London, 1980). My own appreciation of Althusser has been deepened by Geoff Eley and June Howard.

It should be noted that my account ignores other crucial areas of Althusser's work, especially his reading of Marx's theory of social determination, which would be thematically relevant to issues of power. This work was quite influential during the heyday of structuralism in the '70s, but it has tended to be neglected (an impulse I admit to sharing) in the more recent appropriation of his treatment of ideology and subjectivity.

12On the carnivalesque, see Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World (Cambridge, Mass., 1968); and the introductory commentary in Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (Ithaca, N.Y., 1968). On dialogism, see especially Bakhtin's essay, "Discourse and the Novel," in Michael Holquist (ed.), The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays By M.M. Bakhtin (Austin, Texas, 1981), 259-422. I have found Robert Stam, "Mikhail Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique," in E. Ann Kaplan (ed.), Postmodernism and Its Discontents (London, 1988), an exceptionally helpful reading of Bakhtin's work, especially as it has been appropriated by the academic left of the '80s.

13For examples of recent work in cultural studies which has made imaginative use of the Bakhtin circle, see Stallybrass and White, Politics and Poetics of Transgression; Michael Denning, Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America (London, 1987); and George Lipsitz, Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture (Minneapolis, Minn., 1990).

14See Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York, 1988), especially the Introduction, 1-11, and "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," 28-50; and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (ed.), "Race," Writing, and Difference (Chicago, 1985), especially Gates, "Introduction: Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes," 1-20, and Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: DuBois and the Illusion of Race," 21-37.

Noting that feminist appropriations have worked to politicize post-structuralist theory does not of course speak--one way or the other--to the issue of whether the use of post-structuralism has depoliticized feminism; that is a battle I don't want to engage here.

15 This overview of Foucault's rethinking of power focuses on his later work, especially Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York, 1978), and The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction (New York, 1978); the quoted phrase is from Discipline and Punish, 27. Foucault's interviews offer a surprisingly lucid guide to the difficulties of his thinking; see "Prison Talk" and "Body/Power" in Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977 (New York, 1980), 37-62. I have also found Nancy Fraser's essays on Foucault in Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory (Minneapolis, Minn., 1989), 17-66, exceptionally illuminating.

16 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 194.

17 Geertz, "Thick Description," in Interpretation of Cultures, 25.

18 Berger and Luckmann, Social Construction, 18.

19 Thompson deploys this opposition in his polemic against Althusser, "The Poverty of Theory, Or an Orrery of Errors," published in Edward Thompson, The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (London, 1978).

20 See especially Gareth Stedman Jones, "Rethinking Chartism," in Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History, 1832-1982 (Cambridge, 1983); Linda J. Nicholson (ed.), Feminism/Postmodernism (New York, 1990); Gates, "Race," Writing, and Difference; and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London, 1985).

21 Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, especially 93-148; Gates, "Writing 'Race'"; John Tagg, The Burden of Representation; Mark Seltzer, "The Princess Casamassima: Realism and the Fantasy of Surveillance," in Eric J. Sundquist (ed.), American Realism: New Essays (Baltimore, 1982), 95-118.

22 Althusser, "Ideology," 140-8.

23 Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 80n.

24 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 26, 203, 11, 16.

25 Althusser, "Ideology," 142-5.

26 For Foucault's account of power in the ancien regime, see Discipline and Punish, 3-69; for his critique of "the repressive hypothesis" concerning the history of sexuality, see History of Sexuality, 15-49.

27 Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 170.

28 See "Ideology," 137-57. Althusser apparently came to back off from this argument identifying the state as the primary site for the production of dominant ideologies--and its corollary, the definitional extension of the state to include any institution central to social reproduction. See Therborn, Ideology of Power, 85.

29 For instances of this militarization of his discourse, see the Prison Notebooks, 139, 108-10, 152-3, 229-39, 432-3.

30 For Foucault's presentation of the Panopticon, see Discipline and Punish, 200-9.

31 For Althusser's argument that education represents the dominant "ISA" under capitalism--a claim written only months after the French student insurrection of 1968--see "Ideology," 152-7.

32 My thanks to Michael Epstein for making me see the significance of this last phenomenon.

33 My thanks to Robin Kelley for teaching me what tiny bit I know about "gangsta rap."

34 See Berman's "Preface" to All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity (New York, 1982), 14: "This book aims to..."

restore the spiritual wealth of modernist culture to the modern man and woman in the street, to show how, for all of us, modernism is realism."
35Perry Anderson, Considerations On Western Marxism (London, 1979), 42;
Tom Lehrer, "The Folk Song Army," in the album That Was the Year That Was.

36Derrida, "Like the Sound," 651 and, generally, 647-51.

37Barbara Fields article on race and ideology.

38Scarry, Body in Pain; Ava Baron (ed.), Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991); Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," Diaspora 1 (Spring, 1991) 8-23; Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski, "Dismembering and Remembering the Nation: The Semantics of Political Violence in Venezuela," CSSH 33 (April, 1991) 288-337.

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