INTRODUCTION: A USER'S GUIDE

In this book there are two texts which simply alternate; you might almost believe they had nothing in common, but they are in fact inextricably bound up with each other, as though neither could exist on its own, as though it was only their coming together, the distant light they cast on one another, that could make apparent what is never quite said in one, never quite said in the other, but said only in their fragile overlapping.

(Georges Perec, _W_ [vii])

One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with. A good book may have three openings entirely dissimilar and inter-related only in the prescience of the author.

(Flann O'Brien, _At Swim-Two-Birds_ 9)

**argument**

This dissertation outlines a new theory of the relation between culture and politics, a theory I call "posthegemony." In the first instance, it presents a critique of current theories of that relation. This critique is twofold, taking on two of the dominant conceptions of culture and of politics today. These are cultural studies on the one hand, and the social scientific discourse of civil society on the other. I suggest that cultural studies' definition of culture in terms of discursive articulation, and its definition of politics therefore in terms of hegemony, substitutes culture for the state, and therefore also confuses culture and the state. At its limit, the logic of hegemony produces an image of culture
that is one with the state. Second, I examine the way in which the social scientific focus on civil society excludes culture from the political in the name of rational discourse. At its limit, however, civil society theory is overwhelmed by the affects it sets out to exclude. What cultural studies and civil society share is an emphasis on discourse and on transcendence. What they fail to confront are immanent processes: either the embedded institutional structures that lie behind the discursive (in the case of cultural studies) or the affective flux that escapes the discursive (in the case of civil society theory).

Therefore in its second half, the dissertation turns to, first, affect and, then, habit as forms of (dis)organization that lie beyond discourse, and so beyond the conceptual apparatus of cultural studies and civil society theory. These concepts provide the basis of posthegemony. I examine Gilles Deleuze's theory of affect, for which immanence is generally to be seen as a space of liberation, and then Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus, in which it is social control that is immanent, and all the more effective as a result. Though these two approaches would appear to be diametrically opposed, I argue that in fact they complement each other, not least because each opens up to the other at critical moments: Deleuze's theory of affect when it has to take account of the suicidal state, and Bourdieu's theory of
habitus when social crisis opens up the possibility of radical ambivalence. Together, Deleuze and Bourdieu point to the need to take account, first, of the double inscription of the state (as both immanence and transcendent quasi-cause), and, second, of the different possible modalities of immanent organization.

In conclusion, therefore, and to complete the theory of posthegemony, I suggest that Antonio Negri's theory of the multitude provides an approach that helps explain the state's double inscription--as both constituent and constituted power. The multitude is also a social subject that constitutes itself on the plane of immanence, and therefore offers the prospect of social formations, or forms of community, that might do without transcendence, and so without either the state or sovereignty. I warn, however, first that the multitude may become corrupted (and so limited), and second that even should the multitude emerge fully, autonomous and unlimited, we may have reason for reservations concerning the end of history that would result.

We might not necessarily want to embrace posthegemony as a project for a future constitution (though I leave that possibility open). But posthegemony as analysis offers a new understanding of the constitution of the present. For the second aspect of my critique of cultural studies and civil society is that, in their partiality, they also mimic the
structures of power that they set out to understand. These structures of power are the two that have been paradigmatic in twentieth-century democratic societies: populism and neoliberalism. Cultural studies is, effectively, populist. Civil society theory is, for all intents and purposes, itself neoliberal. For all the best intentions of their practitioners, neither can serve as the standpoint from which to launch a critique of, respectively, a populism that claims culture can substitute for the state, and a neoliberalism that purports to exclude culture from its domain. Only posthegemony, with its understanding of double inscription, provides a foothold from which the unsaid as well as the said of these political formations can be observed and analyzed.

Together these two aspects combine to provide a level of theoretical argumentation. The dissertation moves from critique to constitution with the contention that these three bodies of theory (Deleuze, Bourdieu, and Negri) can be productively combined to trace a social and historical plane of immanence, a political and social theory that would abjure, and yet also explain, transcendence and transcendentalism at every point. This is the dissertation's affirmative project, its elaboration of a theory of posthegemony, whose elements are affect, habitus, and multitude. Posthegemony encompasses populism and neoliberalism, but also goes beyond them, and beyond even
modernity's contractarian tradition of which they (I argue) form the apogee and last gasp. For we are indeed now moving beyond the period in which the state is constituted by means of double inscription, and entering a period in which immanence is (nearly) all, and epoch now posthegemonic in the temporal sense, beyond and after even the fiction of hegemony. The theory of posthegemony is adequate to this new period. (It may perhaps remain a question as to whether or not it enables us to go beyond and outside it, if there is indeed a beyond and outside that is not simply death itself.)

analysis

In keeping with the conception of posthegemony as analysis, and parallel to its theoretical argument, this dissertation further aims to undertake an engagement with Latin American social, political, and cultural history. This history is arranged as a series of case studies, each of which resonates with a specific theoretical development in that each is envisaged as illustrating, supporting, testing, and amplifying an aspect of the theoretical argument. The chapters are therefore conceived in line with the way in which Deleuze and Félix Guattari projected *A Thousand Plateaus*, and so my historical narrative moves from intensive moment to intensive moment rather than according to strict chronology or narrative teleology. The case studies may
perhaps be read separately, skipped, or, better still, supplemented or replaced by other cases that readers may wish to bring to and test with the theoretical matrix of posthegemony: if not El Salvador, then Colombia, say; if not Chile, then Poland; if not Argentina, then the USA.

