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后现代性、霸权与性

大卫·艾尔德森

摘要:福柯在《性史》中影响了对于弗洛伊德-马克思主义的背弃,本文则反其道而行之,提出一种针对后现代理论以及关于后现代性的诸种理论的批判,并提出回归马尔库塞关于性的先见之明。本文尤其指出,当我们重新考察马尔库塞时,我们必须考虑到自他那个时代以来资本主义下的各种转型,而今他所归纳的表演原则比起当时更加切适当代语境。不过,他有关压抑化的去崇高理论则应修正为一种压抑化的激发。面对当代语境下的“主导因多样化”,本文建议引入文化唯物主义以强固马尔库塞的论述,以便促成葛兰西式的反霸权政治。

关键词:马尔库塞 新自由主义 文化唯物主义 表演原则

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Postmodernity, Hegemony, Sexuality

David Alderson

Abstract: Michel Foucault influentially dismissed ‘Freudo – Marxism’ in his *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1. This paper, by contrast, proposes a critique of postmodern theory, as well as theories of postmodernity, in proposing a return to the preoccupations of Herbert Marcuse in relation to sexuality. Specifically, the paper suggests that we must take account of the transformations in capitalism that have taken place since Marcuse’s time when revisiting his work, but that his category of the performance principle is now even more relevant than it was when he elaborated it. Nonetheless, his theory of repressive desublimation is revised as repressive incitement, and a cultural materialist perspective is brought to bear on his arguments in order to suggest the need for a Gramscian counter – hegemonic politics in the context of a contemporary “diversified dominant.”

Key words: Marcuse neo – liberalism cultural materialism performance principle

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This essay began life as an attempt to revive the reputation of Herbert Marcuse by emphasizing his continuing relevance for thinking about sexuality.^① It remains that, but in order to propose a necessarily critical return to his work, it became increasingly clear to me that it was necessary to intervene in debates about the postmodern. This is because, from a postmodern perspective, Marcuse’s powerfully Freudo – Hegelian Marxism has been superseded. Indeed, it is possible to argue that Marcuse is one of those figures whose superses-

sion has assisted in defining the postmodern. He was, after all, one of the last truly public intellectuals to have argued in totalizing, “metanarrativizing” and avowedly utopian and humanistic fashion for overturning capitalist society. Such projects, we are now told, are theoretically discredited by the anti – teleological, anti – humanist and particularizing logics of postmodern and poststructuralist thought.^②

One area in which Marcuse initially made considerable impact in the West was that of the sexual liberation movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. He was extensively discussed in Dennis Altman’s widely influential *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation* (especially 94 – 108), for instance, and José Esteban Muñoz has recently suggested that *Eros and Civilization* represented “almost a blueprint for sexual liberation” (133). Indeed, Marcuse enjoyed something of the status – not especially welcomed by him – of guru to the counterculture of that period.^③ This kind of celebrity may have ironically contributed to the demise of his influence, though, as it also ensured that his eminence became too closely linked to the fortunes of specific movements. Moreover, in the challenge to humanist and teleological notions of liberation developed by poststructuralism and increasingly influential on the academy in the years after the counterculture and the New Left, the very notions of liberation that Marcuse sought to theorize came to seem to many simply naive. One crucial work in this respect was Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, in which he sought to overturn the influence of what he called “Freudo – Marxism” – a derisive epithet for a highly eclectic group of writers, including Wilhelm Reich, Norman O. Brown, Erich Fromm, and Marcuse himself, among whom there were actually very pronounced differences, and even animosities. It is as well, then, briefly to begin with Foucault and his rejection of liberation politics, before going on to attempt a more generalized critique of both postmodern theory and theories of postmodernity in order to re – establish the significance of some of Marcuse’s preoccupations, if not all aspects of his theoretical elaboration of them.

From the postmodern perspective, power and resistance do not and should not exist in a dialectical relation of opposition, but are rather mutually implicated in each other – necessarily so, and with consequences that are held to be democratic. Foucault’s work on sexuality exemplifies the claims. For him, the notion that we possess a sexuality that might be liberated from repression is itself an effect of power – that is, of the discourse of sexuality that produced new forms of subjectivity in the West from the later nineteenth century on through the categorization of individuals on the basis of their desires; thus, for instance, the homosexual was born as “a species” through the discursive elaboration of that category and the “implantation” of it in individuals’ consciousness of themselves (42 – 43). However, the arguments on power that he goes on to develop are highly abstract, such that a work that begins by tracing a genealogy of the discourse of sexuality specifically becomes a theorization of power – in – general – hence, the very considerable influence beyond studies of sexuality of Foucault’s arguments. “Where there is power, there is resistance,” Foucault famously writes, “and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power [...] there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case” (95 – 96). The claim here about resistance’s non – exteriority to power, its lack of purity, seems to necessitate recognition of its multiplicity, but there is a telling ambiguity in Foucault’s phrasing: it is not clear whether the mere fact of being a special case in some sense requires our endorsement of each form of resistance, or whether, in describing things in this way, Foucault is refusing the authority claimed in the act of making such endorsements in the first place. Actually, the carefully neutral tone seems to me to be a strategic way of keeping both possibilities open, such that a claim about the nature of resistance merges with an ethical rejection of judgement, and each serves to reinforce by obscuring the other. Diversity thus appears as fact and value, and anyone who “fails” either to recognize or advocate a plurality of resistances must therefore come across as authoritarian. Postmodern claims fre-

quently rely on this form of argumentation, as we shall see.

Foucault's target here is clearly Marcuse: the Great Refusal is the latter's term for authentic forms of rebellion against what he described as the performance principle of capitalism. I am not keen to resurrect the idea of the Great Refusal itself, but I retain an ambivalence towards that term that is indicative of my critical sympathy for Marcuse's work more generally. If Foucault is surely right that there is something problematic about the conviction that a certain purity of sensibility is a pre-requisite for social transformation, Marcuse's claim that the resistance of some is qualitatively bound up with their abject situation does at least acknowledge those whose very conditions of existence demand the most thoroughgoing critique of the system. There is more to be said for this in my view than for an apparently indiscriminate (and thereby "democratic") validation of all "cases."

I therefore find myself acknowledging a certain truth in Foucault's objection, while rejecting the conclusions he draws from this. Whereas Marcuse tended to believe that forces opposing capitalism specifically must either be radically oppositional or else incorporated on the basis of their positioning within the system, Foucault's proposition suggests a more complex, if abstract, spectrum of resistance to power. It is partly in order to address this issue of complexity that I begin, not with a discussion of Marcuse at all, but rather by considering arguments that have been advanced about postmodern hegemony that suggest it is so secure that only micropolitical strategies are likely to be effective. In doing so, I consider the use that has been made of Raymond Williams' cultural materialist categories of dominant, residual and emergent within certain strands of postmodernist thought, though I do so in order to re-establish certain emphases in Williams that those strands have effectively overlooked or negated.

This, then, is an ambitious agenda. Its aim is to encourage a re-evaluation of both postmodern theories and theories of postmodernity, as well as to propose that Marcuse's work retains considerable importance for a critical, leftist understanding of the present, and, in particular, of the centrality of sexualized sensibilities to neoliberal capitalism. Since I am dealing with arguments and theories that originate in the West, I am conscious that much of what I say relates to Western societies and histories, though I shall also at various points attempt to differentiate between various trajectories into the globally neoliberal world that is now our common reality. I am working broadly within the field of cultural theory, though I range beyond it in ways that I consider necessary, and I hope that it will be of interest to readers of *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art* for the broad theoretical and contextual frame it proposes.

