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Republicanism: the Career of a Concept

Daniel T. Rodgers

The concept of republicanism was one of the success stories of the 1980s. A generation ago the term—while not unknown—carried no more freight than scores of others in the historical vocabulary. First given formal analytic and conceptual identity in a historiographical essay by Robert Shalhope in 1972, it vaulted within a decade into the eye of scholarly debate over revolutionary and early national politics—and soon thereafter into nineteenth-century historiography as well. By 1985 it had become, in the words of one of its principal critics, “the most protean” concept in antebellum cultural history. By 1990 it was everywhere and organizing everything, though perceptibly thinning out, like a nova entering its red giant phase.¹

The process by which republicanism burst onto the scene was not simply one of intellectual fashion. Nor was it, at heart, a discovery, driven by newly unearthed evidence. It was a conceptual transformation, a reconfiguration of the largely known, a paradigm shift of Kuhnian scale and Kuhnian dynamics—fittingly so, since Thomas S. Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was so closely bound up in it. Sorting the enduring from the merely provocative in Kuhn’s notion of paradigm shifts has constituted a sizable intellectual industry since the book’s publication in 1962. That modern science has moved through intermittent conceptual revolutions, from one highly elaborated structure of assumptions to another, with a precipitousness that often more closely resembled conversion than the accretive processes of normal science was not a novel announcement. What was distinctive to Kuhn was his insistence that the outcome turned, not on the relative comprehensiveness of the competing paradigms—not on the ability of the victor to absorb the

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¹ Robert E. Shalhope, “Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 29 (Jan. 1972), 49–80; Joyce Appleby, “Republicanism and Ideology,” *American Quarterly*, 37 (Fall 1985), 461.

vanquished, as in the textbook claim that Einsteinian physics simply enfolded Newtonianism within it—but on the ability of the new, whose loose ends and explanatory limits were never signally fewer than those of the old, suddenly to make sense of precisely those issues that the profession had identified, for the moment, as its most pressing quandaries. Kuhnian science did not expand; its growth was not additive; it leaped from paradigm to paradigm, from one identifiable set of problematics to another.²

In comparison to those that interested Kuhn, republicanism was a relatively modest paradigm. But the processes of its triumph had a Kuhnian familiarity. Republicanism's place in a succession of explanatory structures, its development by leapfrogging between traditionally isolated subdisciplines and problematics, its ability to explain so many urgent puzzles together with a certain inner vagueness of its own—all were in the nature of paradigm succession. So too was a point Kuhn did not emphasize: the extent to which the new paradigm, born in rivalry and negation, bore the marks of the paradigm it succeeded.

That the rise and efflorescence of republicanism constituted a paradigmatic event, however, is not as remarkable as the historiographic shift itself. The obstacles were formidable. The root texts of the republican synthesis were difficult to the verge of unreadability, highly intellectualistic, and in many respects as consensual as the consensus history they were designed to supplant. The most effective popularizers of the synthesis were the heirs of Charles Beard, historians of the nineteenth-century American working class, committed to the study of conflict, materialists by either neo-Beardian or neo-Marxian custom, often deeply suspicious of ideas. Even eighteenth-century republicanism's interpreters spoke in so many radically different tongues—about time, ideology, politics, and republicanism itself—that it is hard to see how a term so heavily burdened could in normal circumstances have taken off to paradigm status.

But Kuhn's core point is the essential one: Not logic, but interpretive needs create paradigms. The history of the conviction that the concept of republicanism could unlock the basic riddles of American politics and political culture is the history of a conjunction of multiple, sometimes contradictory needs. It is also a history of how historians argue and how concepts persuade.

The republican synthesis can only be understood within a succession of paradigms: Beardian, Hartzian, and republican. The Beardian paradigm organized American history around a restless sea of conflicting material interests; the Hartzian around a stable liberal consensus; the republican around the importance of liberalism's precedents and rivals. Like all successional paradigms, these not only rivaled but also reflected one another, demolishing and mimicking each other's root weaknesses.

² Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1970). See also Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago, 1977).

That was among the reasons that republicanism, cast in paradigmatic opposition to Hartzian liberalism, was to be difficult to define, even to perceive, except in a complex mirror of what it was not.

“Hartzian” was not, in some ways, the second paradigm’s proper name. Few of the consciously post-Beardian, post-progressive American historians of the 1950s and early 1960s shared either Louis Hartz’s aphoristic style or his contention that liberalism had crossed the Atlantic, by feudal default, with the initial English settlements. But among those impressed with the essential stability of American politics, no one put the point of liberal consensus more forcefully than Hartz or swept the concept of an essentially Lockean America over so vast a historiographic territory. “[John] Locke dominates American political thought, as no thinker anywhere dominates the political thought of a nation,” Hartz wrote in *The Liberal Tradition in America*. “He is a massive national cliché.”³

That the very heart of American identity should have been suspended in this way on so slender and bookish a thread would have been still more remarkable had the post-progressive historians’ Locke not been both so much smaller and so much larger than life. Apprentices to the Hartzian paradigm all read the key passages in the *Two Treatises of Government* and learned to cite Locke as an honorary member of the revolutionary generation. That Locke’s writings competed for place with those of scores of rival authorities in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglo-America was not an especially salient fact. The Americans took to Locke, the Hartzians maintained, because American society was already Lockean in its social marrow: individualistic, ambitious, protocapitalist, in a word, “liberal.” Locke’s conclusions already having been embedded in their social experience, they hardly needed to read him—or, in Daniel Boorstin’s variation, anyone else—at all. Except as a tag for an arrangement of society and culture, Locke hardly mattered to the Hartzians.⁴

But as a symbol of balanced, tempered political reasoning, Locke mattered a great deal. To call the Revolution a Lockean revolution was to emphasize not only its social immanence but also its sobriety, “the legalistic, moderate, nonregicidal, and largely nonterroristic character of the American Revolution,” as Richard Hofstadter put it in 1968. By insisting on the authority and ubiquity of Locke’s ideas in the revolu-

³ Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (New York, 1955), esp. 140. For critiques of Hartz from within the post-progressive tradition, see Daniel J. Boorstin, “American Liberalism,” *Commentary*, 20 (July 1955), 99–100; and Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York, 1968), 446–49.

⁴ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, Eng., 1960). How strong the assumption of Locke’s contemporaneity can be seen in a collection of the best scholarly work of the day, Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Reinterpretation of the American Revolution, 1763–1789* (New York, 1968). The index gave John Adams 45 entries, Thomas Jefferson 38, James Madison 31, Alexander Hamilton 30, and John Locke 21; Locke not only eclipsed all other European writers but edged out Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, and George Mason and ran far ahead of George III, Samuel Adams, or Thomas Paine. Similarly Clinton Rossiter, while recognizing that the “greatest” of the English political writers “as far as the colonists were concerned” were John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, left them with 5 citations to Locke’s 42. See Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty* (New York, 1953), 141. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago, 1953).

tionary and postrevolutionary eras, historians and political scientists in the 1950s made Beard's seething class and regional conflicts consensual for a post-progressive age. Locke's centrality to the Americans' revolutionary moment helped explain why theirs was so reasonable a revolution, just as (in the circularity by which paradigms reconfirm themselves) the reasonableness of the Revolution confirmed the pervasiveness in it of Locke's ideas. The critical point, as Hartz put it, was that the Americans did not have to "endure a democratic revolution"—not, that is, a revolution of the European sort, culminating in the frenzy of a Maximilien Robespierre or a Lenin. To invoke Locke was to evoke a revolution marked by rationality and moderation, by a minimum of the terrible messiness of most revolutions, and hence (for better or for worse) a lasting immunity to the revolutionary contagions that followed.⁵

Explaining so much—the relatively contained dynamics of the Revolution, the relatively easy transition to high capitalism, the weakness of both Continental-style conservatism and Continental-style socialism in America—the Hartzian paradigm (like all paradigms) left its share of loose ends. Conflict was the most important. Rather than confronting the accumulated Beardian evidence of endemic social conflict, the Hartzians prevailed by raising the stakes of what counted as *meaningful* conflict, until every conceivable demonstration of conflict short of Jacobin or Bolshevik revolution vanished in the all-pervasive liberal consensus. This is the way of paradigms: not to refute incongruent data, but to deflect attention from them, rearrange their weighted values, and diminish the importance of their related problematics. The result was the construction of a paradigm virtually impregnable to the big event of 1960s and 1970s historiography, the massive revival of neo-Beardian social history. But let the leading ideas of the Revolution seem less Enlightened than was appropriate to a Lockean revolution, let them seem more anxious and frenzied, and the case was potentially more difficult.

Of anxiety there had all along been a good deal of evidence. Eighteenth-century Americans' sense of history ran to cycles rather than linear progress and spun off quickly into fantasy or despair. They worried incessantly the question of national destiny and the fragility of their experiment in a kingless republic—as if unaware (as Hartzian Americans should not have been) that reassurance lay in the social fabric under their very feet. They were prone to nightmares in which partisan disputes appeared as treason, in which the accidents of imperial mismanagement turned into conspiracy and deliberate design.⁶

By the mid-1960s evidence of a great deal of revolutionary anxiety was suspended anomalously in the air, unintegrated into the Hartzian paradigm yet without any

⁵ Hofstadter, *Progressive Historians*, 162; Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 35.

