SOCIAL TEXT - MINUTES - 10/

RESENT: S. Aronowitz, M. Brown, B. Danbom,
Burney, J. McClure, P. Mann, R. Martin, B.
ussig, D. Wildman, G. Yúdice.

SPECIAL MEETING ON INTELLECTUALS: NOV.

Sohnya's & George's. Invitees include Iva
berto Unger. Read Selenyi's bibliog. essay
the Intell, Foucault on Intells, & Bove's

RM to organize Soirée for Nov. 13.

MSS REVIEW: (See RR's "Corresponding Eds

Girardi: ready for #18.

McLaren: accepted with revisions, which

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# Introduction

**Brent Hayes Edwards and Anna McCarthy**

The proposition that the history of a collective must be written collectively seems at once self-evident and impossibly ambitious. If the principle of collectivism implies a radical challenge to the conventional understanding of authorship, one that foregrounds the constitutive social mediation of any practice, any discourse, then the most accurate history of any collective would arguably preserve a multiplicity of (potentially dissonant) voices and avoid the pretense of a smooth, singular, magisterial narrator. But the practice of collective history ultimately involves more than assembling a compendium, gathering the polyphony of disparate perspectives on a shared past or endeavor. Can the act of assembling or gathering be *itself* a collective enterprise, or does it demand some "final, virtuoso orchestration" by an editorial hand?[1] This thirtieth-anniversary issue emerges from two years of intensifying conversation among the current collective as to how to understand our history, and about the procedures we might use to curate it in this issue. As much as it is possible, the result is the editorial handiwork of all of the collective's members; it falls to the two of us, as coeditors for the collective, to provide a recounting of the journal's past that can help frame the following annotations from the present *Social Text* collective on the texts, arguments, and programs that constitute that past.

Compiling this issue has involved a particular challenge in that the *Social Text* collective is not a coherent group that has remained constant over time, but instead is an institutional space that has provided an arena for "interested affiliation" among a changing cast of characters.[2] What does it mean to write the history of an editorial collective after thirty years when no one from the initial collective is still affiliated with the journal? A history of such a collective must involve a history of its transformations — the


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history of its own internal tensions and shifts — without the illusion that the current collective is either the privileged inheritor or the enlightened culmination of prior versions of itself.

When the current collective met in the spring of 2008 to begin to discuss the form of *Social Text* 100, it became clear to us that any attempt at collective history would require coordinated research into the history of the journal. It is remarkable, though perhaps not surprising, how common it is for intellectuals to take on editorial work with only a loose familiarity with the particular history of the journals they inherit. In some ways this is liberating, because it can undo the shackles of ingrained editorial practice and dissolve calcified visions of a journal's core identity or audience. Indeed, this unstudied ignorance may be the condition of possibility for editorial innovation. But undertaking the history of a journal — an exercise in speculative thought that develops a sense of contemporary and future needs out of an engagement with the past — demands that one "read hard" in the archive of the periodical as it transforms and reconstitutes itself serially.[3] So we set ourselves a curriculum, diving into the entire run starting from the first issue in 1979.

We also decided to compile an informal oral history of *Social Text*, interviewing many of the key figures in the history of the collective, including the three founding editors (Fredric Jameson, Stanley Aronowitz, and John Brenkman), all the subsequent coeditors (Sohnya Sayres, Andrew Ross, Bruce Robbins, Toby Miller, and Randy Martin), and a few of the collective members who had served as managing editors (Anders Stephanson, Wendy Graham, and David Wildman).[4] Drawing on the personal files of many of these scholars, we gathered an archive of the editorial history of the journal (minutes, memoranda, conference and event flyers, correspondence, photographs, notes, reader's reports) that has been indispensable in the writing of this introduction, and that supplies the fragmentary artifacts that illustrate this special issue. Likewise, excerpts from the interviews have been culled and distributed in thematic clusters throughout the issue, starting with the initial section of comments, "The Collective as a Political Model," that follows this introduction.

