

what mostly interested them; none of the three took it more seriously than her work" (12-13). Although the chapters focussing on the individual artists provide insightful readings of the paintings of Vanessa, for example, or draw provocative links between Woolf's fiction and her friends' aesthetic concerns, too many sentences like the following (from "Vanessa") appear:

Whether they are discussing a new green dress for her and the dinner parties at which it is worn, or the paintings of Giotto and Matisse, for which she has a particular passion, whether their work or their relation, and the problems of each, or the interweaving of Vanessa and her sister Virginia Woolf, Vanessa's writings to Roger stand, concerning her mind and personality and heart, in the place of the private journals kept by Virginia and Carrington, and so many other artists and writers, those journals with their strange and sometimes uneasy relation to the letters, those journals often best described assituated midway between invention or elaboration, and fact. (76)

The effort to make the text flow, to represent the fluidity of life as Caws imagines Bloomsbury to have lived it, leads to a kind of breathless muddle that sometimes loses touch with the subject.

Despite the obvious infelicities of style, the real strength of this book comes through in its careful attention to the work of each artist as it relates to her life as friend, lover, sister, mother (or not). Caws portrays the ongoing anxieties of each about money, about what the others would think, about the ongoing value of the work. The intertwining self-representations that emerge will engage the reader—whose own life is likely to appear barrenly, or blissfully, simple in contrast.

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Tony Bennett. *Outside Literature*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. pp. 320. \$45.00; \$15.95.

Tony Bennett's previous books have made signal contributions to Marxist criticism and theory (*Formalism and Marxism*) and cultural studies (*Bond and Beyond*, written with Janet Woollacott). One is thus at a loss to understand the turn to post-Marxism and Foucauldian anti-Marxism (for such it is) in *Outside Literature*. Without knowing anything in particular about the author's personal or political biography, I shall hazard the view that this book reflects—a word rendered effectively *verboden* as a descriptor for cultural phenomena in Bennett's account, but one that, in some instances, surely remains entirely appropriate and fundamentally accurate—a political and theoretical turn typical of many among the 1960s and 1970s generations of the Anglo-American

left. It is therefore less with the individual author of this text that one wishes to quarrel than with the tendency his book exemplifies among literary and cultural intellectuals. This tendency, I hasten to observe at the outset, I believe to be utterly baleful, both politically and theoretically.

Bennett establishes his post-Marxist *bona fides* early on, contrasting recent Marxist attempts to avoid "the aesthetic connection" with his own program for research:

The most sophisticated Marxist response to idealist and aestheticist understandings of literature's specificity has consisted in the argument, variously formulated, that literature, viewed as a special kind of writing, is the product of historically specific relations of literary production. In countering this, I suggest that literature is more appropriately regarded as a historically specific, institutionally organized field of textual uses and effects. (10)

Try as one may, it is virtually impossible to discern the strong distinction between these two positions Bennett asserts here and throughout *Outside Literature*. Both insist upon the historicity of literary production, on its determination by a complex set of conditions that are not simply intraliterary, and on the potential for altering the current function of literature, and culture generally, in advanced industrial societies. So at least I read the work of Eagleton, Macherey, and Jameson, to all of whom the moniker "sophisticated Marxist response" can be said to apply (and for whom Bennett exhibits varying degrees of disapproval). Bennett professes considerable piety towards Foucault (including a rather puzzling insistence, in a discussion of literary criticism and pedagogy, that we need to displace the notion of ideology's psychological effects by emphasizing its effects on the body—how, one wonders, does literary study discipline the body, save in the most attenuated sense that all mental constructs can produce physical outcomes?). But nothing in his own program for criticism and pedagogy need conflict with the fundamental tenets of historical materialism classically construed. Nor is his description of the pedagogical apparatus especially original or at odds with familiar Marxist accounts (for example, Ohmann and Shor) of how this apparatus is structured to reproduce the relations of production in capitalist society (see pages 286-87, a passage discussed further below). So what's my beef with Bennett, other than that he has grossly misrepresented historical materialism?