Totality and Hegemony

Fortunately, there is a way of advancing my arguments relatively efficiently through critical discussion of a project in some ways analogous to my purposes, though directed to quite distinct ends. In a series of striking and sophisticated readings, Marianne DeKoven, in *Utopia Limited* (2004), focuses on the relations between what she terms the late modernist writings of the US counterculture and New Left of the 1960s, and the postmodern theories that she argues emerged out of them in various ways. Though she professes continuing sympathy for the politics of the sixties, she positions herself on the postmodern left, and from this position both invokes Raymond Williams' categories of dominant, residual and emergent in order to account for that transition, and includes a critical chapter on Marcuse that sees his arguments as epitomizing the kind of totalizing perspective that postmodern theory and politics definitively supersede. In what follows, I shall take DeKoven's work to be more or less representative of postmodern thought generally, at least as it circulates in the anglophone world, at the same time as I note she elaborates a particular position within a more general field.^④

DeKoven describes modernity in terms of the dominance of the "teleological master narrative of Enlightenment" – the belief, that is, in the potential for humanity to achieve progress through the deployment of rea-

son. This must be distinguished from modernism, however, which she defines as “the dominant aesthetic movement of the first half of the twentieth century” in which the “attributes of modernity are at once asserted and contradicted.” But modernism also refers to something other, and grander, than an aesthetic movement: it designates the ways in which “the Other of modernity rises, pushes toward audibility, visibility, subjectivity, and agency, in global movements against imperialism, Eurocentrism, racism, male dominance, and class stratification, shaking and dislodging dominant aesthetic forms as well as politics and ideologies” (13 – 14). Thus, modernism radically challenges modernity, but does so on the basis of utopian terms that are indebted to it: crucially, modernism is dialectically bound to modernity, and Marxism is perhaps its exemplary manifestation.

Postmodernity, by contrast, results in a displacement of such intense forms of opposition through the emergence of a dominant, globalized capitalism characterized by pervasive commodification, dramatic technological innovation and spectacular cultural forms, bringing with it inequality and environmental destruction, on the one hand, and resulting in diverse, particularistic, and localized political movements, on the other. DeKoven relies heavily on arguments advanced by Fredric Jameson about the transition from modernity to postmodernity, but she crucially adds an emphasis crucially not found in him: such movements, it seems, are both more democratic and less utopian than those that typified modernism. “The democratic project of modernity,” she suggests, “has become in postmodernity at once (in its historical link with capitalism) a project of capitalist globalization, and also, at the same time, a project of egalitarian populism” (15).

It should be said that the tradition of cultural materialism has consistently problematized such periodizations in ways I wish to develop here in criticisms of both DeKoven and Jameson. Modernism as an aesthetic movement, for Raymond Williams, is a retrospectively imposed, selective tradition that fetishizes exceptional, cosmopolitan perspectives, with all of their sense of linguistic and cultural dislocation. Its anti – bourgeois sensibilities were as prone to right as to left variants, but its techniques have subsequently been reified and absorbed by explicitly commercial forms. From the perspective of modernism, he suggests, “all that is left to us is to become post – moderns,” (Williams, *Politics* 32) and he argues that the rediscovery of alternative traditions might facilitate the conceptualization of ‘a modern future in which community may be imagined again’ (35). Alan Sinfield, meanwhile, argues from within the same tradition that it is naive to perceive a more general democratization in the breakdown of high and low cultural forms said to be characteristic of postmodernism: “it is likely,” he writes, “that the fading of certain kinds of hierarchy is producing the compensatory strengthening of others” (334). Indeed, an apparent cultural democratization is one means by which hierarchies may be relegitimated: pop music in Britain, for instance, is now said to be dominated by the privately educated, even while it preserves the gestural repertoire of revolt against the mature and supposedly conservative in the cause of (mostly sexual) desire.^⑤ Cultural materialism is therefore suspicious of the tendency to generalize about historical experience on the basis of cultural forms.

Nonetheless, DeKoven follows Jameson in using Williams’ terminology to suggest “*ab utero* shift within the general conditions of capitalism.”^⑥ “The modern,” she writes, “was dominant in the sixties, then became residual; the postmodern was emergent in the sixties, then became dominant” (18). Since DeKoven claims to reject totalizing analysis, the irony of her account is that it manifestly preserves Jameson’s totalizations, as well as his claims about a fairly seamless transition from one to the other. In one sense, the figurative qualities of Williams’ terms may facilitate such an account, since, as Terry Eagleton has observed, they retain an organicist dimension from his earlier work prior to his *rapprochement* with Marxism (Eagleton 32 – 42). But this effect is also achieved through a specific revision of them against Williams’ purposes. DeKoven highlights that she uses dominant, residual and emergent as “markers of the specific dynamics of historical change, without

the implications of progress from capitalism to socialism (or of any teleology) that inhere in Williams' s Marxist development of these terms" (18). DeKoven has a teleology all of her own, though, evident in her particular summary of Jameson when she writes that postmodernism represents "the cultural dominant of a triumphant consumer capitalism" (10).

My principal objection to DeKoven, though, is not principally that her work is totalizing and teleological in spite of her own claims about it. I want rather to pursue the assumption made by both Jameson and DeKoven that postmodernism is culturally dominant – the specific terminology is important here – because it is predicated on a misrepresentation of Williams' arguments that, if corrected, opens up a different perspective on the shift both Jameson and DeKoven seek to describe. The categories of dominant, residual and emergent result from Williams' turn to the Gramscian category of hegemony, and this was precisely determined by his sense of the inadequacies of the Hegelian – Lukácsian tradition to which Jameson remains strongly indebted. Williams was very clear about his preferences in this respect:

the key question to ask about any notion of totality in cultural theory is this: whether the notion of totality includes the notion of intention. For if totality is simply concrete, if it is simply the recognition of a large variety of miscellaneous and contemporaneous practices [as Williams suggests it is in Lukács], then it is essentially empty of any content that could be called Marxist. Intention, the notion of intention, restores the key question, or rather the key emphasis. For while it is true that any society is a complex whole of such practices, it is also true that any society has a specific organization, a specific structure, and that the principles of this organization and structure can be seen as directly related to certain social intentions, intentions by which we define the society, intentions which in all our experience have been the rule of a particular class. (Williams, "Base" ⑦)

DeKoven would no doubt highlight the class reductionism of this passage as evidence of its oppressively modernist metanarrativizing, even though her own focus on commodification is hardly in itself more pluralistic. That objection is clearly important, and I return to it below, but I nonetheless want to bracket it off temporarily in order to see what the restoration of Williams' original emphasis may permit us to see more clearly about the historical transition under consideration.

Jameson relies heavily on Ernest Mandel's discussion of "late capitalism," first published in 1972. There, Mandel describes a three – stage development from freely competitive to monopoly capitalism, then, from the 1940s, late capitalism that is characterized by multinational corporations, increasingly global markets, and intensified consumerism. He also – in many ways presciently – places great importance on the increasing mobility of finance capital. Jameson claims that the three stages Mandel outlines have successively determined aesthetic realism, modernism and postmodernism (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 35 – 36). I shall focus here on only one problem with this rather neat, base – superstructure schematization: the way in which it neglects the very dramatic shifts that have taken place within capitalism since the 1940s. After all, Mandel himself noted in his introduction to the revised edition of his work in 1975 that 'belief in the permanence of the "mixed economy" has proved a myth' because of the economic crises that were very evident by that time (Mandel 8). However, he was clearly not in a position to engage with the right's solutions to these crises as they emerged over the course of the seventies, or the restructuring of and technological developments within capitalism that emerged in a dialectically determining relation with those solutions. These things are crucial in separating us from, rather than connecting us with, the postwar period of mixed economies. The one – sided emphasis almost exclusively on consumption evident in both Jameson and DeKoven facilitates the cultural theo-

retical elision of that dramatic shift in ways it is necessary to specify.