⁶ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689–1775* (New York, 1962); Roger H. Brown, *The Republic in Peril: 1812* (New York, 1964); John R. Howe, Jr., *The Changing Political Thought of John Adams* (Princeton, 1966); John R. Howe, Jr., "Republican Thought and the Political Violence of the 1790s," *American Quarterly*, 19 (Summer 1967), 147–65; Cecilia M. Kenyon, "Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Government," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 12 (Jan. 1955), 3–46; Stow Persons, "The Cyclical Theory of History in Eighteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly*, 6 (Summer 1954), 147–63.

counterparadigmatic structure of its own. Edmund S. Morgan's "The Puritan Ethic in the American Revolution," published in 1967, is a case in point. In that widely read essay, Morgan's eye swept in virtually all the themes soon to be subsumed under the "republicanism" label: the Americans' fear of British corruption, fear of the grasping, fatal effects of luxury, fear of their own inability to sustain the self-denying virtues on which a republic depended. But Morgan could explain all this only as the residue of "Puritanism," which had apparently not only perdured in New England but also somehow oozed down to the southern colonies during the early years of the Enlightenment to resurface in Puritans manqué such as Richard Henry Lee and Henry Laurens. Morgan's was a particularly striking example of a brilliant essay suspended in a paradigmatic vacuum, and it was not alone. Gordon S. Wood, writing a year earlier of the "fear and frenzy, the exaggerations and the enthusiasm, the general sense of social corruption and disorder" heavy in the revolutionary air, could only grope for the psychohistorical language of a recurrent "revolutionary syndrome."⁷

The Hartzian paradigm, to be sure, possessed strategies to contain these signs of the underappreciated emotionality of the Revolution. The most important was the notion of a paranoid style, reconceived, not as a particular response to particular social strain, but as a constant undercurrent to the Lockean mainstream.⁸ But the recognition gathering force so rapidly in the mid-1960s that the best and brightest of eighteenth-century Americans had been steeped in thought processes akin to those of McCarthyites and John Birchers was not a little troubling. Having tied the nation's fundamental identity to the Revolution and the constitutional settlement, having tied the Revolution to Locke, and Locke to a particular set of "liberal" ideas and a rational style, the Hartzian paradigm was hard pressed to accommodate this challenge to the Lockean card with which it had so long trumped the Beardian signs of conflict.

The interpretive crisis came in a Kuhnian paradigm shift of almost textbook form. Within a decade of the publication of Morgan's essay, the syndromes, the anxieties, the paranoid style, the aberrant outcroppings of the Puritan ethic, all cohered in something called republicanism. Like most paradigm shifts, the phenomenon entailed no slow scraping of geological plates against each other but a quick, decisive conceptual rearrangement around a new scheme and center. Within five years Robert Shalhope's "synthesis" was Robert Kelley's "discovery"—indeed "one of the striking discoveries of recent scholarship . . . that republicanism was the distinctive political consciousness of the entire Revolutionary generation."⁹

The prime movers in this event were three books: Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967), Gordon S. Wood's *The Creation of the*

⁷ Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 24 (Jan. 1967), 3–43; Gordon S. Wood, "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution," *ibid.*, 23 (Jan. 1966), 25.

⁸ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York, 1965).

⁹ Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis"; Robert Kelley, "Ideology and Political Culture from Jefferson to Nixon," *American Historical Review*, 82 (June 1977), 536.

America Republic (1969), and J. G. A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975).¹⁰ But books alone rarely change minds, still less regroup a discipline's reigning schools and paradigms, and this trio was weighted with particular liabilities. The first of them, written with great lucidity and grace, employed neither of the key terms—*republicanism* or *virtue*—by which the paradigm would be identified. The opening half of Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* offered a brilliant, contra-Lockean reading of revolutionary rhetoric, in which notions of power and liberty coalesced in escalating conspiratorial nightmares. But with independence, Bailyn's Revolution reverted to a Hartzian frame, climaxing in a release of assertions inherent in colonial society long before.¹¹ It was in Wood's *Creation* in 1969 that republicanism first emerged as a distinct organizing theme, to which, six years later, Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* gave a global context and history. But Wood's book, so intricately argued and suspended by such subtle threads between Beardian and post-Beardian impulses that twenty years later historians were still trying to figure out what it said, was very difficult to see whole. As for *The Machiavellian Moment*, its difficulty was so notorious that few actually scaled it. J. H. Hexter might brag that he had struggled through every one of its "lumbering, crooked, mammoth sentences," but far fewer historians followed Hexter's example than said, or implied, they had done so. Most American historians, including many who entered the pro- and anti-Pocock debates, confined themselves to the book's last chapter, and more still, given the argumentative density they found even there, stuck with Pocock's earlier essay "Virtue and Commerce." Difficult arguments have their advantages as paradigm makers, drawing young, smart minds to them and making converts out of those who successfully crack the code. Still, in comparison to the straightforward assaults of the young neo-Beardians flooding into the profession in the early 1970s, this was an unlikely trio of books to down the Hartzian paradigm.¹²

Complexity was one liability; terrible simplification was another. Locke being at the symbolic core of the Hartzian paradigm, efforts to release Locke's hammerlock on the American mind were prominent in the argumentative strategies through which the republicanism project took shape. Bailyn, while not denying Locke's influence in eighteenth-century America, surrounded him with so large a mass of rival publicists and pamphleteers that his singularity disappeared. Wood gave him a handful of inconsequential citations. Pocock's early formulations wrote Locke off

¹⁰ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill, 1969); J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975). The gist of Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* had been published two years before as the "General Introduction" to Bernard Bailyn, ed., *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750–1776* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 3–202.

¹¹ Gordon S. Wood, "The Creative Imagination of Bernard Bailyn," in *The Transformation of Early American History: Society, Ideology, and Authority*, ed. James A. Henretta, Michael Kammen, and Stanley N. Katz (New York, 1991), 16–50.

¹² Merrill Jensen, "A Long and Complex Book," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 45 (Autumn 1969), 682–86; "The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787: A Symposium of Views and Reviews," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 44 (July 1987), 549–640; J. H. Hexter, *On Historians: Reappraisals of Some of the Makers of Modern History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 260; J. G. A. Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (Summer 1972), 119–34.

as altogether irrelevant to the American controversy and, for good measure, virtually irrelevant to the mainstreams of English history. When Shalhope announced the birth of a republican synthesis in 1972, a skeptical attitude about Locke's transatlantic influence was, not accidentally, its first characteristic.¹³

Yet as argumentative strategies lure challengers into the constructs of the challenged, those who had dismissed Locke soon found themselves taking the Locke question more seriously than ever. In the Hartzian paradigm, Locke had been shorthand for a general state of mind and society. Rather than challenge this abstracted Locke at the level of culture and society, Bailyn and Pocock pitted the authority of his writings against that of his rivals' writings; they stripped Locke of any special key to the revolutionary mind only by passing it on to others. The writers who brought revolutionary ideas "into a coherent whole" and "shaped the mind of the American Revolutionary generation," Bailyn claimed, were not Locke's heirs but the "country" polemicists of early eighteenth-century Britain: John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, Benjamin Hoadly, and Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke.¹⁴ Pocock's sense of lineage was longer and more exhilarating: behind the revolutionary generation, the English country writers; behind the country party, James Harrington; behind Harrington, Niccolò Machiavelli and the discourse of civic humanism—all way stations on an intellectual route from the Renaissance to the Revolution that bypassed Locke altogether. To describe the Revolution as empowered by the ideas of "commonwealth" or "country" Englishmen quickly became axiomatic among writers in the emerging republicanism vein, though it represented an intellectualization of the Revolution with a vengeance.

Moreover, as intellectual history, this investing of the revolutionary mind in the texts of a handful of English publicists was clearly wrong. It squeezed out massive domains of culture—religion, law, political economy, ideas of patriarchy, family, and gender, ideas of race and slavery, class and nationalism, nature and reason—that everyone knew to be profoundly tangled in the revolutionary impulse. One has only to compare the nervously complicated, encyclopedic structure of Henry F. May's *The Enlightenment in America*, completed before the republicanism paradigm took hold, with the work that followed to see how swiftly and drastically late eighteenth-century intellectual history was simplified (and secularized), repackaged along those linear lines of influence that had long given political theory a bad name. The upshot was not only a heated and futile quarrel over the measurable influence of Locke vis-à-vis that of the commonwealth pamphleteers but also a cascade of similarly posed permutations on the same line: Locke versus Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, Locke versus Jean Jacques Burlamaqui, Locke versus Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and the Scots humanists. As the simplifications of the Hartzian paradigm led to countersimplifications, recapitulating in defeat variations on its own exaggera-

¹³ Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce," 127–29; J. G. A. Pocock, "The Myth of John Locke and the Obsession with Liberalism," in *John Locke*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock and Richard Ashcraft (Los Angeles, 1980), 3–21; Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis."

¹⁴ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 34–35.

tions, the republican synthesis threatened to degenerate into an argument about sources and influence, as if the revolutionary mind had come across the Atlantic in one or another late eighteenth-century sailing vessel, packed as tract and pamphlet, to be grafted onto a headless social body.¹⁵

Compounding the burdens of heroic inaccessibility and heroic simplification, finally, was the fact that the paradigm makers offered up, not one paradigm, but two. Harvard republicanism (Republicanism_H) and St. Louis republicanism (Republicanism_S) were the rival camps, and from the beginning they were at odds in assumptions, methods, adherents, and language. Even the names were not at first the same. Wood's "republicanism" was "country ideology" to those in the circle of Pocock's influence. Not until after 1980, when the Pocockians' resistance to the "republicanism" tag finally gave way, were the two camps literally on speaking terms with one another.

Harvard republicanism as it culminated in Wood's *Creation* was at its core dualistic. It saw American history as swung on a great hinge between traditional and modern, and its imagination was riveted to the moment in which modernity came into being. Bailyn's Revolution had been conceptually simpler: an explosive release of accumulated tension, to which he has consistently claimed "republicanism" irrelevant.¹⁶ On the other hand, Wood, who had been Bailyn's student, was by 1969 no longer impressed by the social-psychological familiarity of the nightmares Bailyn's work had emphasized; he was struck, rather, by their "irretrievability and differentness," their place in an "essentially classical and medieval" mental frame. Republicanism, sweeping into colonial political culture with near utopian force in 1774-1775, entered as a modernizing impulse, impelling and giving expression to the regenerative ambitions of the Revolution. But the key republican injunction, Wood held, was a profoundly traditional one, the preeminence of the "public good." Whether expressed in fantasies of a new Christian Sparta, the mobbing of Tories and war laggards, or the exhortations of pamphleteers and ministers, "the sacrifice of individual interests to the greater good of the whole formed the essence of republicanism and comprehended for Americans the idealistic goal of their Revolution," Wood wrote. "From this goal flowed all of the Americans' exhortatory literature and all that made their ideology truly revolutionary."¹⁷

¹⁵ Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, 1976). For a rare exception to the republicanism writers' secular readings of eighteenth-century political culture, see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven, 1977). For the debate over intellectual influences, see Staughton Lynd, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (New York, 1968); Morton White, *The Philosophy of the American Revolution* (New York, 1978); Morton White, *Philosophy, The Federalist, and the Constitution* (New York, 1987); Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (Garden City, 1978); Garry Wills, *Explaining America: The Federalist* (Garden City, 1981); Ronald Hamowy, "Jefferson and the Scottish Enlightenment: A Critique of Garry Wills's *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence*," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 36 (Oct. 1979), 503-23; and Daniel W. Howe, "European Sources of Political Ideas in Jeffersonian America," *Reviews in American History*, 10 (Dec. 1982), 28-44.