The history of the *Social Text* collective begins with an encounter among two of its three founding editors. In the first part of the 1970s, Fredric Jameson was a professor of French and comparative literature at the University of California at San Diego. In 1972 Stanley Aronowitz had become an assistant professor of community studies at the College of Staten Island.[5] In the first years of the decade, each published studies that were highly influential: Jameson *Marxism and Form* (1972) and Aronowitz *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness* (1973).[6] As Jameson recalls, the events that led to their meeting and eventually to the conception of *Social Text* begin with his involvement with the Marxist



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Literary Group (MLG), which he had formed with a number of his graduate students (including James Kavanagh, Bill Langen, Gene Holland, June Howard, and John Beverley) at San Diego in 1969–1970.[7] At the time, the MLG was an affiliated group of the Modern Language Association that was organized to foster discussion around the parameters and practice of Marxist literary criticism and theory. In fact, as Sean Homer has pointed out, "in the early 1970's the MLG was the largest affiliated organization to the MLA, running 14 sessions at the 1975 conference."[8] Given the amount of scholarship produced under the aegis of the MLG, and the degree to which it catalyzed a broad conversation about the scope of Marxist theorization in relation to culture in the wake of the 1960s, it is unsurprising that there seems to have been a drive within the organization to find a venue for publication. In 1975 the MLG founded its newsletter, *Mediations*, which "provided at least sporadic communication among a couple of hundred students and professors in the academic humanities."[9]

The same year, work from the MLG started to appear in the *Minnesota Review*, which since the inception of its new series in 1973 (under editors Roger Mitchell and Martha Bergland) had gained a reputation as a venue hospitable to Marxist literary scholarship. In the fall 1975 issue, there appears a "special supplement" titled "The Marxist Alternative to the Traditions" edited by Jameson and the MLG, with a dozen contributions from an intriguing array of academics, including H. Bruce Franklin, Jean Franco, David Bathrick, and Terry Eagleton, on a broad range of topics: Chaucer, Latin American literature and dependency theory, Sergei Eisenstein and montage, contemporary Chinese aesthetics, and Pierre Macherey's theory of literary production. Jameson's introduction to the section, "Notes toward a Marxist Cultural Politics," describes the pieces as offering a "selection of the kinds of Marxist literary analysis practiced today." Rather than a shared program, he writes, the pieces should be taken as "an on-going assessment of the concrete historical problems which face Marxist scholarship and Marxist cultural practice in the United States today."[10]

On a number of levels, Jameson's introduction resonates with what would become the animating concerns of *Social Text* at its founding: the need to historicize the upheaval of the previous decade, taking stock of dead ends ("everyone seems agreed that something ended with the 1960s," he writes) as well as new possibilities (especially in "the whole countercultural heritage of the so-called New Left"); a commitment to Marxist theory as "the only complete explanation of the things that are happening to us," even if it must be taken up "not as ready-made, knee-jerk diagnoses, but only on condition we are prepared creatively to think through the current historical situation in the light of classical Marxist theory and practice"; the need to theorize the dialectic between mass culture and



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"high culture"; the foregrounding of the implications of the university as a setting for radical criticism.[11] He concludes with something of a call to arms: "We cannot pass up the chance of contributing to and shaping a new intellectual and cultural atmosphere from which some new cultural production might arise."[12]

This chance would emerge through a series of encounters between Jameson and Aronowitz over the next few years. In 1974, Aronowitz was invited to UCSD to give a series of ten lectures based on *False Promises*. The next year, Jameson asked him to participate on a plenary session titled "Toward a Marxist Theory of Culture" organized by the MLG at the Modern Language Association convention in San Francisco.[13] The two met again in December 1975, when Jameson came to the Modern Language Association meeting in New York and visited Aronowitz at his apartment in the city. Then, through Jameson's initiative, in 1976 Aronowitz spent the winter quarter teaching as a visitor in the literature department at UCSD. (He subsequently accepted a tenured position as a professor of social sciences and comparative culture at the University of California at Irvine.) Over this series of interactions, Jameson and Aronowitz — along with others in New York and southern California — began to discuss the possibility of founding a journal in order, as Aronowitz recalls it, to "re-examine the salience of Marxist theory for cultural, political, and social thought." Their discussions kept coming back to a core set of concerns, defining the agenda that would provide the subtitle of the initial *Social Text*: "Theory, Culture, Ideology." At the center of these spirited dialogues, still vivid memories for both — Aronowitz remembers Jameson at his apartment in Manhattan in 1975, "talking a mile a minute" — was a curiosity with the argument then circulating on the intellectual Left that politics was no longer organized around political parties, but instead around journals. "So we thought," as Jameson explains, "if we're trying to build up a Marxist intellectual movement in this country, we would have to have a journal."