If, rather than relying on Mandel, we turn to the work of David Harvey, a different picture emerges. Whereas Jameson's emphasis on the greater purity of postmodern capitalism focuses on its "prodigious expansion [...] into hitherto uncommodified areas," Harvey, building on the work of Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy in *Capital Resurgent*,^⑦ argues that neoliberalism has been a project aimed at restoring, even as it has reconfigured, class power. That it has been informed by a certain utopianism of its own about individual freedom is clear, but Harvey pointedly demonstrates that while "neoliberalization has not been very effective in revitalizing global capital accumulation [...]" it has succeeded remarkably well in restoring, or in some instances (as in Russia and China) creating, the power of an economic elite" (Harvey, *Brief History* 19). Thus, to recapitulate the objection Williams makes about Lukács, whereas Jameson is concrete, and in this limited sense materialist, others restore a Gramscian emphasis on intention. Of course, "intention" is one of those supposedly humanist terms about which postmodern theory is sceptical, but it is used both in Williams and Harvey to signify a more complex *social*, rather than individual, intention, and an agency that exemplifies the dialectical process of making history in specific, determining circumstances.^⑧

A further factor facilitating both Jameson's and DeKoven's discussion of the postmodern is that the shift to neoliberalism has been more profoundly felt outside the US, since capitalism there in the postwar period was always relatively speaking less "pure" (to use Jameson's term).^⑨ Indeed, some have described the emergence of neoliberal hegemony globally as a process of Americanization.^⑩ In consequence, the transition to neoliberalism in most of the world outside the US has been more disruptive of political norms, and has been accompanied by more intense, even violent, forms of conflict. In Britain, for instance, the extraordinary year-long miners' strike of 1984 – 1985 was a watershed in the very purposeful defeat of the left by the state.^⑪ This, indeed, was but one example of the peculiar rapacity of neoliberal capitalism that Harvey has argued has been determined by its renewed dependence on crude accumulation by dispossession rather than accumulation through expansion; land and resource grabs, evident, for instance, in the privatization of state industries and public services, as well as the new imperialism of the war for oil in Iraq (Harvey, *New Imperialism* 137 – 82). Meanwhile, Naomi Klein, in *The Shock Doctrine*, speaks convincingly of neoliberalism as having been advanced substantially through deployment of the shock doctrine: the inducement or exploitation of crises in order to impose favoured "solutions," a tactic still evident today in attempts to impose austerity measures in response to neoliberalism's most devastating and persistent financial crisis to date. The history of neoliberal transition is littered with conflicts, and even the most distant from us now remain formative in shaping political attitudes through their legacies.

I am not, of course, arguing that either Jameson or DeKoven are unaware of neoliberalism as either dogma or practice; the point is rather that they do not recognize its distinctiveness on the basis of its historical emergence. To speak of neoliberal, rather than postmodern, hegemony is to emphasize a very determined kind of right-wing agency as pursued through and transformative of institutions; the purposeful dissemination of ideas, and the establishment of a kind of common sense that at least aspires to saturate society "to such an extent [...] that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure" (Williams, "Base" 8). Wendy Brown, indeed, recognizes precisely this feature of it when she claims that neoliberalism "must be conceived of as more than a set of free market economic policies that dismantle welfare states and privatize public service in the North, make wreckage of efforts at democratic sovereignty or economic self-direction in the South and intensify income disparities everywhere [...]" it also involves a specific and consequential organization of the social, the subject and the state" (693).

Despite the apparent convergence in emphasis between Williams and Brown, however, the latter's terminology highlights a further, definitive point of contrast between cultural materialism and postmodern thought. Brown's reference to the subject is indicative of her indebtedness to structuralist accounts of subjectification: the claim (though not fully explicit here) is that individuals are formed by ideology/power – that becoming a subject entails subjection. This is a logic that unites Althusser and Foucault, in spite of their many differences,¹² but it is one Williams specifically rejected. His elaboration of the categories dominant, residual and emergent represents an explicit challenge to the reductivism of Althusser's category of Ideological State Apparatuses,¹³ and is based on a key theoretical distinction between hegemony and socialization: while hegemony may indeed dominate experience, it does not govern all of it, since residual and emergent formations may preserve or give rise to social forces ranging from the alternative to the oppositional.¹⁴

Williams' emphasis on intention is therefore indispensable if we are to understand what has been taking place in recent decades, but there are nonetheless a number of criticisms to be made of his categories. The first is that, although there can be no doubt on the basis of his work as a whole that he was committed to the achievement of a *socialist* hegemony, his model provides no terms for understanding this as a possibility. Rather, the implication is that the dominant is forced to assimilate residual or emergent forces that challenge it: hence the charge of gradualism. More significant for the context I am concerned with, though, is the fact that this account failed – understandably, no doubt – to anticipate the possibility that the political right might itself generate emergent forces that would carry an inherent potential for achieving hegemony in appropriate conditions. This is how we must think of neoliberalism, and we must acknowledge along with this its sequestration of terms such as freedom, modernization and progress, though the current crisis may be starting to threaten such ideological equivalences.

Nonetheless, I have to acknowledge a certain sleight of hand on my part in the argument so far by having contrasted DeKoven and Jameson's writings on the postmodern with Harvey's on neoliberalism. That is to say I might more appropriately have invoked the latter's own, earlier discussion of postmodernity as a comparison. My reason for not doing so was strategic and intended to highlight more acutely the contrast between the Gramscian talk of hegemony and Lukácsian discussions of totality. By contrast with his work on neoliberalism, however, Harvey relies more clearly on the classical base – superstructure model in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), and the world he describes there is admittedly more consistent with the one we find in Jameson. In the specifics he provides, however, Harvey nonetheless provides a further challenge to the adequacy of the latter account.

Harvey's case is that the characteristic elements of a postmodern sensibility have been determined by an uneven, but manifest, shift in capitalism away from Fordist regimes of accumulation to non – or post – Fordist forms of flexible accumulation necessitated, like the shift to neoliberalism, by the overaccumulation crises of the late sixties and seventies.¹⁵ The pervasiveness of the material transformations Harvey describes can hardly be doubted: corporate restructuring and outsourcing of production along with an increasing deregulation of work, extraordinary levels of technological innovation – not least in forms of communication – and greater efficiencies in production and distribution, all of which have enabled a remarkable diversification and turnover of products. All of this has been accompanied and facilitated by an exponential growth in and deregulation of the financial sector, itself a major field of innovation and dominant vehicle of capitalist growth since the 1970s. The result of these pressures has been an extraordinary intensification of what Harvey calls the time – space compression of modernity – the experience, that is, of a shrinking and faster world – with characteristically disorienting effects. In cultural terms, he suggests, “the relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism has given way to all the ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates

difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms" (Harvey, *Condition* 156).^⑥

I see Harvey's discussion of postmodernity as complementing, rather than contradicting, the emphasis on neoliberalism in his later work. Any perceptions to the contrary, such as might be encouraged by Williams' way of counterposing the base and superstructure formulation with hegemony, surely results from misconceptions determined by the figurative forms each of those models suggests: base/superstructure is a bottom – up kind of determinism, whereas hegemony is top – down. The former, especially in Marx's brief, unfortunate, and relentlessly over – discussed adumbration of it, suggests a passive, receptive superstructure; the latter corrects this by highlighting an active form of domination. But since class hegemony is clearly entailed by Marx's account of the base as the combined forces *and relations* of production, the expression of a preference for one model over the other can surely only result in a kind of undialectical incoherence. As Gramsci emphasized, greater attention to hegemonic power on everyone's part was necessitated historically (in the West, at least) by the extension of bourgeois democracy and the expansion of civil society.