¹⁶ Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence* (New York, 1990), 225-78.

¹⁷ Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, viii, 53.

So swift a moral pace was not to be stood. By the 1780s, in Wood's account, the pull and strain of revolutionary politics, the difficulty of holding to the public good as a real, tangible essence amidst a clamor of partial interests, had finally overwhelmed the republican faith. The Constitution, designed with no hope of obviating conflict but merely the hope of managing and containing it, represented a breakthrough to "an entirely new" and "recognizably modern" conception of politics.¹⁸ Republicanism swooned; out of the Constitution's side stepped liberalism. The Hartzians had been not altogether wrong, but they had misplaced the hinge of modernity, bollixed chronology, and badly underplayed the drama of the event.

Republicanism_S, which came at American history steeped in early modern English history, was attuned to far longer historical lines. Where Wood's imagination was dialectical, Pocock's was geological and stratigraphic—drawn to those cliffs and outcroppings where buried ideational formulations, coursing through vast expanses of time, seemed to heave themselves unexpectedly into view. Wood's republicanism was constructed in quarrel with England; Pocock's, born in the city-states of Renaissance Italy, was a quarrel with time itself. Wood's republicanism reverberated to near utopian hopefulness; Pocock's was born out of pessimism and anxiety, out of a quarrel with the degenerative forces of history, the corrupting drag of time that (barring heroic resistance or fortunate social arrangements) threatened to undermine every momentary republican venture. The heart of Wood's republicanism was the preeminence of the public good; not *public*, but *civic* was the key term in Pocock's construct. It was on the field of civic action, if anywhere, that time, fortune, and corruption might be withstood. "Virtue," which Wood read as self-denial, Pocock read as public self-activity—in which "personality," undergirded by sufficient property to give it independence, threw itself (for its own "perfection" and the survival of the republic) into citizenship, patriotism, and civic life. Wood gave republicanism a precise ethical content and a vague and unsatisfying history. The lineage of Pocock's republicanism was crystalline, but its moral was far more complex and trickier to read.¹⁹

Compounding these differences, Republicanism_H and Republicanism_S favored radically different accounts of postrepublican history. Wood's America had "broken through" to a modern sense of politics by 1787. For Pocock, the key to modernity was acceptance of the contingent nature of history. Arriving in St. Louis from New Zealand with *The Machiavellian Moment* half-formed in 1966, he had a hard time dispelling an outsider's sense that the United States was barely modern at all. The footnotes that track his readings in American history over the next decade show a fixation on the great historians of myth and symbolic evasion—Henry Nash Smith on mirages in the West, Ernest L. Tuveson on American millennialism, John Wil-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, viii.

¹⁹ J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York, 1971); Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 507; Lance Banning, "Some Second Thoughts on Virtue and the Course of Revolutionary Thinking," in *Conceptual Change and the Constitution*, ed. Terence Ball and J. G. A. Pocock (Lawrence, 1988), 194–212.

liam Ward on Andrew Jackson's mythic presence, and Leo Marx on the landscape of the mind—as well as Hartz, Bailyn, Wood, and Boorstin. The quarrel with time, which had resolved itself in early nineteenth-century England into a sense of historicity, seemed to Pocock still going full blast in America. Born in “dread of modernity,” Pocock's United States was being dragged into modern times only over massive resistance—if, indeed, it had got there yet.²⁰

Over the terms of republicanism's end, Republicanism_H and Republicanism_S thus quickly fell out of agreement. When Wood turned to the early national period he found a society dancing feverishly to the tune of “modern American liberalism.” The mark of St. Louis republicanism, by contrast, was a reluctance to date the “end of classical politics” as early as Wood had put it. Lance Banning, John M. Murrin, Nathan Hatch, and Drew R. McCoy saw the telltale dynamics of court and country at work from the 1790s through the Madison administration, and Rowland Berthoff discerned them well into the Jacksonian era. Republicanism_H collapsed all at once in a clatter of constitutional argument. Republicanism_S staggered on to a slower death.²¹

It is, then, to none of the usually ascribed attributes of intellectual systems—clarity, comprehensiveness, or coherence—that we must look for the rapidly gathering force of the republican synthesis in the 1970s. Like all paradigms, it drew power less from its logic than from the mesh of its premises with the shifting canons of common sense. In this regard, the critically important contingency in republicanism's success was the structuralist turn in 1970s intellectual history. Republicanism had entered the historical literature in the familiar dress of “ideas.” In his pre-1970 essays, Pocock had called civic humanism a “current of ideas,” a “vocabulary,” a “concept,” a “style of thought.” Bailyn wrote of “strands of thought,” “ideas” and “attitudes,” “premises and theories.” Wood's *Creation* introduced republicanism as a “conception.” The broader word waiting in the wings was “ideology,” but though it pops up here and there in Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* and Wood's *Creation*, it merited neither index entry nor comment; as late as 1966 Wood had passed it by altogether, noting that nothing was more “perplexing” in the scholarly literature than the problem of ideology. The perplexing and encumbering baggage

²⁰ Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 614; Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950); Ernest L. Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago, 1968); John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (New York, 1955); Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York, 1964); Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 509.

²¹ Gordon S. Wood, “The Significance of the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 8 (Spring 1988), 8; Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca, 1978); John M. Murrin, “The Great Inversion, or Court versus Country: A Comparison of the Revolutionary Settlements in England (1688–1721) and America (1776–1816),” in *Three British Revolutions, 1641, 1688, 1776*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Princeton, 1980), 368–453; Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty*; Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, 1980); Rowland Berthoff, “Independence and Attachment, Virtue and Interest: From Republican Citizen to Free Enterpriser, 1787–1837,” in *Uprooted Americans: Essays to Honor Oscar Handlin*, ed. Richard L. Bushman et al. (Boston, 1979), 97–124. Murrin and Berthoff were Pocock's colleagues at Washington University. Banning and Hatch were Murrin's and Pocock's students there. Drew McCoy, whose work drew on both schools of interpretation, wrote his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Virginia in correspondence with Banning, Murrin, and Wood.

pressing down on "ideology" in the late 1960s was Marxism. The historiographic mainstream, distancing itself from any Marxian taint, ran toward looser, suppler, more figurative categories: currents of ideas, persuasions, myths, mind.²²

By the early 1970s, however, in response to the challenges of the new social history, intellectual historians were grasping for harder stuff, for conceptualizations that would invest ideas with social power so unmistakable that even the behavioralists in the profession would have to pay attention: in short, for something very like ideology. In the pinch, Clifford Geertz's reformulation of ideology on non-Marxian lines found an extraordinarily eager reception. By 1973 Bailyn had discovered Geertz's "Ideology as a Cultural System" and recast the argument of his *Ideological Origins* in its terms. Between formal ideas and social experience was a middle stratum of mind that "crystallizes otherwise inchoate social and political discontent," mobilizes "disconnected, unrealized private emotions," elevates "to structured consciousness" confused and mingled urges, that in short constructs a revolutionary *mentalité*. Shalhope in the early 1970s was likewise deeply engaged in the literature of "ideology" and in Geertz's reading of it in particular. To the Wingspread Conference on New Directions in American Intellectual History in 1977, where the conversation was thick with references to Kuhn and Geertz, Gordon Wood brought a dazzling essay on the structuring and deterministic power of ideas, drawn from Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Émile Durkheim, Michel Foucault, and, most heavily, Geertz.²³

For the next decade the rhetoric of eighteenth-century intellectual historians was suffused with references to Geertzian winks and twitches, cognitive road maps, and culturally constructed realities. Few readers of Geertz bothered to go past his 1964 essay, "Ideology as a Cultural System," to the looser and more ruminative writings that followed it. The need of the moment was for means of investing the ethereal stuff of mind with convincing social power. As the most recent intellectual construct to arrive on the scene, republicanism was the first to be rebaptized as ideology;

²² J. G. A. Pocock, "Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 22 (Oct. 1965), 551; Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time*, 96, 90, 85; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 34, 26, 55, 61; Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 48; Wood, "Rhetoric and Reality," 25n47.

²³ Bernard Bailyn, "The Central Themes of the American Revolution: An Interpretation," in *Essays on the American Revolution*, ed. Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson (Chapel Hill, 1973), 11; Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter (Glencoe, 1964), 47-76; Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis," 78-80. For the Wingspread conference article, see Gordon S. Wood, "Intellectual History and the Social Sciences," in *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, ed. John Higham and Paul K. Conkin (Baltimore, 1979), 27-63. Thomas Haskell's paper on Kuhn and Dorothy Ross's commentary on Pocock ran in similar directions, but it was Geertz, Higham wrote, who was "virtually the patron saint" of the conference. Higham, "Introduction," *ibid.*, xvi. Thomas L. Haskell, "Deterministic Implications of Intellectual History," *ibid.*, 132-48; Dorothy Ross, "The Liberal Tradition Revised and the Republican Tradition Addressed," *ibid.*, 116-31. Wood's points of reference were Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, 1966); Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller, ed. George E. G. Catlin (Glencoe, 1938); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: Introduction to the Archeology of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1970); and Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973).

through its attachment to the Revolution, it became a particularly forceful example of what an ideology could do.