Between and among these plateaus as they stand there are three identifiable strands, entailing first a typology of Latin American Left movements from populism to the present, via Maoism, national liberation movements, new social movements, neopopulism, and its breakdown; second, a cultural and literary history of the role played by forms such as film, the media, testimonio, and the novel in Latin American societies; and third, studies of the models of social structure found in the conquest, Argentina, Peru, El Salvador, Chile, and Venezuela, indicating the relations between culture and politics in each.

These two levels are intended to be interwoven and co-present to each other, even as each remains distinct and relatively autonomous. Within each chapter the historical and theoretical arguments are woven together via a mechanism of textual differentiation, in which the historical and cultural material appears in a smaller font size. This arrangement is not meant to indicate any hierarchy of the theoretical over the empirical; indeed the historical and cultural could be viewed as the infrastructure for the
theoretical, which the reader may or may not wish to peruse, according to taste.

My preface has already raised the problem of culture's relation to politics with the question of the pact in the dark. We see right at the outset of colonization instances of contracts and compacts that are simply unable to have their purported effect, not least the pact in the dark in which a group of conquistadors read the so-called Requerimiento, designed to justify colonization to the natives, while its putative addressees are asleep and completely unaware of the reading. The pact itself clearly does not establish the social relation it purports—a relation that will have to be established by some other means, in this case above all by force. But what work is the phantasm of (something like) hegemony achieving?

I return to the question of the contract in my concluding chapter, but the intervening historical analyses might also be understood in terms of pacts that fail, as a series of attempts to bind culture to state, or to secure the legitimacy of the state, that endlessly break down. Peronism, the example taken in chapter one, is a spectacular instance of an attempt to construct a compact between people and nation that is (almost) all-encompassing, that tries to sweep the people up in its promise of populist love that would come to stand in for the state. Neoliberalism,
illustrated in chapter two in its fatal dance with Sendero Luminoso in Peru, is likewise expansive in its attempt to cement the whole of society to the state, but shatters in its encounter with the affect that it would abolish from civil society. In chapter three's focus on the Salvadoran FMLN I look more closely at the nature of insurgency and terror, as the absolute limit of societies of control that also destabilizes the very imposition of limits that the contract aims to establish. The example of Chile in chapter four, therefore, considers resonance to be a better concept with which to understand the relation between culture and state, social movement and reproductive project. The concluding chapter's revisiting of these case studies recapitulates the crisis of the social contract in parallel with a theoretical argument concerning the multitude, the social subject that refuses all pacts, all solidarity. In the postface, the study of Venezuela's recent coup and counter-coup offers an example of an unrepresented—perhaps unrepresentable—insurrection.

Read together, then, these case studies exemplify both the discontinuous and fragmented history of state projects to bind the multitude, and the unbroken history of the multitude's ever-expansive constituent power to which the state reacts. This level of the dissertation, then, may point towards the possibility of a history of the Latin
American multitude in the modern period: from Columbus's crew (1492) to the chavista insurrection (2002). This history could be fleshed out further, for instance with studies of indigenous revolts during the colonial period, of the wars of independence, or of late nineteenth-century immigration. Among more recent movements, one might want to consider the neo-zapatista uprising in Mexico or the piqueteros in contemporary Argentina. What would emerge would be an underground, alternative history of Latin America, a history of insurgencies but also of the means by which hegemonic projects have attempted to turn those insurgencies to the advantage of the state—-from the New Laws of the Indies, the Bourbon reforms, the post-independence settlement, to the twentieth-century history that is more fully outlined here.

Latin America

This is a dissertation about cultural theory and Latin America, not cultural theory in Latin America, or Latin American cultural theory. It proposes a juxtaposition of the two terms that is not quite contingent, not quite necessary. In one regard, as I have suggested, the examples and analyses provided are intended to be interchangeable, almost disposable. In another regard, they are to anchor the theoretical argument. In still another, they are to contaminate and decenter it. The theory of posthegemony
draws from but is also tested by Latin American history. Deleuze, Bourdieu, and Negri are European theorists, but just as Bourdieu used his experience in Algeria during the war of decolonization against France to decenter and revise conceptions of metropolitan society, so also passing European theory through Latin America relocates and dislocates that theory. Passing such theory (and the theory of posthegemony) through other contexts would also dislocate it in other ways, forcing revision and reappraisal.