It is necessary in light of this to make some very brief and general distinctions about the kinds of determination each of these models implies, since they effectively highlight the kind of contradictoriness in experience I have been suggesting is a feature of contemporary capitalism. Whereas what is described as postmodern consciousness may be said to result from consumption in conditions of flexible accumulation, neoliberalism dominates as a specifically politico – economic logic that is actively formative. If neoliberalism seeks positively to determine a specific outlook, and may even appear authoritarian, coercive or an affront to established forms of value and common sense – sometimes, indeed, as just plain stupid – the kind of consciousness determined in consumers by the commodification it facilitates may not only fail to appear as obviously ideological, but may even encourage "subversive" desires in relation to forms of social conservatism (above all, no doubt, in relation to sexuality). There is a further contradiction to emphasize, though: flexible accumulation may produce ever more stuff, stimulating desire and dissatisfaction in equal measure, but it has also resulted in intensified forms of exploitation and greater 'precarity' in work.^⑦ Such things are also productive of consciousness, and condition fundamental attitudes towards leisure (as release, for instance), just as the latter tends to determine perspectives on politics (often as boring as well as pointless).

Whereas Dekoven sees postmodernism as emerging from modernism on the basis of postwar late capitalist development and consumerism, it is surely fitting rather to acknowledge that the postwar period came to an end at the end of the seventies in consequence of the global economic crisis and the emergence of neoliberalism and flexible accumulation to displace Keynesianism and Fordism. This brought about a profound transformation of capitalism whose effects are still with us. The problem with the kind of totality that DeKoven takes from Jameson is that it is one that equates culture with consciousness, and sees both as determined (and exhausted) by the fact of an all – pervasive commodification that nonetheless largely ignores the specific forms of commodification of labour and their consequences. This problem is further compounded by a tendency to appropriate theoretical terms and models to support this account in ways that rob them of their specificity. Thus, when DeKoven describes postmodernity in terms of "an unevenly, porously hegemonic global consumer capitalism in antinomy with [...] a diffuse, multidirectional, fluid, oscillating proliferation of power and resistance throughout society and culture" (15),^⑧ the specific sequence of metaphors she deploys facilitates the conflation of a Gramscian discourse of hegemony with a Lukácsian one of totality, supplemented for good measure by Foucaultian – Deleuzian abstractions about power and resistance. All of this is nonetheless the precise theoretical, or at least rhetorical, correlative of her project's drive to reconcile the radical impulses of the sixties with a suitably contemporary pragmatism.

This is not all, however, because one further consequence of viewing things in the way DeKoven does here is an unfortunate tendency to suggest that the left's development can be evaluated through an aggregation of its diverse causes, such that retreats in one respect may be offset by advances in another, as if by way of compensation. Hence, the rhetoric of diffusion, porosity and multidirectionality. However, it might be better to acknowledge that the left's causes as they emerged in and from the sixties, at least in the West, have fared very differently, and for specific, rather than abstract, reasons. If we are speaking of the labour/capital relation, I have already highlighted that the latter has consistently, relentlessly, gained in power. In this respect, at least, these have decidedly not been decades of give – and – take. In other respects, however, the situation has been very much more mixed, precisely because libertarian advances of specific qualitative kinds have been made through the market. Thus, we have to confront the more troubling possibility that left disunity has resulted from diverse, and even opposing, fortunes as these have been determined by neoliberalism and flexible accumulation.

In this highly circuitous way, then – and in order to pave the way for discussion of Marcuse – I return to the question of class reductionism bracketed off earlier in my discussion of Williams. DeKoven's critique of totalization is directed at the left's pronounced tendency in the past to claim that all forms of oppression are ultimately reducible to one cause. Thus, there was, and maybe still is in some quarters, a kind of Marxism that wants to argue that capitalism is the root of all evil, whether that specific evil be racism, sexism or heterosexism. Nicola Field provides one fairly recent instance when she claims that “homophobia is part of a huge economic, political, social and ideological system of mass oppression” (58). But if capitalism is considered a truly complex totality such an obviously implausible claim might easily be avoided. Indeed, it would be more convincing to suggest that there is a relative autonomy of oppressions and resistances within the structuring whole of capitalism, and also that there are different *modalities* of power – about whose dynamics it is important to be precise – rather than Foucault's power – in – general. Nancy Fraser, for instance, distinguishes between injustice in relation to distribution, on the one hand, and recognition, on the other, while nonetheless appreciating that “economic injustice and cultural injustice are usually interimbricated so as to reinforce each other dialectically” (Fraser, *Justice* 15).¹⁹ I have reservations about Fraser's precise articulation of this case,²⁰ but her point is that injustices of recognition will not necessarily come to an end in an economically more just, possibly socialist, future, and that they therefore demand of us specific, active forms of engagement.

There may, however, be a partial historical defence to be made even of reductive forms of totalization such as Field's. When Williams speaks of the dominant in terms of class hegemony specifically he nonetheless remarks that oppositional emergent and residual formations will not necessarily be class – based (Williams, “Base” 12). The fact that he was writing in 1973 suggests that he had in mind diverse New Left and counter-cultural causes, and this is reinforced by a claim he made ten years later that

all significant social *movements* of the last thirty years have started outside the organized class interests and institutions. The peace movement, the ecology movement, the women's movement, solidarity with the third world, human rights agencies, campaigns against poverty and homelessness, campaigns against cultural poverty and distortion: all have this character, that they sprang from needs and perceptions which the interest – based organizations had no room or time for, or which they had simply failed to notice.

Nonetheless, he could still assert that “there is not one of these issues which, followed through, fails to lead

us into the central systems of the industrial – capitalist mode of production and among others into its system of classes” (Williams, *Towards 2000* 172 – 73). Today, such a claim seems less plausible, in part because many of these movements have substantially changed and assimilated as capitalism itself has changed. Harvey argues, for instance, that the protest movements of the sixties, insofar as they were focused on individual freedom, have found significant accommodation under neoliberal regimes,^② and it has become clearer that the kind of class domination consolidated by neoliberalism is compatible, at least in principle, with social liberalism.