Pocock's turn toward structuralism was likewise a phenomenon of the early 1970s, though it came, not through Geertz, but through Kuhn, and its key word was *language*. Pocock's references to language through the late 1960s were still couched largely within the speech-act frame he shared with other Cambridge University-trained political theorists, with its stress on utterances as forms of intended action. "Languages and Their Implications" in 1971, however, suddenly breathed a new, Kuhnian vocabulary of "paradigms," "paradigmatic structures," and "language systems." For Geertz's converts, ideology structured the imaginative construction of reality; for Pocock through the 1970s, language structured the means and vocabularies by which reality could be described. Ideas cohered (and, to a great extent, disappeared) in languages, speech acts in "paradigm systems," intentions in the available means of expression. "Men think by communicating language systems," he wrote. "Authors—individuals thinking and articulating—remain the actors in any story we may have to tell, but the units of the processes we trace are the paradigms of political speech."²⁴

This was a soft structuralism, not the hard structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss or Noam Chomsky. Languages and ideologies alike were open to the push and pull of individuals and experience. Political language was inherently ambiguous and "multivalent," Pocock wrote; concepts "migrated" from one paradigm structure to another. Wood wrote of the need for a "zoom lens" capable of focusing both on "the small world of free will, moral purpose, and individual intention and the large world of deterministic aggregate culture."²⁵ Still, one should not minimize the phenomenon by which the first, tentative formulations of republicanism were hoisted on the back of these big aggregative constructs. Whether as ideology or as language, the new conceptual schemes organized, structured, and empowered all the messy, emotional, frenzied, utopian, extra-Lockean stuff in the late eighteenth-century air. They pulled these anomalies out of the category of the aberrant and psychological. They endowed them with a history, behavioral consequences, and causal force. By investing effective reality in the imaginative constructions of the mind, the new formulations drew the sting from the social historians' claim to comprehend power; the Beardians' talk of ideas as the mere propaganda of classes and interest groups melted in the Geertzian air. *Vis-à-vis* the Hartzians, it made the Revolution important; no longer was the Revolution to be thought of as the realization of an inchoate political mind but as a great, grinding confrontation of ideologies, paradigms, and languages. If the formulations lopped off large expanses of the mental structures they purported to clarify, if they seemed to dwell obsessively on sources and influences, if in their early phase they ran wild with overstatements of

²⁴ Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time*, 15, 25.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17–23; Wood, "Intellectual History," 37, 38.

method, both simplification and exaggeration were in the nature of paradigm succession.

Not surprisingly, this combination of substantive and methodological claims quickly drew the ire of those unwilling to discard the notion of an essentially liberal Revolution. Joyce Appleby, the most prolific critic of those she was by 1986 calling the "ideological historians," waged a running fight with Pocock and his students over their failure to recognize the presence of a market-based economy, a corpus of early, market-based liberal theorizing, and a rapidly growing audience for liberal individualist political ideas. To a left critic of the republicanism paradigm like Isaac Kramnick, to leave Locke and bourgeois liberalism out of the story was to dissolve class relations into a court/country schematic "too confusing to be useful." To a right Hartzian like John Diggins, America was nothing if it was not Locke and Calvin, acquisitiveness and guilt, locked in tragic embrace. For all of them, the new stress on language and ideology sharply compounded the problem: for Appleby because it allowed too little room for dissent and novelty, for Kramnick because it was too soft, for Diggins because it imputed behavioral consequence to ideas at all.²⁶

Rather than weakening republicanism's paradigm status, however, the controversy strengthened it. Republicanism ("vague and supple," Shalhope had called it in its birth announcement, "a difficult concept for historians to define") was reified and popularized less by its formulators than by its antagonists. Pursued through the profession's most widely read journals, the attack climaxed in 1984 with the publication of Appleby's *Capitalism and a New Social Order* and Diggins's *The Lost Soul of American Politics*. The next year the *American Quarterly* published a widely heralded special issue on "Republicanism"; in 1986 the precise and cautious managers

²⁶ The first phase of the controversy, through 1986, may be followed in Joyce Appleby, "Liberalism and the American Revolution," *New England Quarterly*, 49 (March 1976), 3-26; Joyce Appleby, "Modernization Theory and the Formation of Modern Social Theories in England and America," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 20 (April 1978), 259-85; Joyce Appleby, "The Social Origins of American Revolutionary Ideology," *Journal of American History*, 64 (March 1978), 935-58; J. G. A. Pocock, "To Market, to Market: Economic Thought in Early Modern England," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 10 (Autumn 1979), 303-9; Joyce Appleby, "Ideology and the History of Political Thought," *Intellectual History Group Newsletter* (no. 2, Fall 1980), 10-18; J. G. A. Pocock, "An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs? A Note on Joyce Appleby's 'Ideology and the History of Political Thought,'" *ibid.* (no. 3, Spring 1981), 47-51; Joyce Appleby, "Response to J. G. A. Pocock," *ibid.* (no. 4, Spring 1982), 21-22; Joyce Appleby, "What Is Still American in the Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson?" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 39 (April 1982), 287-309; Joyce Appleby, "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic," *Journal of American History*, 68 (March 1982), 833-49; Isaac Kramnick, "Republican Revisionism Revisited," *American Historical Review*, 87 (June 1982), 629-64; Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York, 1984); John Patrick Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York, 1984); John Ashworth, "The Jeffersonians: Classical Republicans or Liberal Capitalists?" *Journal of American Studies*, 18 (Dec. 1984), 425-35; John Patrick Diggins, "Comrades and Citizens: New Mythologies in American Historiography," *American Historical Review*, 90 (June 1985), 614-38; Donald Winch, "Economic Liberalism as Ideology: The Appleby Version," *Economic History Review*, 38 (May 1985), 287-97; Keith Thomas, "Politics as Language," *New York Review of Books*, Feb. 27, 1986, pp. 36-39; Lance Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited: Liberal and Classical Ideas in the New American Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 43 (Jan. 1986), 3-19; and Joyce Appleby, "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts," *ibid.*, 20-34. For the quotations from Appleby and Kramnick, see *ibid.*, 29; and Kramnick, "Republican Revisionism," 661.

of the *William and Mary Quarterly*, deciding the moment of testing was over, finally allotted a place to "republicanism" in the journal's annual index.²⁷

The acceptance of republicanism in revolutionary and early national historiography was, to be sure, one part victory, one part containment. Pocock excepted, it was a rare writer in either the Republicanism_S or the Republicanism_H vein who doubted that liberalism ultimately swept up the nation's economic, political, and cultural life. The project was to stay the hand of the Hartzian moment, not to deny it. Once the initial polemics over ideologies and paradigms were past, this proved a workable point of compromise. The irony was that in the mid-1980s, just as the project of containment was approaching success, the concept was tearing across the nineteenth century, in Appleby's words, like "wildfire."²⁸ Compounding the irony, it was historians on the left, who might have been expected to be talking in Beardian or Marxian terms, who were primarily responsible.

The initial reception of republicanism among historians of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century working classes was indeed sharp and almost unmitigatedly hostile. The discovery of "labor republicanism," like the discovery of civic republicanism a decade before, was testimony less to the logic of the construct of republicanism than to its ability to answer so many needs—to gather, like a mass of tumbleweed, so many different problematics.

Consensualism formed the gravity of the initial complaint. To scholars engaged in unearthing the history of those they called the "inarticulate," the early formulations of the republicanism paradigm wore their liabilities on their sleeves. Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* had read revolutionary ideology out of the writings of a cadre of well-placed pamphleteers. Wood's evidential base, while vastly larger, stuck very close to those with easy access to the printing press; Pocock, whose American chapter was second-order reinterpretation of others' research, had scarcely read any primary sources in American history at all. Neither Wood nor Pocock, to be sure, was a simple consensus historian. Wood's narrative was propelled by a running battle between elite and democratic forces; Pocock's by the clash of court and country. The turbulent midsection of Wood's account, however, was bracketed by static, consensual bookends. As for Pocock's story, the massive quarrel driving the history of early modern England seemed to frazzle out in America, where the country forces faced so weak an opposition that Pocock occasionally wrote of America as all country and no court at all. Where Wood and Pocock mixed the instincts of consensus historians with massive doubts, many of their followers, in the heady moment of republicanism's discovery, came very close to the real thing. In the mid-1970s Shalhope wrote of republicanism as so permeating Thomas Jefferson's America as to represent "a general consensus within American society." Banning wrote of a "heritage of clas-

²⁷ Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis," 72; special issue, "Republicanism in the History and Historiography of the United States," ed. Joyce Appleby, *American Quarterly*, 37 (Fall 1985).

²⁸ Appleby, "Republicanism and Ideology," 462.

sical republicanism and English opposition thought" that "left few men free" to perceive the political world through any other "intellectual medium."²⁹

To social historians struggling to reconstitute the class and racial groups jostling for place in late eighteenth-century America, all this came as a fan of red flags. Jackson Turner Main, offended by Wood's failure to take seriously voices beyond the ministerial and lawyerly elite, called Wood's *Creation* a "dead end." When Alfred F. Young's bicentennial collection of the best of the new neo-Beardian work on the Revolution appeared in 1976, only E. P. Thompson rivaled Bailyn in index entries—Bailyn's consensus assumptions acting as a lightning rod for the contributors' anger and rebuff.³⁰

Compounding consensus was the matter of ideas. On this issue the rhetoric of social history writing in the late 1960s and the 1970s was reflexively dualistic: ideas versus behavior; rhetoric versus "the concrete realities of life"; propaganda and mystification on the one hand, the real stuff on the other. There were clumsy Beardian ways to put the point, and sophisticated neo-Marxian ways to put it, but the underlying skepticism about ideas was the same. When in the mid-1970s Joan Hoff Wilson came across the claims for mothers' virtue that would take shape under Linda Kerber's eyes as "republican motherhood," the words seemed to Wilson mere "flowery rhetoric, . . . a patina of platitudes." Gary B. Nash's treatment of the patriot rhetoric of "public virtue" and "the public good" ran down the same grooves; they were the "catchwords" of "aristocratic politicians," employed "to cloak their own ambitions for aggrandizing wealth and power." To social historians struggling to pry eighteenth-century history apart into a multiplicity of social experiences, value systems, and class interests, the intellectual historians' new talk of "structured consciousness" and "deterministic" cultural systems only made republicanism all the harder to swallow. Consensual in the tendencies of its method, intellectualistic to a fault, wedded to a notion of ideology swiped from Marx only to be emptied of all Marxian social referents, republicanism had little obvious to offer its social history antagonists.³¹

By the late 1970s, however, no one could disguise the fact that social history was in trouble. The project of recovering the history of the inarticulate had filled the historical stage with new actors; it had pulled back into consciousness forgotten his-

²⁹ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 509, 525; Robert E. Shalhope, "Thomas Jefferson's Republicanism and Antebellum Southern Thought," *Journal of Southern History*, 42 (Nov. 1976), 533; Lance Banning, "Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution, 1789 to 1793," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 31 (April 1974), 179, 173. When Shalhope reassessed the republican synthesis in 1982, the weakest link in the early formulations now seemed to him its implicit consensualism: Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *ibid.*, 39 (April 1982), 334–56.