At the same time, however, at least one of the examples chosen here is not strictly Latin American at all: for all Columbus's protestations, on October 10th, 1492 Latin America did not yet exist for Europe. Indeed, the term "Latin America" would not be coined for another 350 years, and even now one would be hard-pressed to define its limits exactly. Part geography, part politics, part culture, Latin America too overspills its bounds: is Belize Latin America? Quebec? Miami? Lavapiés, Madrid? The Gaucho Grill, Manchester? Elsewhere (in "Latin America and the Global System") I have discussed further the way in which Latin America becomes viral, diffusely global, in contemporary postmodernity. But the history of the conquest, of the colony and its immense transatlantic trade, of populism, and of neoliberalism shows that Latin America has always been global, has always affected and so decentered the global system. In this sense,
a history of the Latin American multitude will necessarily go beyond regional borders, and will directly touch, affect, and infiltrate the metropolitan. Reciprocally, the metropolis is already in some sense Latin American.

I argue therefore that the theories that are the object of my critique--cultural studies and civil society theory--have themselves a hidden, Latin American history. Returning the theory of hegemony (via Ernesto Laclau) and the theory of civil society (via Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato) to a Latin American context is also recentering those theories in the contexts for which they are most adequate. In this sense, I want to give those theories their best shot: not only do I choose what I regard to be their strongest and most developed articulations (in Laclau and in Cohen and Arato), I also test them in contexts that should be favorable to their assumptions. Hence the choice of locations in which to test the theory of posthegemony: if posthegemony can do a better job of explaining the Central American liberation movements (the point of introduction for cultural studies in Latin America) and the transition from dictatorship in the Southern Cone (favored locale for civil society) then a fortiori it is all the more adequate to explain other conjunctures. This is why I am relatively happy to leave neo-zapatismo and the piqueteros out of my analysis, even though they are the movements that have to date most
attracted scholars who work with theorists such as Deleuze and Negri. I am happy to take for granted that posthegemony best explains these movements, if it also best explains the FMLN and the new social movements of the democratic transition. It is, in other words, my contention that though posthegemony arises from a specific Latin American experience, it is not for that specific to any one location.

Cultural theory and Latin America: users are welcome to detach and to re-attach any of the various elements. If theory provides a toolbox for the production and constitution of concepts, it is only history that is the workroom for testing them.

definitions

Before embarking, the reader may feel owed definitions of some key terms, particularly those of culture, state, and civil society that recur throughout the first two chapters. These definitions will necessarily be provisional, as fuller definitions of each term, and the relations between them, emerge from the analyses in the dissertation itself. Specifically, moreover, it is from the historical analyses that their theoretical understanding is drawn, rather than from a prior systematization. Moreover, the mode of presentation of these concepts is complicated by the fact
that each is defined in a distinct manner--substantively, ideally, and functionally according to the case.

To avoid misunderstanding, however, and to forestall the imposition of pre-conceived definitions whose validity I wish to suspend initially, here are some working negations:

Culture here is above all not defined purely in representational terms. In other words, by culture is not meant (simply) a series of symbolizations or significations, whether these be understood in literary, ideological or linguistic terms. The working premise then is that culture is not a secondary formation, an expression or reworking of some other essence. While the cultural may be found within such formations--and so may appear as high culture, as representational culture, as symbolic culture, and so on--the hypothesis is that its meaning is not to be found at such a level. Indeed, my working definition is that culture may not have a meaning, and may rather be substantive and constituent. Culture, in short, is primary; it does not hide some other reality which it would be the object of interpretation to reveal. Culture might instead best be understood under the category of "movement" in its various possible meanings: physical movement, social movement, affective movement.

By contrast, the state here is not primarily defined here substantively or sociologically. In other words, by
state is not meant (simply) a series of institutions and apparatuses. Though the state may be instantiated in such institutions, and the importance and specific weight of such instantiation cannot be ignored, its essence is not to be found in any particular material or substantive form. Rather, the working definition is of the state as above all an idea, an abstract (but also specific) principle, a principle of sovereignty whose achievement is a certain transcendence over culture.

Finally, civil society is defined neither substantively nor ideally. In other words, by civil society here is not meant (merely) either a set of social movements or associations on the one hand, or an abstract social principle on the other. Though, again, civil society may be instantiated in such movements or hypostatized into such a principle, it may also be a concept without an essence on either level. Thus the working definition of civil society is functional or pragmatic, associated with a specific set of relations. Civil society is one name for a series of inter-relations between immanence and transcendence, through which the immanent becomes transcendent and vice versa. It is precisely such mechanisms of conversion--of culture into state, affect into emotion, habit into belief, multitude into people, constituent into constituted power--that are the ultimate interest of this dissertation.