Thus, the integrity of once globally dominant, white Western bourgeois societies, central to which was the family and its sexual divisions of labour, has increasingly fragmented in the neoliberal period as a result of a variety of pressures: first, there has been the continuing pressure from the so – called new social movements (Laclau and Mouffe 159) and their partial accommodation and transformation through the market’s individualization of freedoms; second, there has been the greater mobility of populations bound up with the material dynamics of time – space compression; and third, there has been the neoliberal development of once subordinate states to become formidable capitalist powers self – conscious of themselves as challenging Western hegemony, in part – though not in all cases – because of their formerly colonial status (Brazil, Russia, India and China are only the most obvious examples).^③

In any case, it may now be possible to speak legitimately of a diversified dominant, or hegemony, under neoliberalism, not in order to highlight an established fact, but rather to indicate a general, if contested, tendency for the dominant to legitimate itself through such diversification as one indication of its sponsorship of an expanded freedom. This, however, is a problematic claim, with many local variations in terms of particular states and regions. Indeed, many of those forces generating diversification at one level are not themselves welcoming of difference on others.

Hence, it is necessary to resist the kind of breezy position adopted by Walter Benn Michaels, who, in *The Trouble with Diversity*, argues that state and institutional initiatives promoting diversity serve above all to distract us from a proper concern with economic inequality. Such a claim profoundly underestimates forms of resistance to social diversification that are frequently also bound up with resistance to aspects of modernity from a range of social forces, conservative, religious, and even leftist, some of which either aspire to or do in fact deploy the resources of the state in order to regulate social norms. After all, there are very few who believe that our necessary interdependence should be mediated by exchange value alone. Hence, a specific problem that has attended the marketization of freedoms, including sexual ones, that we have witnessed: through this alignment, such freedoms appear as a threat to other kinds of value, and even as inhuman, precisely because they have been alienated. Thus, in addition to a certain complacency, Michaels also neglects crucial questions around the qualitative nature of such freedoms and the ends they serve. Such questions were central to Marcuse’s thought, and the need to recover them is urgent.

The Performance Principle

In her discussion of Marcuse, DeKoven focuses exclusively on his most pessimistically Frankfurtian text, *One – Dimensional Man* (1964), in which he described a society that had eroded oppositional consciousness, or two – dimensionality, through various forms of assimilation and integration: the working class now participated in consumerism and increasingly worked in conditions made less obviously exploitative by automation; art dealt with, or was integrated into, everyday life in terms prescribed by the latter, thereby eroding its uncompromising critique; ordinary language philosophy was a form of empiricism that served to attach even intellectuals to reality as currently known; and so on. Marcuse therefore believed that Western societies as they had developed by the 1960s had largely foreclosed the possibility of revolutionary consciousness developing within

them. In respect of the working class, for instance, he claimed that

it is precisely this new consciousness, the ‘space within,’ the space for transcending historical practice, which is being barred by a society in which subjects as well as objects constitute instrumentalities in a whole that has its *raison d’être* in the accomplishments of its overpowering productivity. Its supreme promise is an ever – more – comfortable life for an ever – growing number of people who, in a strict sense, cannot imagine a qualitatively different universe of discourse and action, for the capacity to contain and manipulate subversive imagination and effort is an integral part of the given society. Those whose life is the hell of the Affluent Society are kept in line by a brutality which revives medieval and early modern practices. (Marcuse, *One – Dimensional Man* 26)

Only among “the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable” (260) who are subject to medieval forms of suppression did Marcuse see the potential for the Great Refusal. They constituted the new, if dispersed and fragmented, “universal class” formerly identified by Marx in the proletariat; those whose needs were so fundamental as to constitute universal ones. But for the rest, autonomy had been replaced by heteronomous social control through what Marcuse elsewhere strikingly described as “deprivatization,”²³ the erosion of that “space within”.

DeKoven claims that Marcuse’s wholly negative account of one – dimensional life evinces a revolutionary sensibility that blinds him to postmodern truths and possibilities. What Marcuse regards as one – dimensionality, she claims, “also often describes what has come to be positively valued in some postmodern theories as complicitous critique or resistance from within.” She asserts that such postmodern resistance rejects master narratives “in favour of broader, more egalitarian, and more realistic notions of everyday tactics [...] [that] involve partial, local refunctioning and subversion, not of a totalized domination but of an incomplete, malleable, shifting, continually redefined, recontested, and reinstituted hegemony” (30). Thus, Marcuse’s description of one – dimensional society represents a kind of negative to the more colourful postmodern photograph she would like us to see in its place: it is the same kind of totality, only viewed and valued differently.

DeKoven’s valuation of difference, however, carries the quite typical danger of reifying that which it claims to be recognizing, a danger evident above all in her resignification of the conventional language of the left when she invokes a humanistic language of oppression, as well as a discourse of equality – but in relation to causes rather than persons (thus, *narratives* are said to be “oppressive,” and egalitarianism resides in a greater plurality of *movements*). Whereas, in the context of so – called master narratives, identities seemed to serve some future form of reconciliation or liberation in which those identities might become obsolete, the importance attached by DeKoven to identities risks a circularity: the point of recognizing difference is the recognition of difference as such, and in this way ends are collapsed into means and sanctified as “democracy”, conceived not in terms of popular control, but representation. This is a distinctly “American” discourse, and to that extent ideological, in spite of here being a specific left – idealization within that discursive mode.

In certain respects, though, *One – Dimensional Man* makes DeKoven’s job of generalizing about postmodern society on the basis of US norms all too easy, precisely because that book failed to recognize differences within that increasingly problematic reification, “the West”.²⁴ Working class militancy, for instance, remained far more pronounced in Europe in the sixties, seventies and even into the eighties than *One – Dimensional Man* suggested was plausible, and, as Malcolm Miles notes, figures on the European left were bemused and frustrated by Marcuse’s position in this respect.²⁵ But even in the context of the US, the book’s pessimism must be acknowledged as bound to its historical moment prior to the emergence of the counterculture,

many of whose causes Marcuse critically supported. Moreover, the global capitalist triumph suggested by DeKoven in 2004, in part through her critical acceptance of Marcuse's claims about one - dimensionality, imputed a stability to the neoliberal order that was both inaccurate at the time and failed to anticipate the economic crash whose consequences are still with us. Anti - neoliberal, if not thoroughly anti - capitalist, critique and protest has flourished since 2008, and DeKoven's theorization of a secure postmodern hegemony evidently looks somewhat less plausible. In *One - Dimensional Man*, Marcuse effectively accepted the case that the Keynesianism of postwar Western societies had indeed brought an end to crises within capitalism. Claims for about one - dimensionality either implicitly reject or merely overlook the Marxist point that capitalism is systemically crisis - prone - and the "purer" it is, the more prone it is. Robert Skidelsky points out that between 1951 and 1973, the period of Bretton Woods, there were no global economic recessions; since 1979, there have been five (Skidelsky, *Keynes* 116 - 17).

One - Dimensional Man may therefore be seen as an exceptional work for Marcuse. Certainly, it seems to me far less significant than his earlier, more abstract, theoretical work, *Eros and Civilization* (1956), on which I wish to focus here. This book is often viewed as more optimistic, though at one stage in it Marcuse does anticipate the later book's emphasis on individual subjection to social heteronomy. In *Eros and Civilization*, he accounts for this in terms of an increasing flattening out of the radical tensions an earlier form of bourgeois society had generated between id, ego and superego. Social control was now exerted through commodification and the satisfaction of pleasurable, notably sexual, urges, as well as the increasing displacement of the mediating figure of the *paterfamilias* by more direct institutional and cultural forms of authority (94 - 105). Indeed, Marcuse brilliantly anticipates the fetishization of *youth* in postwar societies: "In the struggle between the generations, the sides seem to be shifted: the son knows better; he represents the mature reality principle against its obsolescent forms" (97).