The pernicious aspects of Bennett's book derive less from his particular (if often vague) formulations about the literary institution than from his fashionable refusal of the distinctive features of Marxist sociology. It is not that Bennett has gotten the concept of literature wrong; rather, he has abandoned the very instruments of analysis that would allow him "to cash out" his own most significant insights into the position and power of literary production within particular social formations. In dancing around the classical conundrum posed by the base/superstructure topography, Bennett misses the point that social phenomena, while complexly determined and semi-autonomous in relation to each other (as Althusser famously insisted), are nevertheless hierarchically or-

dered, such that some structures (for Marxism the economy) are more fundamental and powerful, that is, more determining, than others. The hypothesis of determination in the last instance by the economy has of course been much disputed—from Durkheim and Weber onwards—but no serious social theorist has held, *pace* the current Foucauldian orthodoxy; that all social facts act with effectively equal force. To take Bennett's privileged instance, it requires more than pure assertion—it requires, indeed, what Bennett never gives: empirical demonstration—to establish that literary production, even in late capitalism, can weigh as heavily in the structure and trajectory of a given social formation as the profit rates of major capitalist firms. If this were so, it might follow that the present Anglo-U.S. (soon to be global) recession could be reversed merely by altering the relations within literary practice, say, by making literature a more egalitarian, less class-stratified enterprise. In truth, it seems most unlikely that any major ideological apparatus, including literature and its attendant pedagogical armature, could be significantly transformed barring widespread political and social changes that undermined the bases of capitalist reproduction. For instance, only by abolishing the market in book and periodical production and in educational credentialing will capitalist literary relations cease to exert an irresistible gravitational pull on these social forms.

Consider for a moment Bennett's description of the literary apparatus as a whole:

[literary institutions] comprise, among other things: particular sets of relations between teachers and students, critics and readers; specific techniques of reading functioning as parts of apparatuses of self-formation; specific forms of examination and assessment with consequences for the modes of production and training of intellectual strata, and so on. There is no singular unity here to be opposed, and dismantled by, a revolutionary criticism but a differentiated field of textual functions and effects requiring forms of analysis and intervention that generalised conceptions of criticism cannot deliver. (286-87)

No Marxist would disagree with the broad outlines of this characterization. Indeed, several variants of the Marxist tradition from Marx through Lenin and Trotsky down to Freire and Renée Balibar have been the source of much that is most valuable and incisive in understanding the stratified nature of the literary educational apparatus. What, however, follows from Bennett's reasonable assessment of the structure of the literary institution?

To stick with the letter of *Outside Literature*, nothing at all. Bennett offers no specific recommendations for altering the literary apparatus at any level. But we may surmise from his description that various familiar tactics like dehierarchizing the classroom, eliminating examinations or rendering them less pressurized, abandoning grades, and so on, would be part of his reforming program. Again, one is hard-pressed to disagree with the intent of such measures. But are they any more likely to realize the social goals he professes than what Bennett derisively dubs "revolutionary criticism"? We do know that to date they have not. If anything, the literary relations of production in the

1990s capitalist West are more, not less, repressive than they were a quarter-century ago when radical pedagogy exploded onto the scene. Publishing has become increasingly concentrated among a handful of transnational giants; the credentialing sieve now permits ever smaller percentages of the population to pass through its narrowing apertures; and the range of literary opinion in the general culture has shrunk steadily with the increased centrality of a handful of influential journals and literary editors. Nothing on the present horizon suggests that the literary institution has been revolutionized by all the worthy and well-intentioned efforts of sixties radicals. Just the reverse.

Are we left, then, only to despair? If we follow Bennett down the reformist road, I expect, yes. But, as I have been maintaining, his abandonment of Marxism is not the only current option. It is incumbent upon those of us who continue to hold onto the possibility of creating socialism in the industrialized West to offer alternatives to the bankrupt programs of liberalism and social democracy. What can be done by cultural intellectuals to defend Marxism's revolutionary social project at this juncture in our history? Nothing that I am about to say is especially original or pathbreaking, but I think it bears repeating—and often—amid the quite general malaise that has overtaken leftist academics and other literary intellectuals in the era of reactionary triumph into which we have, one trusts temporarily, settled.