³⁰ Jackson Turner Main, review of *The Creation of the American Republic* by Gordon S. Wood, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 26 (Oct. 1969), 606; Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (Dekalb, 1976). In the same vein, see Jesse Lemisch, "Bailyn Besieged in His Bunker," *Radical History Review*, 3 (Fall 1976), 72–83.

³¹ Joseph Ernst, "Ideology and the Political Economy of Revolution," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 4 (Fall 1973), 147; Joan Hoff Wilson, "The Illusion of Change: Women and the American Revolution," in *American Revolution*, ed. Young, 389; Gary B. Nash, "Social Change and the Growth of Prerevolutionary Urban Radicalism," *ibid.*, 27.

tories of cruelty, exploitation, anger, and endurance. But dismantling the great Hartzian aggregate had not produced a new master story. To some of its internal critics, the social history enterprise looked all too much like a sideshow, a vast, booming, Barnumesque encampment pitched just outside the walls of the conventional wisdom.³²

If the splintering of history into microhistories was social history's first embarrassment, its second had to do with the relationship between the American enterprise and its single most cited text, E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. No book did more in the 1970s to shove out Beard's wooden categories and replace them with the conceptual vocabulary of a powerfully supple, humanized Marxism, respectful of both experience and ideas. Thompson's eloquent and aphoristic passages on class formation were known to every young labor historian in the decade. But *The Making of the English Working Class* was almost as difficult a book to see whole as Pocock's. With secret relief, most social historians turned to Thompson's key articles, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism" and "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," whose accounts of confrontation between the new forces of capitalist work and exchange and the traditions of an older, premarket, William Morris-ized world of mutuality inspired a raft of American work. But the heart of *The Making of the English Working Class* was about the relationship between the nascent English working class and late eighteenth-century politics. Thompson's working class was born, not in the factory—he was explicit about the point—but in the London debating clubs and correspondence societies, in an underground full of radical Paineites, republicans, and Jacobins and an atmosphere thick with political ideas and ideologies.³³

At this juncture Pocock's work gained a new reading and, in the course of that reading, a potential new moral. The key essay for the purpose was Pocock's "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," a gloss on Wood's confrontation between classical and modern politics that construed it as a transatlantic dispute between parties with tangible, almost Beardian social foundations. The party of "commerce" and the party of "virtue" were Pocock's labels: on the one hand the court adventurers and placemen gathered behind Robert Walpole's burgeoning public debt and burgeoning army, on the other their country opponents. The mark of the latter was a civic consciousness, "at once intensely autonomous and intensely participatory," not impossible to construe in New Left terms. The line of descent from the court party was more obscure. "There is no hurry to adopt a neo-Beardian interpretation," Pocock wrote, "whereby the founders shall have been seen to have sold out from a civic to a merely liberal ideal in the moment of triumph"; but "should this come to be adopted," the court versus country frame was ready for it. This teasing with "liberalism" as the opposite of "civic humanism" continued through

³² Special issue, "Social History Today . . . and Tomorrow," *Journal of Social History*, 10 (Winter 1976).

³³ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963); E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* (no. 38, Dec. 1967), 56-97; E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *ibid.* (no. 50, Feb. 1971), 76-136.

Pocock's writings of the 1970s, the opposition, sustained but never quite explicit, hovering just out of reach in the thickets of Pocock's syntactic structures. To a few younger social historians, however, these formulations offered a potential bridge between political ideas and social history, between microhistory and the vast linear formations of Pocockian time.³⁴

If the bridge looked inviting, it was strewn with obstacles. By "commerce" Pocock clearly did not mean "capitalism"; the country party's quarrel was not with private property (from which it drew its very foundation) nor with wage labor (which had no apparent place in its vocabulary) but with a particular form of early eighteenth-century state capitalism. Nor was his country party—a compound of landed gentlemen and London scribblers, great Whigs and reactionary Tories—translatable into even the loosest terms of class. Pocock was neither neo-Marxian nor New Left, and he wrote critically of both. In his history there was struggle but no classes, respect but no fondness for the "highly compulsive" civic ideal of classical republicanism. The social historians' usable Pocock would take a bit of doing.³⁵

One of the first to make the attempt was Eric Foner, whose *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* appeared in the same year as Young's Beard-dominated collection. Foner's *Paine* was a model integration of the divided worlds of social and intellectual history. But in the process, it demonstrated the difficulty of connecting Pocock's century-long vertical lines to the horizontal muck of social history. Hunting for the "coherent ideology" that impelled late eighteenth-century radicalism, Foner nominated "republicanism." Without it, he wrote, Paine was "incomprehensible." But Paine, the classic eighteenth-century ideologue, was, as Foner's qualifications made clear, not comprehensible within it either. He scorned monarchy but took the pay of some of the sleaziest public promoters of his day; a believer in progress, he engaged in no Machiavellian quarrel with time; a believer in virtue, he was as eager (Foner admitted) as any American of his day for the first stirrings of laissez-faire commerce. Paine was, in short, a man furiously thinking his way through the events around him, but either he had no clear hold on the language or republicanism was not the one he was speaking. Nor in that respect did Paine's fellow artisans seem much different. When Gary B. Nash's *Urban Crucible* appeared in 1979, republicanism was incorporated into a lumbering, massively complicated taxonomy of late eighteenth-century artisan ideology that, beginning with divisions over religion for which the republicanism paradigm was hard pressed to find any room, ramified out into a maze of overlapping subdivisions—as paradigmatically unworkable as it may have been close to real life.³⁶

³⁴ Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce," 134. On "liberalism" versus "civic humanism," see, for example, J. G. A. Pocock, "Virtues, Rights, and Manners: A Model for Historians of Political Thought," *Political Theory*, 9 (Aug. 1981), 363.

³⁵ On left politics, see J. G. A. Pocock, "The Machiavellian Moment Revisited: A Study in History and Ideology," *Journal of Modern History*, 53 (March 1981), 70; Pocock, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs?" 47; and Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time*, 273–91. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 551.

³⁶ Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York, 1976), xiv; Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 340–51. A slightly less cumbersome scheme, announced a year later, was similarly stillborn: Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800–1850* (Philadelphia, 1980).

The road to the discovery of labor republicanism was to be run through not late eighteenth- but nineteenth-century America, and the connection was through memory and time. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, social historians had begun to note the intensity of references in the nascent nineteenth-century labor movements to the symbols and language of the Revolution, as the linguistic constructions of the late eighteenth-century independence movement were rolled out, without a blush of anachronism, for a second use. An older school of labor historians had written off this inflated talk of vassalage and dependency, virtue and luxury, wage slavery and Fourth of July patriotism as the marks of "utopianism." The republican paradigm, by contrast, gave these unexpected conjunctions of the political and the economic a logic, an ideological and linguistic status, and — not the least — a history. Here were the outcroppings, it seemed, of a tradition unaffected by the wedge liberalism had putatively driven between the political and economic spheres. Here was an opposition to the liberal mainstream couched in terms, not of class, but of virtue and civic justice. From the Jacksonian workingmen's parties to the Populists, the long, messy, rhetorically extravagant, often utopian, conspiracy-obsessed history of radicalism suddenly gained an organizing thread.

The speed with which the notion of a popular republican tradition extending deep into the nineteenth century was accepted was a sign of the intensity of the needs it filled. Its first published hints were to be found in Sean Wilentz's articles of 1980–1981. By 1983 Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz were prepared to announce, in a report from the frontiers of labor history research that contained a central extract from Wilentz's Yale University dissertation, that "republican ideology served perhaps longer than any other dimension of American culture as a legitimization of working-class values . . . [and] a bulwark against the corrosive power of capitalism." Within another three years, the notion of a popular republicanism had been applied to late eighteenth-century New England farmers battling with mill promoters, to early nineteenth-century urban artisans, to proto-Populists in the Georgia upcountry, to the Knights of Labor, to immigrant and native-born steel workers at Homestead, Pennsylvania, to nineteenth-century radicalism in general, and it was lapping hard at the edges of the twentieth century.³⁷

³⁷ Sean Wilentz, "Whigs and Bankers," *Reviews in American History*, 8 (Sept. 1980), 344–50; Sean Wilentz, "Artisan Origins of the American Working Class," *International Labor and Working Class History* (no. 19, Spring 1981), 1–22; Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz, "Introduction," in *Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society*, ed. Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz (Urbana, 1983), xiv. This last was a gloss on Sean Wilentz, "Artisan Republican Festivals and the Rise of Class Conflict in New York City, 1788–1837," *ibid.*, 37–77. Gary Kulik, "Dams, Fish, and Farmers: Defense of Public Rights in Eighteenth-Century Rhode Island," in *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel Hill, 1985), 25–50; Jonathan Prude, "Town-Factory Conflicts in Antebellum Rural Massachusetts," *ibid.*, 71–102; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York, 1984); Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788–1890* (New York, 1985); Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850–1890* (New York, 1983); Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana, 1983); Linda Schneider, "The Citizen Striker: Workers' Ideology in the Homestead Strike of 1892," *Labor History*, 23 (Winter 1982), 47–66; Paul Krause, "Labor Republicanism and 'Za Chlebom': Anglo-American and Slavic

Not every labor historian was convinced. Materialists and culturalists gave each other the predictable drubbing in the left historical journals. Implied claims that republicanism was a worthy substitute for a Marxian socialist tradition set off particularly heated controversy.³⁸ Everyone recognized that “artisan republicanism,” “labor republicanism,” or “republican producer ideology”—the labels varied—blended the ideational ingredients of late eighteenth-century republicanism in radically different ways and for radically different purposes than Pocock’s paradigms seemed to allow. Labor republicanism was marked by a sharp new edge of class resentment and a new insistence on equality. Ideational fragments that should not have strayed from the language of liberalism migrated into labor republicanism, particularly the great nineteenth-century demand for “equal rights.” The sphere of classical republicanism was the public and the political; its social thought was bent to the problem of finding a set of social arrangements (a patriot army for Machiavelli, a polity of freeholders for Harrington) that would secure civic liberty against the corruptions of time. The sphere of labor republicanism was the workshop, factory, credit relationship, and tenant farm; its political consciousness was focused on the problem of finding a set of political devices (the single tax for Henry George, the subtreasury for the Populists) that would secure economic mutualism against the exploitations of capital. The issues might have been more problematic had eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians been on closer speaking terms. Except for Foner and Wilentz, however, few historians of the nineteenth-century labor movement directly engaged the literature of late eighteenth-century republicanism. Their footnote trails tended to begin with Wilentz’s *Chants Democratic*; like most historiographical traditions, this one quickly became self-contained and self-reaffirming.