The reference to the reality principle here, though, requires explanation, since it is a Freudian term Marcuse finds it necessary to revise, and it is through this revision that he generates a complex understanding of what liberation might mean. It is this utopianism I wish to focus on here, rather than the pessimism that might lead us to conclude that transformational possibilities are closed off to us.

Marcuse begins *Eros* by accepting Freud's proposition in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) that repression is a necessary feature of any kind of human society. Socialization entails an acceptance on the part of the child that gratification must be deferred in order to achieve accommodation with the reality principle because central to any social order is the work that goes into that order's reproduction. However, Marcuse points out that Freud's insight is problematically abstract: there has not only been one civilization historically, and others may be possible. Hence, it is wrong to speak of only one reality principle, and recognition of this opens up the possibility of a critical relation to the given social order and the specific demands it makes on us. Under capitalism, Marcuse claims, we are subject to the insatiable demand for growth that serves profit rather than human need, and is predicated on exploitative social relations. Subjection to such an order generates *surplus* repression. The tacit allusion here^⑥ is to Marx's claim that capital is generated by the extraction of surplus value through the labour process itself. Consequently, Marcuse suggests, the specific reality principle of capitalism should rather be known as the performance principle, and his description of this is worth quoting at length:

The performance principle, which is that of an acquisitive and antagonistic society in the process of constant expansion, presupposes a long development during which domination has been increasingly rationalized: control over social labour now reproduces society on an enlarged scale and

under improving conditions. For a long way, the interests of domination and the interests of the whole coincide; the profitable utilization of the productive apparatus fulfils the needs and faculties of the individuals. For the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labour; but their labour is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individuals must submit if they want to live. And it becomes the more alien the more specialized the division of labour becomes. Men do not live their own lives but perform pre – established functions. While they work, they do not fulfil their own needs and faculties but work in alienation. (Marcuse, *Eros* 45)

This is a richly dialectical account of capitalism²⁰ and the development of the productive forces it has generated, stressing both their potential to enhance the satisfaction of general needs, but also their reliance on rationalization (divisions of labour that reduce people to functions) and alienation (the fact of working for and predominantly in the interests of others). Since the interests of those who control the means of production are served by the persistent pressure on workers for greater productivity in return for less remuneration the result is the expansion of production through the antagonism that Marcuse initially highlights. Moreover, the performance principle fuels the growth in consumption that serves as its justification, since “the definition of the standard of living in terms of automobiles, television sets, airplanes, and tractors is that of the performance principle itself” (153). We might update and expand this list, of course, by adding any amount of contemporary gadgetry, all of it more or less obsolete as soon as it is released, and conditioning our sense of civilizational progress as an effect of its obsolescence. Moreover, we may speak now of the renewal and intensification of this performance principle under neoliberalism and flexible accumulation – indeed, we may speak of its pervasive deregulation.

At the heart of the bourgeois social order as analysed by Freud rather than Marx was the family, the institution primarily responsible for the individual’s socialization and accommodation with the reality principle. The bourgeois familial ideal was one in whose name erotic pleasure was repressed or sublimated. As we have already seen, Marcuse noted that the integrity of this ideal was breaking down, and he was later to speak of the obsolescence of the Freudian model of subjectivity itself (Marcuse, *Five Lectures* 44 – 61). Nonetheless, his description of bourgeois marital relations is important: they were the consequence of an historically “long and cruel process of domestication” founded on a certain contradiction, namely that

while, outside the privacy of the family, men’s existence was chiefly determined by the exchange value of their products and performances, their life in the home and bed was to be permeated with the spirit of divine and moral law [...] The full force of civilized morality was mobilized against the use of the body as mere object, means, instrument of pleasure; such reification was tabooed and remained the ill – reputed privilege of whores, degenerates and perverts. Precisely in his gratification, and especially his sexual gratification, man was to be a higher being, committed to the higher values; sexuality was to be dignified by love. With the emergence of a non – repressive reality principle, with the abolition of the surplus – repression necessitated by the performance principle, this process should be reversed. (Marcuse, *Eros* 201)

I shall call the dominant familial principle as outlined here “hetero – sacramentalism”:²¹ it is the view that sexual pleasure needs to be justified by a higher principle, love – whether conceived in religious or humanistic terms – and that this endows the sacramental relationship with a qualitative moral and emotional superiority

over all others. Marcuse's point here is that erotic pleasure should be its own justification, and it is a mark of the general condition of (surplus) repression in a society that it should be thought otherwise. He also, at least implicitly, suggests that the privatization and domestication of humane relations through marriage sanctions and helps to perpetuate the instrumentality of relations beyond it. While hetero-sacramentalism in the strict form articulated by Marcuse here may seem to us archaic,^② the ideal nonetheless survives institutionally and ideologically to the extent that marriage continues to thrive and is romantically invested in. The campaign for lesbian and gay marriage in various parts of the world testifies to that continuing dominance. Couched in egalitarian terms, it represents a demand for the extension of the principle: sacramentalism for all.

Of course, as an ideal, sacramentalism is both pervasively demystified in everyday contemporary existence and adhered to contradictorily and hypocritically because sexual "temptation" assaults us from all sides through its commodification in one form or another. The investment in sex as ultimate satisfaction means that it serves as the perfect metaphor for the potential of commodities, but it is also frequently enough invoked as the experience that consumption will facilitate (thus we buy cars or clothes, or may be lured on holiday). The perception of sex as ultimate satisfaction is ironically a remnant, or reinfection, of sacramentalism, but under the newly valorized performance principle its intensity is not predicated on scarcity: rather, we are encouraged to believe we can always have more and better sex. Moreover, our existence, if we are privileged enough, is suffused with sex: "sexy" is the dominant aesthetic category of our time, a "desublimated" form of cultural capital indeed.

The performance principle is a genuinely totalizing, if complex, one. Marcuse's brilliance was to establish this as the basis for thinking about the sexual, the aesthetic, and the erotic, as well as the relations between them. In doing so, he inherited hydraulic^③ Freudian theories of instincts and drives, of energies channelled or released, of Eros's complex relations with Thanatos. The way that Marcuse develops his argument through an engagement with Freud's categories and narratives is compelling, but he also sometimes indicates that he sees in them a certain symbolic value,^④ just as he is keen to integrate them into a larger discussion of the history of Western philosophy from Plato on, and that tradition's definitive separation of reason and the body. The value of the category of the aesthetic for Marcuse therefore resides in its mediation of the two and anticipation of a future reality principle predicated on their integration. There is a sense throughout the "philosophical inquiry" of *Eros and Civilization*, then, that the specific categories and systems of thought Marcuse invokes are not so much to be defended on their own terms as regarded as expressions of a desire for an alternative order that only materialist thought suggests is a realizable possibility in specific historical conditions (the eradication of scarcity.^⑤) In principle, then, such philosophical discourse can only ever be heuristic, never wholly adequate to the task. Nonetheless, following Freud, this desire is presented by Marcuse as the memory - and in part a biological one - of a former ontogenetic and phylogenetic wholeness that acts as a negating force in relation to repressive civilization. Thus, as Jay Bernstein notes, his 'exhortation to remember an "imaginary *temps perdu*" allowed him to smuggle an a priori philosophical anthropology into Critical Theory' (Jay 236).^⑥

The proposal that future utopian existence must be governed by a logic of return, that regression constitutes progress, may be appealing in one sense, but Marcuse provokes most scepticism in us, perhaps, when he speculates about the features a future non-repressive society. I wouldn't want to underestimate the extent to which such scepticism is itself one consequence of our conditioning by the performance principle - a conditioning evident in postmodernism's specific modes of accommodation with the way things are - but he surely tries too hard to persuade us that the lion really can lie down with the lamb. After all, even according to the Freudian theory he deploys, any civilization must be predicated on repression (the deferral of gratification),

and Marcuse is clear that disagreeable work will not simply go away. Moreover, the myth of wholeness risks introducing a degree of normativity that Marcuse has to struggle against (though, to his credit, he does struggle).