To begin with, one must take seriously Benjamin's injunction—cited by Bennett (189)—to alter the apparatus of literary production. This project would entail, for example, creating alternative modes of publication to those controlled by the bourgeoisie. In the era of comparatively inexpensive micro-computers, laser printers, and electronic mail, there is no reason why socialists should adopt Luddite attitudes towards silicon chip technology, since their ideas and values can be cheaply and efficiently disseminated across the growing networks linking such machines and their users. Organizations like the Marxist Literary Group and Teachers for a Democratic Culture in the U.S. have already taken advantage of this technology. More socialists should do likewise.

Correlatively, more alternative conferences where socialists and other progressives gather to read papers, conduct seminars and colloquia, and generally share and debate their views are very much in order. Many such already exist, some as annual events (the Institute for Culture and Society, the Marxist Scholars Conference, the Socialist Scholars Conference, the Standing Conference on Realism and the Social Sciences). But we have hardly exhausted the potential to establish regular venues for discussion among socialist intellectuals. I am even tempted to counsel socialists to eschew the vastly more numerous academic gatherings that are dedicated to preserving and extending the bourgeoisie's ideological power while allowing for a non-lethal dose of leftism to season the salad. Life is short, our energies and time limited, and it is therefore necessary to choose carefully where to intervene. At present, there are worse choices than to sustain solidarity with one's socialist comrades.

Both these modest proposals can be summed up in a single injunction to all socialists: support the existing organizations and institutions that promote Marxist and more broadly socialist culture, while looking out for ways to create new ones. There exists a quite lively and reasonably numerous left in Europe and the U.S., out of all proportion to the significance of existing left political parties (in Britain and the U.S., at any event), with considerable intellectual resources and a distinguished record of successful, sustained theoretical production. I see no reason to abandon or denigrate this still vital cultural patrimony, something Bennett's animus against Marxist criticism and theory seems set to do.

Second, as Bennett programmatically recommends, we ought to further the aims of radical pedagogy—never more at risk than during the years of Tory hegemony in Britain and resurgent Republicanism in the U.S.—but in more systematically Marxist and less libertarian ways. Again, I have some few suggestions how this project might be pursued. Given the general, lamentable ignorance of the history of Marxism (and other varieties of socialism) in the culture at large, we have an obligation to teach the classic texts of these traditions, in order, as Roy Bhaskar has put it, “to make socialism the enlightened common sense of our age.” At the same time, one should recognize that these theoretical texts have always been meant to subtend the movement towards human emancipation that has been sustained by many non-professional intellectuals whose lives and labours give ultimate value to socialist theory. We ought as well to teach our students (and ourselves) about working-class, feminist, and non-metropolitan cultures that have been the milieu in which radical politics have historically been born and nurtured. We ought, furthermore, to support adult education, workers' colleges, and similar institutions of non-elite learning, while encouraging our students in elite schools to break down the formal and informal hierarchies that stratify the educational system and thereby help to reproduce the inequitable structure of the society as a whole.

Barring a full-scale revolutionary transformation on the order of Russia in 1917, China in 1949, Cuba in 1959, or Nicaragua in 1979, none of these measures individually or collectively will be sufficient to alter the nature of the literary apparatus, which will remain at base capitalist as long as the social relations of production are so. Tony Bennett is perfectly justified in his skepticism about the revolutionary potential of criticism as such. At the same time, if there is to be a broad-based political movement for socialism in the capitalist West, as Bennett continues to hope, it will have to confront the bulwarks of capitalist culture in order to loosen the grip of bourgeois ideology holding so many in its grasp. “Revolutionary criticism,” if it can mean those practices outlined above, will be, *pace* Tony Bennett, a necessary, if insufficient, condition for any revolution against capital in the U.S. and Britain.

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