The sharpest divide between the classical republican and labor republican constructs was over the question of persistence. However much they quarreled over the exact moment of transition, virtually all historians of late eighteenth-century America thought of republicanism and liberalism as stacked horizontally in time.

Solidarity in Homestead,” in *“Struggle a Hard Battle”*: *Essays on Working-Class Immigrants*, ed. Dirk Hoerder (DeKalb, 1986), 143–69; Leon Fink, “Looking Backward: Reflections on Workers’ Culture and Certain Conceptual Dilemmas within Labor History,” in *Perspectives on American Labor History: The Problem of Synthesis*, ed. J. Carroll Moody and Alice Kessler-Harris (DeKalb, 1989), 5–29; Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York, 1980); Eric Foner, “Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?” *History Workshop*, 17 (Spring 1984), 57–80; Herbert G. Gutman, *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class* (New York, 1987), 332–36. Fink’s paper was first presented in 1984.

³⁸ Sean Wilentz, “Against Exceptionalism: Class Consciousness and the American Labor Movement, 1790–1920,” *International Labor and Working Class History* (no. 26, Fall 1984), 1–24; Nick Salvatore, “Response to Sean Wilentz,” *ibid.*, 25–30; Michael Hanagan, “Response to Sean Wilentz,” *ibid.*, 31–36; Steven Sapolsky, “Response to Sean Wilentz,” *ibid.* (no. 27, Spring 1985), 35–38; Sean Wilentz, “A Reply to Criticism,” *ibid.* (no. 28, Fall 1985), 46–55; David Brody, “On Creating a New Synthesis of American Labor History: A Comment,” in *Perspectives on American Labor History*, ed. Moody and Kessler-Harris, 209–12; Alan Dawley, “Workers, Capital, and the State in the Twentieth Century,” *ibid.*, 194n43. Dawley, who had been among the first to discern the “Liberty Tree” rhetoric in the early nineteenth-century working class, thought it had led American workers into a political blind alley. Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976). On the argument as a whole, see Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia, 1990), 106–18.

"All of us," John Murrin declared for the St. Louis school at a conference in 1985, "have insisted, and still do insist, that there was a transition, a before and after," a shift from "premodern" to "liberal" society. For some historians, including Murrin, the project was to tie the cultural transition to the still larger social transition from premarket to market economics. Others were content with more loosely constructed epitaphs. Among contributors to the *American Quarterly* symposium on republicanism in 1985, the consensus seemed to be that republicanism had survived vigorously through Andrew Jackson's presidency, only to fade into a "translucent" half-life until finally killed dead by the Civil War.³⁹

By reconceiving republicanism and liberalism as rooted in rival social experiences, however, it was possible to imagine them in parallel, vertically opposed discourse — not as a "before" and "after," but as a running quarrel. Pocock, whose formulation came closest to such a scheme, had been misled by the myth-and-symbol historians into believing the great debate had spun off into collective fantasy. The gift of the Pocock-inspired social historians was their ability to imagine a society, not in consensus, but in quarrel, to sustain the dialectical side of Republicanism, into the territory Wood had ceded to Hartz and Pocock had ceded to anxiety and escapism.

Over how to map this debate on the historical landscape, there was no shortage of disagreement. Wilentz thought of early nineteenth-century radical and entrepreneurial thought as spinning off the republicanism frame, as a common ideology split and fractured; others conceived of entrepreneurial thought as the outgrowth of liberalism. Some thought of republicanism and populism as fundamentally different; others hunted for the moment when radical movements abandoned a language steeped in (and inhibited by) a civic and political vocabulary and turned at last to economic analysis. However complicated the diagrams, ramifying out like Charles Darwin's evolutionary schematics, the formulators of labor republicanism replaced the obituary metaphors (Pocock's "last great act of the Renaissance," Murrin's "Great Transition," Jean Baker's "translucence") with an image of antagonistic traditions battling their way deep into contemporary history.⁴⁰

They did so, not to clarify the term *republicanism*, but to answer to other needs: the limits of a social history emptied of politics, the inadequacy of conventional Marxian categories to the history of American radicalism, the need for a longer narrative line in social history. Popular radicalism was neither simple Beardian anti-

³⁹ John M. Murrin, "Self-Interest Conquers Patriotism: Republicans, Liberals, and Indians Reshape the Nation," in *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits*, ed. Jack P. Greene (New York, 1987), 226. In a similar vein, see Steven Watts, *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790–1820* (Baltimore, 1987); and Michael Zuckerman, "A Different Thermidor: The Revolution beyond the American Revolution," in *Transformation of Early American History*, ed. Henretta, Kammen, and Katz, 170–93. Jean Baker, "From Belief into Culture: Republicanism in the Antebellum North," *American Quarterly*, 37 (Fall 1985), 532–50, esp. 539.

⁴⁰ Michael Kazin, "A People Not a Class: Rethinking the Political Language of the Modern US Labor Movement," in *Reshaping the US Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980s*, ed. Mike Davis and Michael Sprinker (London, 1988); Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1989); Fink, "Looking Backwards"; Steven J. Ross, "The Transformation of Republican Ideology," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10 (Fall 1990), 323–30. For the obituary motifs, see Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce," 120; Murrin, "Self-Interest Conquers Patriotism," 225; and Baker, "From Belief into Culture," 539.

elitism, nor a confusion to be ascribed to Marx's absence. It possessed a language and an ideology rooted in the social experience of the artisan shop and small farm, renewed and ritualized in Independence Day civic patriotism—a history so tightly wound around the mainstreams of the nation's history as to be inextricable from it. What sort of entity republicanism actually was—an ideology, a Geertzian map of the world, a paradigm, or a rhetorical mode of confronting one's antagonists—did not interest the social historians. The label *republicanism* had too many explanatory advantages to be quibbled with. Propelled by the needs of labor history, republicanism broke out of its premodern context and began to race over the nineteenth century.

Historians of the working class were not the only nineteenth-century historians to appropriate the idea of republicanism. If the others picked over the threads of the construct more warily, taking a strand here and there, their cumulative effect was considerable.

The history of the American South was an early site for paradigmatic borrowings. Shalhope's concern was the construction of an "agrarian or pastoral republicanism," increasingly distinctive to the South, that organized southerners' mounting sense of unease at the burgeoning commerce and corruption to the north. By the early 1980s, the notion of a southern republicanism had been applied to the politics of antebellum Alabama, South Carolina, and Tennessee—all of which emerged from the undertaking less aberrant, more deeply steeped in the nation's core political values, than had been imagined.⁴¹

Southern republicanism was, by and large, a simpler construct than civic or labor republicanism. There were only "two things that really mattered in Alabama—liberty and equality," J. Mills Thornton III wrote in an early exposition of the theme.⁴² Others quickly added independence. All, the most acute writers in the vein noted, were deeply entangled in distinctive southern dynamics of slavery and race, mastership and dependence. But even this relatively skinny, regional version of republicanism served to Americanize the region's most extravagant peculiarities—its obsessive fear of external threat and internal corruption, its conspiratorial fantasies, its secessionist impulses, even slavery itself, without which, it was said, there was no forestalling the slide of white freemen into dependency relations—and thereby to nudge southern history toward the mainstream.

⁴¹ Shalhope, "Thomas Jefferson's Republicanism," 555; J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800–1860* (Baton Rouge, 1978), 449; Robert E. Shalhope, *John Taylor of Caroline: Pastoral Republican* (Columbia, S.C., 1980); Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822–1832* (New York, 1981); Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore, 1985); James Oakes, "From Republicanism to Liberalism: Ideological Change and the Crisis of the Old South," *American Quarterly*, 37 (Fall 1985), 551–71; Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800–1860* (New York, 1988).

⁴² Thornton, *Politics and Power*, 449.