Marcuse inherits the problem from Hegel, not Freud, of course; it is the end of history thesis, the belief that the subject – object dialectic will be resolved, that we can all finally rest, or at least be active in harmony with each other and our environment. But, as that other Hegelian Marxist, Georg Lukács, came to recognize in his autocritique of *History and Class Consciousness* (1922) “objectification is [...] a phenomenon that cannot be eliminated from human life in society. If we bear in mind that every externalization of an object in practice (and hence, too, in work) is an objectification, that every human expression including speech objectifies human thoughts and feelings, then it is clear that we are dealing with a universal mode of commerce between men” (Lukács xxiv). Thus, the political and historical struggle is over the conditions of objectification, including – as Lukács intriguingly suggests here in his reference to speech – the production of culture (this, indeed, is one emphasis of Williams’ cultural materialism).

Nonetheless, Marcuse’s utopianism evinces a commitment to the principle that a different order of things is demanded by the kinds of beings humans are. In my view, this conviction is indispensable; without it, the left – any left, even of a pragmatic sort – cannot survive, and probably doesn’t deserve to. The problem is that such a necessarily normative claim carries with it the potential to perpetuate oppressive logics, heteronormativity among them. Hence, the appeal for me of Norman Geras’ defence against many on the left of the category of human nature. Geras suggests that human nature resides in the dialectical relation between certain clearly generalizable needs – for food, shelter, some kind of sociality, for instance – and the creative potential to satisfy them that makes us distinctively human. It follows from this that the immense variety of human societies and cultures is proof of, rather than against, human nature. Moreover, this argument is relevant to historical materialism because it “highlights that specific nexus of universal needs and capacities which explains the human production process and man’s organized transformation of the material environment; which process and transformation it treats in turn as the basis both of the social order and of historical change” (Geras 108).³⁰

There is one implication of this argument I think it is necessary to draw out further, though. When Geras claims that human nature is an abstraction, but a valid one (115), it is necessary to go still further and insist, not only that it must remain an abstraction in any conceivable historical conditions, but that any claim that it might be wholly realized within them is itself the mark of oppressively normative reason. In this way, it seems to me possible to cut through a whole range of unhelpful debates around essentialism, anti – essentialism and strategic essentialism predicated on the structuralist assumption that nature and culture are binary opposites.³¹ Sexual needs, for instance, may be posited abstractly, but it is difficult to conceive of them in any way separately from the social prioritization of them and the various cultural means we have developed to inhibit or satisfy them – means that nonetheless may become a kind of “second nature” of their own, as is the case when we speak of having a sexuality. It therefore surely make sense to speak of the denial of sexual needs, and in this limited sense of their repression, but this need not be predicated on the idea that some elemental force that must find expression directly or indirectly is being contained.

These comments on human nature are necessary in order to revise the problematic category of desublimation in keeping with the intensification of the performance principle that has taken place under neoliberalism and flexible accumulation. Marcuse theorized desublimation as resulting from deprivatization because it was precisely sex’s former quality of freedom from direct social control that lent it its powerful attraction (Marcuse, *Five Lectures* 57). Consequently, with the increasing integration of the sexual into everyday life has

come a diminution of its dangerous or threatening qualities and a loss of its radical potential. This process of integration, though – the sheer extent and apparent limitlessness of it, indeed – demystifies the category of the libido as a kind of an almost quantifiable force that has been stored up. We should therefore speak in somewhat more Foucaultian fashion of contemporary levels of sexual awareness and desire as specifically instilled, or provoked, in us, and therefore of repressive incitement. “Repression” here refers both to the specification and privileging of sex over other forms of sensuous experience, and to sexual desire’s reinforcement of the performance principle. Moreover, repressive incitement should not be understood as a generalized subjective experience, as if each individual might be said to be both repressed and incited in more or less equal measure. Rather, the experience of desire and repression are likely to be radically separated out by the system, depending on relative privilege within it: under the performance principle, my pleasures will be paid for by someone.

Though I have little time for Alasdair MacIntyre’s polemic against Marcuse, the assertion that he is “is endlessly willing to talk of “man” rather than of men” (MacIntyre 21)^⑥ is therefore not without justice, (even if it fails to correct the neglect of sexual difference evident in most of Marcuse’s work).^⑦ Thus, it is necessary to recognize that the performance principle distributes privileges, pleasures and sufferings unequally and contradictorily, and does not determine general levels either of repression or satisfaction. I do not accept that Marcuse’s account of Fordist conditions was wholly adequate, but any extrapolation from this to contemporary conditions must be acknowledged as utterly falsifying of life under neoliberalism, flexible accumulation and so – called globalization. Hence, there is a difference between speaking of one – dimensionality as a powerful pressure within contemporary life, and speaking of it as an accomplished fact, determining either pervasive uncritical acquiescence or a pluralized, but always reincorporated, postmodern politics under an abstract hegemony. Hegemony, as Williams pointed out, is a category distinguished by its acknowledgement of intention, and the kind of intention he had in mind is surely everywhere evident to us now.

The logic of the critique of what I have called repressive incitement may seem to be that we should voluntarily resist it. Marcuse even embraced such a position when he suggested that ‘the need to “relax” in the entertainments furnished by the culture industry is itself repressive and its repression is a step toward freedom’ (Marcuse, *Eros* 224). To advocate a form of voluntary resublimation as a form of resistance to the performance principle, however, would constitute a form of left puritanism objectionable in itself, but also especially problematic for those, notably queers, whose social marginalization has forced their dependence on commerce as the foremost element of civil society open to them precisely because of the market’s amorality and capacity to cater to private desire.^⑧

Kate Soper, by contrast, has advocated the development of forces within capitalism, but critical of it, not least through their development of an anti – consumerist “alternative hedonism” through ‘a new erotics of consumption or hedonist “imaginary”’ (Soper, “Alternative” 571).^⑨ Such an erotics should aspire to the dereification of sexuality (in the sense of essence, or source of ultimate fulfilment), but it should also entail the demystification of the family as source of humanist values to be counterposed with the market for the reasons Marcuse highlights in his critique of it. Such hedonism can never be a substitute for political struggle in the self – sacrificial sense, but it seems to me an indispensable supplement to it if utopian critique of the sort Marcuse encouraged is to be a part of the counter – hegemonic project of achieving a world in which anything like the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all, rather than only ever the posited and deferred end.

Eros and Civilization proposes both that a post – capitalist world in which scarcity has been eradicated might be characterized by a diminution in the antagonistic relations between work and leisure, and that the a-

mount of time spent on ineliminable, necessary drudge should diminish. In such a context, the question of culture would be one of primary, rather than secondary, significance – not a matter of how the rarefied arts might be spread around a bit more, but of how all of us might live better and more erotically, in Marcuse's expansive definition of that term. The plausibility of his case is given some credence from an unlikely quarter: even the liberal economist, John Maynard Keynes, speculated that economic growth would have generated sufficient by 2030 for people to have "enough", such that they would only need to work around three hours a day (see Skidelsky 142–43). Under neoliberalism, by contrast, the reverse trend is dominant: we are expected to work more intensively for longer hours, to retire later, and to accept greater job insecurity. The overwhelming reason is clear: because growth serves the private rather than general good. Marcuse's work provides us with critical resources for challenging the hegemony of those who ensure it is so.