Another important site for the extension of the republicanism paradigm was women's history, and there too the dynamic had much to do with parts and wholes. Like social history, women's history in the 1970s suffered simultaneously from success and marginalization. As Sara M. Evans wrote in 1989, the pressing need of women's history was some means to "integrate [women's] experiences into the dominant narrative of the American past, the main story we tell ourselves about who we have been as a nation." In this pinch, the platitudes Joan Hoff Wilson had passed by suddenly seemed important. The exigencies of the Revolution, Linda Kerber argued in a widely read essay in 1976, had not only affected women's experiences but had given birth to a new ideological understanding of women's role as nurturers of the virtue essential to republican government. "Republican motherhood," as Kerber described it, was a deeply ambiguous construct that both empowered and constrained, offered women a public role and excluded them from politics. Yet for all its ambiguity, the concept of republican motherhood gave women a connection with the Founding and with public life. It seemed to many women's historians to sustain a tradition, however complex the line, that ran as hard through the moral reformist majority of women as through the suffragist minority, tacitly reminding women of their political natures even while reconciling them to their subordinate political status. The concept quickly settled into women's history, as a linear thread, like southern and labor republicanism, extending deep into modernity.⁴³

"Once having been identified," Appleby wrote of republicanism in 1985, "it can be found everywhere." Indeed over the next five years, from its bases in women's, southern, and working-class history, the concept slithered all across the landscape. "Free labor republicanism" was said to have empowered the antislavery crusade; "slave labor republicanism" empowered the drive for secession. Republicanism dominated the ideology of the South as a whole; it propelled the discontents of poor upcountry southerners against the black-belt southern elite. It framed the mental universe of Jacksonians; Whigs were not understandable without it. It permeated nineteenth-century social thought. It described John Marshall's jurisprudence and 1930s unionism, the martial bombast of Theodore Roosevelt and the moral power of Jane Addams. By the end of the 1980s it had passed into general intellectual currency: as an intellectual taproot of the non-Marxian Left or, in the most widely read variant of them all, *Habits of the Heart*, as one of the three core traditions in American culture itself. Republicanism had its gravity sometimes in virtue, sometimes

⁴³ Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York, 1989), 2; Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An American Perspective," *American Quarterly*, 28 (Summer 1976), 187–205; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Boston, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America," *American Historical Review*, 89 (June 1984), 593–619; Jacqueline S. Reiner, "Rearing the Republican Child: Attitudes and Practices in Post-Revolutionary Philadelphia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 39 (Jan. 1982), 150–63; Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *ibid.*, 44 (Oct. 1987), 689–721; Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society," *American Historical Review*, 89 (June 1984), 620–47.

in independence, sometimes in consensus, sometimes in opposition to capitalism or to patriarchy. Most often it was in opposition to liberalism. As the concept disintegrated and grew harder to define, republicanism tended to stalk all the more closely in liberalism's shadow, as its predecessor, its antagonist, the universe of value Hartz forgot.⁴⁴

How reflexive republicanism had become of its Hartzian predecessor became evident when legal philosophers discovered the terminology in the late 1980s. "Natural scavengers," as one of their number wrote in 1988, they had been slow to sense what was transpiring. By the late 1980s, however, the law journals were full of news of a "republican revival" in legal theory. In the work of Frank I. Michelman, Cass R. Sunstein, Morton J. Horwitz, and others, "republicanism" was swept up as shorthand for everything liberalism was not: commitment to an active civic life (contra liberalism's obsession with immunities and rights), to explicit value commitments and deliberative justice (as opposed to liberalism's procedural neutrality), to public, common purposes (contra liberalism's inability to imagine politics as anything other than interest group pluralism).⁴⁵

The polarities, under other names, had long been deep in the language of liberalism's critics.⁴⁶ In a highly complex fashion, they had found their way out of 1960s

⁴⁴ Appleby, "Republicanism and Ideology," 461. For "free labor republicanism," see Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, 10; for "slave labor republicanism," see Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 351-65. On republicanism in the slavery crisis, see Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York, 1978). On courts and parties, see G. Edward White, *The Marshall Court and Cultural Change, 1815-35* (New York, 1988); Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979); Major Wilson, "Republicanism and the Idea of Party in the Jacksonian Period," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 8 (Winter 1988), 419-42; and Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990). On social thought, see Dorothy Ross, "Liberal Tradition Revisited"; Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge, Eng., 1991); and John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900* (New York, 1976). On 1930s unionism, see Lary May, "Movie Star Politics: The Screen Actors' Guild, Cultural Conversion, and the Hollywood Red Scare," in *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War*, ed. Lary May (Chicago, 1989), 125-53. On Theodore Roosevelt, see John Patrick Diggins, "Republicanism and Progressivism," *American Quarterly*, 37 (Fall 1985), 576. On cultural resources for the Left, see James Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York, 1987); and Harry C. Boyte, *Commonwealth: A Return to Citizen Politics* (New York, 1989). Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, 1985).

⁴⁵ Kathryn Abrams, "Law's Republicanism," *Yale Law Journal*, 97 (July 1988), 1591; Cass R. Sunstein, "Interest Groups in American Public Law," *Stanford Law Review*, 38 (Nov. 1985), 29-87; Frank I. Michelman, "Foreword: Traces of Self-Government," *Harvard Law Review*, 100 (Nov. 1986), 4-77; Suzanna Sherry, "Civic Virtue and the Feminine Voice in Constitutional Adjudication," *Virginia Law Review*, 72 (April 1986), 543-616; Suzanna Sherry, "The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution," *Constitutional Commentary*, 5 (Summer 1988), 323-47; Morton J. Horwitz, "Republicanism and Liberalism in American Constitutional Thought," *William and Mary Law Review*, 29 (Fall 1987), 57-74; Hendrik Hartog, "Imposing Constitutional Traditions," *ibid.*, 75-82; Larry G. Simon, "The New Republicanism: Generosity of Spirit in Search of Something to Say," *ibid.*, 83-92; Mark Tushnet, "The Concept of Tradition in Constitutional Historiography," *ibid.*, 93-99; G. Edward White, "The Studied Ambiguity of Horwitz's Legal History," *ibid.*, 101-12; Mark Tushnet, *Red, White, and Blue: A Critical Analysis of Constitutional Law* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988). For special issues devoted to republicanism, see "The Republican Civic Tradition," *Yale Law Journal*, 97 (July 1988); and *Florida Law Review*, 41 (Summer 1989). For a shrewd critique, see Richard H. Fallon, Jr., "What Is Republicanism, and Is It Worth Reviving?" *Harvard Law Review*, 102 (May 1989), 1695-1735.

⁴⁶ Michael J. Sandel, ed., *Liberalism and Its Critics* (New York, 1984); Amy Gutmann, "Communitarian Critics of Liberalism," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 14 (Summer 1985), 308-22; Nancy L. Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Republicanism vs. Liberalism? A Reconsideration," *History of Political Thought*, 9 (Summer 1988), 349-77.

political discourse into Pocock's work and, still more eventfully, into the republicanism the labor historians had constructed. Reappropriated to legal and political theory, the polarities came back to their starting point, abstractions with a veneer of history. To some, the task was to construct *de novo* a "liberal republican" or "republican liberal" amalgam of the most attractive elements of both ideal types. Others, such as Horwitz, saw them sweeping through the past in timeless opposition. That liberal and republican arguments were responses to fundamentally different problematics, that they organized distinctly different realms of experience, that (as Pocock had insisted at the outset) they were not fully on speaking terms, was easy to lose sight of. The Hartzian paradigm was something like a tar baby; the harder one struggled against it, the tighter its vocabulary seemed to stick.

The problem of the republicanism paradigm as it entered its last phase, however, was not simply that of a word passed through too many hands and made to do too many things—though that was manifest in republicanism's career in the late 1980s. The deeper, unnoticed problem was the unraveling sense of what kind of entity republicanism actually was. Was it an ideology, with the power to construct the imaginable possibilities of behavior? A language precluding rival languages? A paradigm of Kuhnian power? In the late 1980s, as republicanism was catching up the imagination of more and more historians, explaining so much, it was quietly coming apart at its core.

The locus for the event was late eighteenth-century historiography. In part it was the result of the usual paradigmatic difficulties, a detritus of loose ends and things that would not fit the radical simplifications that paradigm construction entails. Paine, as Foner had recognized in 1976, was a problem case. Paine "was difficult to fit into any kind of category," Pocock himself confessed; *Common Sense*, the great republican tract of the American Revolution, "does not consistently echo any established radical vocabulary." Other major cultural vocabularies were also hard to fit into the available republicanism or court/country dialogues. Among historians of eighteenth-century thought, one began to hear less talk of dualities and more of the need to map the grammar and vocabularies of other languages; those of jurisprudence and political economy were most often mentioned.⁴⁷

Some of the key categories, moreover, would not stay put. Gender intruded here, and with unsettling results. No term was more central to the republican paradigm

⁴⁷ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Cambridge, Eng., 1985), 276; Pocock, "Virtues, Rights, and Manners"; J. G. A. Pocock, "Cambridge Paradigms and Scotch Philosophers: A Study of the Relations between the Civic Humanist and the Civil Jurisprudential Interpretation of Eighteenth-Century Social Thought," in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge, Eng., 1983), 235–52; J. G. A. Pocock, "Between Gog and Magog: The Republican Thesis and the *Ideologia Americana*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 48 (April–June 1987), 325–46; Anthony Pagden, "Introduction" in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, Eng., 1987), 1–17; Ruth H. Bloch, "The Constitution and Culture," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 44 (July 1987), 550–55.

than “virtue.” But as women scholars turned from the history of women to examination of the engendered nature of history itself, it became clear that virtue had radically changed its meaning and its gender valence—from Machiavelli’s understanding of virtue as active, masculine, and martial to the late eighteenth-century domestic handbook writers’ understanding of virtue as passive, feminine, and family-centered—in ways that confounded paradigmatic order.⁴⁸ But it was not so much the accumulating anomalies as the exhaustion of the structuralist confidence of 1970s intellectual history that mattered. Methodologically, that history had claimed too much; the post-structuralist reaction was already in full gear.

The Geertzian notion of ideology was the first to erode as Geertz himself moved on to other concerns and as the notion of the compelling power of a socially shared cognitive road map—however effective in describing a revolutionary moment such as 1774–1776—proved harder to match to the quarrels and compromises of normal politics.⁴⁹ More open to dualities and oppositions, the concept of political language had greater immunity to the growing post-structuralist doubts. But Pocock himself was already in strategic retreat. As late as 1980 he had written, in Kuhnian terms, of liberalism and civic humanism as languages that could not be “assimilated” into one another. When *Virtue, Commerce, and History* appeared in 1985, however, it contained only two passing references to Kuhn. Though Pocock still referred to paradigms, now it was the distinction between language and all the messy, multitudinous possibilities of speech and discourse that interested him. Political language had rules, but political *speech* “is typically polyglot, the speech of Plato’s cave or the confusion of tongues.” The deep structures of language, Pocock now admitted, were beyond the historians’ ken; their field was rhetoric, and Pocock’s polyglot rhetoricians now seemed capable of employing bits and pieces of all sorts of structurally incompatible languages. “Ways of talking, [which are] often profoundly at variance, do not typically succeed in excluding one another.” Multilingualism ruled in discourses of “debate, perplexity, and contradiction.”⁵⁰

Pocock had never conceived of language as a prison house, but now the very walls seemed to have blown down, most important, those surrounding republicanism. In the caves of real speech, he now argued, it was incorrect to suggest that repub-

⁴⁸ Hannah Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley, 1984); Ruth H. Bloch, “American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785–1815,” *Feminist Studies*, 4 (June 1978), 101–26; Ruth H. Bloch, “The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America,” *Signs*, 13 (Autumn 1987), 37–58.

⁴⁹ Gordon Wood did not join the general retreat from ideological explanations. See Gordon S. Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 39 (July 1982), 401–41; Gordon S. Wood, “Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution,” in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (Chapel Hill, 1987), 69–109; and Gordon S. Wood, “Ideology and the Origins of Liberal America,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 44 (July 1987), 628–40. But the last, a restatement of Wood’s earlier understanding of ideology, down to the familiar Geertzian winks and twitches, found only scattered support in the preceding symposium.

⁵⁰ Pocock, “Virtues, Rights, and Manners,” 357; J. G. A. Pocock, “The Concept of a Language and the *métier d’historien*: Some Considerations on Practice,” in *Languages of Political Theory*, ed. Pagden, 21; Pocock, “Between Gog and Magog,” 336.

licanism and liberalism were oppositional. All he had meant to say, he wrote, was that "the language of republicanism . . . survived to furnish liberalism with one of its modes of self-criticism and self-doubt," that "the persistence of a republican world-view continued to render commercial society, and the role of the self in it, problematic."⁵¹

The retreat to more complicated and defensible positions was not Pocock's alone. Lance Banning, who in 1974 had written of ideational systems so strong and well structured that they could "virtually determine" the social expression of a society's hopes and discontents, by 1986 had likewise fallen back on polyglotism. Liberal and classical ideas derived from "ultimately irreconcilable philosophies," he wrote. "But major difficulties will arise if we suppose that the analytical distinctions we detect were evident to those we study. . . . Logically, it may be inconsistent to be simultaneously liberal and classical. Historically it was not." Shalhope in 1990 could still write of liberalism and republicanism "coursing through the lives of late-eighteenth-century Americans," but "few individuals at the time could or would have distinguished" between them. Their thinking, one of the most attentive intellectual historians of the 1780s and 1790s wrote, was "ambivalent, contradictory, and sometimes flatly paradoxical." The languages perdured, but since they were neither spoken nor perceived, it was hard to see why they mattered any longer except to satisfy the taxonomic tics of political theorists.⁵²

Into these concessions to polyglotism, republicanism's revisers were quick to rush. Eighteenth-century Americans "stitched" their ideas together out of several traditions, James Kloppenberg contended, not the least of which was liberalism. There was a "full-blown . . . confusion of idioms, [an] overlapping of political languages," Isaac Kramnick wrote. "They lived easily with that clatter." The Founders, it was increasingly heard, had no truck with ideology at all. As Forrest McDonald put the rapidly growing consensus in his bicentennial lecture of 1987, the Framers "were not concerned" by the incongruities between the books they read. "They were politically multilingual, able to speak in the diverse idioms of Locke, the classical republicans, Hume, and many others, depending upon what seemed rhetorically appropriate to the argument at hand."⁵³

The decomposition of the earlier claims was apparent in the analytical imagery. Republicanism in the late 1980s was less often referred to as a language, rarely as

⁵¹ Pocock, "Between Gog and Magog," 341, 344.

⁵² Banning, "Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution," 179; Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited," 12; Robert E. Shalhope, *The Roots of American Democracy: American Thought and Culture, 1760-1800* (Boston, 1990), 50, xiii; Michael Lienesch, *New Order of the Ages: Time, the Constitution, and the Making of Modern American Political Thought* (Princeton, 1988), 8.

⁵³ James T. Kloppenberg, "The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse," *Journal of American History*, 74 (June 1987), 20; Isaac Kramnick, "The 'Great National Discussion': The Discourse of Politics in 1787," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 45 (Jan. 1988), 12, 4; Forrest McDonald, "The Intellectual World of the Founding Fathers," in Forrest McDonald and Ellen Shapiro McDonald, *Requiem: Variations on Eighteenth-Century Themes* (Lawrence, 1988), 9. See also Ralph Lerner, *The Thinking Revolutionary: Principle and Practice in the New Republic* (Ithaca, 1987); and Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago, 1988).

an ideology; most often it was now an “idea,” a “theme,” a “vocabulary,” a “tradition,” a piece in a “pattern of patchwork intellectual creations,” a “strand” in the tangled skein of culture. The metaphors turned organic. One talked of “hybrid republican visions,” of “classical republican terms leavened by egalitarian notions of . . . rights,” of the language of liberal individualism “grafted” onto or “symbiotic” with the discourse of civic humanism. “Conceptual fissures and fault lines ran everywhere,” James Farr wrote. This was the familiar idiom of intellectual history; it posited a world of complex currents, interlaced strands, a handful of powerful texts and systematic thinkers, and beyond a loosely structured, confused, and altogether familiar muddle. Structure—both social and intellectual—was out; “conceptual confusion” was in.⁵⁴

Perhaps that is the truth of it. “Having one’s intellectual house in order, for all its intrinsic appeal, is apparently no guarantee or prerequisite of historical significance,” Leon Fink summarized the apparent moral.⁵⁵ The structuralist mood in intellectual history had been unsustainable, its claims too extravagant. The borrowings from Kuhn and the early Geertz could not be made to stick. But the historiographic irony should not be missed. It was the investment of language and culture with coherence and social power that had made republicanism a historiographical concept to contend with. By 1990 the field was full of players of the republicanism game, tearing off in every conceivable direction. But the ball had all but disappeared.

Paradigms end in collision, not attenuation. The republicanism now thinning out in the atmosphere, as intangible and ubiquitous as the Hartzian liberalism of the 1950s, is not likely to vanish altogether. Pulled out of its root texts by an extraordinary conjunction of interpretive needs, it will be sustained by those needs, even as its ontological status grows fainter and more confused.

Republicanism, it seems clear in retrospect, was neither an ideological map to more than a small piece of experience, nor a paradigmatic language in the strong sense of Pocock’s early work. Neither was it a *tradition*—the term toward which many of its appropriators were tending by 1990. Without a name except a name of art applied long after the fact, without lasting institutions and the ability to command explicit loyalty, without, in short, a consciousness of itself, it hardly fits the term.⁵⁶ Its key terms—*virtue*, the *republic*, the *commonweal*—were slippery and

⁵⁴ Kloppenberg, “Virtues of Liberalism,” 19, 30, 14, 11; Leon Fink, “The New Labor History and the Powers of Historical Pessimism: Consensus, Hegemony, and the Case of the Knights of Labor,” *Journal of American History*, 75 (June 1988), 121n12; Linda K. Kerber, “The Republican Ideology of the Revolutionary Generation,” *American Quarterly*, 37 (Fall 1985), 491, 492, 488; Ross, *Origins of American Social Science*, 28n10; James Farr, “Conceptual Change and Constitutional Innovation,” in *Conceptual Change and the Constitution*, ed. Ball and Pocock, 15; Cathy D. Matson and Peter S. Onuf, *A Union of Interests: Political and Economic Thought in Revolutionary America* (Lawrence, 1990), 12.

⁵⁵ Fink, “New Labor History,” 130.

⁵⁶ See Mark Tushnet, “The Concept of Tradition in Constitutional Historiography,” *William and Mary Law Review*, 29 (Fall 1987), 93–99.

contested. "There is not a more unintelligible word in the English language than republicanism," John Adams complained in 1807. What the term might, or should, mean beyond a kingless government, over how many political and social arrangements its "mantle" could be distended (as Jefferson complained of Adams)—all this was permanently in conflict.⁵⁷

But muddle is not a satisfactory conclusion. The terms, tropes, rhetorics, and oppositions identified as republican were not simply an ideational set of clothes to put on when in the mood; still less, elements of a whimsically incoherent wardrobe to mix and match at will: republican jeans, liberal dress shirt, shoes of Scots moralism, Protestant hat. To close with the multitude of things beyond the Hartzians' ken required a more strategic sense of language than the ideational and linguistic structures for which republicanism's inventors and borrowers often yearned. Here and there amidst the rafts of extracted quotation, writers in the republicanism vein offered a tangible sense of occasion and place: the language and setting of courthouse contests, of Independence Day crowd inspiration, or of labor mobilization.⁵⁸ Here the essentialism by which republicanism came to be posited (just outside of historic time) as a resource, a strand, or an appropriatable tradition was replaced by a deeper sense of process and culture. Here the processes of persuasion and argument, the making and sustaining of collective identities and identifying rhetorics, began to come clear. Out of such inquiries something more than the clatter and fault lines of taxonomic intellectual history still waited to be found.

In the meantime, republicanism's ontological fragility and simultaneous paradigmatic success stands as a measure, should historians need yet another one, of how deeply responsive the interpretive disciplines are, not to evidence (though evidence plays at its allotted moment a critical part) but to their interpretive problematics. The gift of republicanism, as an explanatory concept, lay in its ability to do so much disparate interpretive work. At its best, the republicanism paradigm enriched and complicated historians' understanding of revolutionary and early national America. It brought into consciousness lost worlds of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas and culture. It offered social and intellectual historians a momentary piece of common ground. At its worst, employed for too many ends and distended too far, it ran the danger of explaining everything, even that most Hartzian of categories, to which it stuck with a tenacity inexplicable except in terms of rivalry for the same explanatory space: the American "mind." Formulated as an alternative to a flat, timeless liberalism, it threatened to end up, by its very parallelisms, reifying and reconfirming the liberalism it had been designed to escape. Like all successful paradigms, it answered a breathtakingly wide array of questions. In this regard, its success and its weakness were one and the same.

⁵⁷ Kerber, "Republican Ideology," 474; Adrienne Koch and William Peden, eds., *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1944), 672.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Rhys Isaac, "Dramatizing the Ideology of Revolution: Popular Mobilization in Virginia, 1774 to 1776," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 33 (July 1976), 357–85; Wilentz, "Artisan Republican Festivals"; Greg Kaster, "'Not for a Class? The 19th-Century American Labor Jeremiad,'" *Mid-America*, 70 (Oct. 1988), 125–39.