Notes

- ①There have been periodic attempts to re-establish Marcuse's significance. In addition to those listed below, see the essays in Bokina and Lukes, *From New Left*; also, more recently, Bowring, "Repressive Desublimation".
- ②I acknowledge that use of the terms "postmodern" and "poststructuralist" are problematic. The former has been defined in various ways, and the latter is an Anglo-Saxon coinage for a variety of mostly French thinkers. Nonetheless, they have a currency and force that has become difficult to avoid. I use "poststructuralism" to refer to the broadly philosophical and theoretical trends within postmodernism. I accept as definitive of the latter Lyotard's claim that it represents 'scepticism towards metanarratives' (xxiv).
- ③For a summary of Marcuse's participation in debates, see Kätz 181–92.
- ④I am conscious that the meaning of the category 'postmodern' lacks clarity, in part because of the different ways it has been defined and used. Still, it carries a certain force that I think is typified by DeKoven's arguments as I outline them here.
- ⑤See, for instance, Liz Thomas, "Public School Singers" on this widely noted phenomenon.
- ⑥This is Best's phrasing in his excellent essay (357).
- ⑦See also their summary of this case in "The Neoliberal (Counter-) Revolution."
- ⑧In fact, Jameson does acknowledge "the class origins of postmodernism", but only in the context of late capitalism and 'as some "non-human" logic of capital' (Jameson, "Marxism/Postmodernism" 382–83).
- ⑨A good summary of the continuities, as well as the shifts, in postwar capitalism in the US is offered by Al Campbell ("Birth of Neoliberalism").
- ⑩Take, for instance, Laura Doan's comment that "the Tory government of the 1980s has encouraged the rapid Americanization of the British economy by calling for a new attitude toward free enterprise and consumerism, and inculcating an ethos of hard work" (69).
- ⑪See, for instance, Alderson, "Making Electricity."
- ⑫Montag this case in detail.
- ⑬Althusser's account of subjectification is facilitated by first suggesting that those institutions Williams considers diverse – churches, schools, Trades Unions, and political parties – are, in fact, State Apparatuses (17). For an astute critique of Althusser's assimilation of different institutions as State Apparatuses, see Benton (102–05).
- ⑭This is also Alan Sinfield's emphasis (Sinfield, *Cultural Politics* 25–26).
- ⑮I phrase this carefully: Harvey only tentatively accepts the language of the "regulation school" on which he draws as a means of establishing broad contrasts.
- ⑯John Bellamy Foster and Fred Magdoff emphasize economic stagnation and capital overaccumulation as the spur to financialization in a series of crucial articles collected in *The Great Financial Crisis*.
- ⑰See, for instance, Guy Standing's *The Precariat*.
- ⑱DeKoven also refers to "fundamentalisms" as part of this overall pattern. I omit that reference here, as it would require separate consideration, but, in any case, fundamentalism doesn't feature prominently elsewhere in DeKoven's analysis.

- ①Fraser develops and pursues her arguments in dialogue with Axel Honneth in *Redistribution or Recognition*. Her original argument provoked a debate with Judith Butler that has been widely commented on: see Butler, “Merely Cultural”. and Fraser, “Heterosexism, Misrecognition and Capitalism: A Reply to Judith Butler.”
- ②These are well summarized by Hennessy (221 – 24).
- ③See, for instance, Harvey, *Postmodernity* (88 – 92), where the emphasis is on space, and *Neoliberalism* (47); also, Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (107 – 24). Lisa Duggan challenges the adequacy of Klein’s and others’ remarks in *The Twilight of Equality* (esp. 67 – 88).
- ④The narratives of these nations, moreover, and their experience of the transition to neoliberalism are different again from those of either Europe or the US, and demand consideration that goes beyond anything I can attempt in this article.
- ⑤The term is, in fact, first used in relation to totalitarianism in Marcuse’s 1934 essay, “The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian Use of the State,” (*Negations* 39), revealing the persistent Frankfurtian sense that there were powerful affinities between administered capitalism and more obviously authoritarian societies.
- ⑥See Lazarus, “Fetish of the West.”
- ⑦Malcolm Miles highlights Lefebvre’s response to meeting Marcuse in 1968 (123). Marcuse did recognize the differences between US and European working class movements, but worried about Americanization: see Marcuse, *Five Lectures* (99 – 100).
- ⑧Marcuse and other members of the Frankfurt School in exile had to be highly circumspect about their Marxism, as Douglas Kellner has pointed out (115). During the McCarthyite years, when *Eros* was written, this was presumably especially necessary. There is no mention of Marxism in the book, and there are no positive references to either socialism or communism, though there are negative references to Stalinism.
- ⑨Elsewhere in the text, Marcuse suggests that the performance principle describes any society – pre – capitalist as well as capitalist – in which the extraction of surpluses takes place. Nonetheless, the dynamism he associates with the performance principle seems characteristic of capitalism specifically – which, presumably for reasons already highlighted, is never named as such in the text. Where I refer to the performance principle in this essay I am referring specifically to the reality principle of capitalism.
- ⑩Jeffrey Weeks speaks in somewhat similar terms of “the sacramental family” in relation to nineteenth century ideals (38 – 56).
- ⑪Kevin Floyd suggests that it was archaic even at the time of *Eros*’s publication (134), but, as I show above, Marcuse was conscious of this. I should, however, acknowledge a more general debt to Floyd’s chapter on Marcuse in thinking through some of my own positions in this essay.
- ⑫This is John H. Gagnon and William Simon’s analysis (9 – 19). One result, however, is that in their analysis conduct almost entirely displaces desire.
- ⑬This is how Marcuse attempts to redeem Freud’s frequently critiqued anthropological speculations (*Eros*, 60).
- ⑭Kellner suggests Marcuse is guilty of “post – scarcity” thinking (345).
- ⑮Jay develops his case on the basis of observations made by Fredric Jameson in *Marxism and Form* (112 – 16).
- ⑯Geras’ self – conscious preference for the category “man” to designate the universal is regrettable, but I don’t think it invalidates his argument by making it gender specific.
- ⑰Diana Fuss presents a good account of the problems associated with these various positions in *Essentially Speaking*, though she remains within a poststructuralist framework that I would suggest is productive of them.
- ⑱MacIntyre’s case is that Marcuse is actually a pre – Marxist left – Hegelian in a way that short – circuits any debate about Marx’s continuing indebtedness to Hegel. See W. Mark Cobb’s essay, “Diatribes and Distortions”.
- ⑲Marcuse was highly sympathetic to feminism as it emerged out of the more general radical milieu of the 1960s. See, for instance, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (74 – 78). In *Eros*, though, the analysis inherits a Freudian focus on the male subject, even – and perhaps especially – when Marcuse positively entertains the possibility of a “castration wish” through identification with the mother (228 – 33). Nonetheless, this represents a critique of bourgeois masculinity.
- ⑳This is the argument of David T. Evans in *Sexual Citizenship* (89 – 113).
- ㉑Soper also adumbrates aspects of what this might mean in “Other Pleasures”.

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