Building up this movement required a sustained social and scholarly context for the exchange of ideas. Two years later, in the summer of 1977, the MLG held its inaugural Summer Institute in Cultural Studies at St. Cloud University in Minnesota. Over three weeks, about forty participants met for an intensive series of lectures, seminars, panels, and discussions. One participant, Patrick Story, described the reading lists that had been distributed in advance as "staggering" and detailed a daily schedule devoted almost entirely to intellectual activity: breakfast between 7:00 and 8:00; mandatory attendance at the day's lecture from 9:30 to 11:45; lunch from 12:00 to 1:00; two sessions of seminar papers and panel discussions from 1:30 to 3:00 and 3:30 to 5:00; dinner in the evening; and, on ten evenings, a film screening from 7:00 to 9:00, followed by further discussion. The featured lecturers were Aronowitz, who gave a series of talks



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called “The Theory of Culture,” Jameson, who offered “The Theory of Ideology,” and Terry Eagleton, who every third morning spoke on methodological problems in literary criticism, often turning to close readings of particular poems. According to Story,

> The crossover between Aronowitz and Jameson, in which the social scientist took on culture, and the humanist, ideology, may sound confusing, but it represents more than the polymath interests of these two. It shows the tendency of Marxist theory to re-unify the study of culture that was split and fragmented a century ago in an academic division of labor useful to the embattled bourgeoisie. This parceling out of the subject among economics, history, sociology, the various humanities, etc., has effectively served to mask and palliate the fundamental irrationality of capitalism as a social system.[14]

For Story, the reclaiming of the study of culture was central to the argument that developed in “crossover” among the three lecturers. All three speakers emphasized the limitations of anthropology as an academic discipline that, as Aronowitz contended, habitually projected culture onto “primitive social formations” rather than attending to the complex dynamics of cultural forms on a global scale, and all three were equally dismissive of the “laughable reductions” of culture in other disciplines, “such as the mystified ‘refined taste’ still emanating from English departments.”[15]

In the winter of 1977, during the Modern Language Association convention in Chicago, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak hosted a reception at her apartment where there was announced the formation of a new journal called *Social Text*.[16] By this time, Jameson and Aronowitz had been joined by a third colleague, a former student of Spivak’s named John Brenkman, who in 1974 had started teaching at the University of Wisconsin at Madison as an assistant professor of comparative literature. Brenkman recalls meeting Jameson at a conference in the mid-1970s,[17] and later inviting him to give an intensive two-week seminar at Wisconsin. There was a thriving culture of young scholarly journals (including *SubStance*, founded in 1971, and *New German Critique*, which began in 1973) in Madison at the time, and Brenkman was able to get modest support for the journal, holding editorial meetings in his office in Van Hise Hall at the university. Nevertheless, when *Social Text* actually began publication nearly two years later, the journal remained “tremendously under-capitalized,” according to Brenkman. The first six issues were financed almost entirely by the three founding editors, with sales (mainly through newsstands and bookstores rather than through subscriptions) only providing a minimal return.[18] Brenkman stored the issues in his garage.

In founding *Social Text*, Aronowitz, Jameson, and Brenkman were attracted to the model of the “little magazine,” especially periodicals in the first part of the twentieth century that posed themselves as the “sponsors of



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innovation, the gathering places for the 'irreconcilables' " of literature and political critique.[19] There was an explicit decision, as well, that the journal had to be independent; it had to follow the line of what Ezra Pound long ago had evocatively called "the impractical or fugitive magazine"—that is, the periodical that refused to allow its editorial line and its political commitments to be dictated by commercial interest (subscription sales) or by the "strategic containment" of academic disciplines.[20] Rather than ignore their scattered geographical locations, they decided to make the "dispersion that affects intellectual life in America" into an organizational principle and initially set up editorial groups around each editor in La Jolla-Irvine, Madison, and New Haven.[21] Although their sense of the paradigm was not necessarily uniform—Aronowitz looked more to the *Partisan Review* in the 1930s, for example, while Brenkman found inspiration in *Tel Quel*—the three founding editors shared a vision of a journal that would attend to the broadest range of inquiry into the understanding of culture across academic fields, striving for clarity at a level of abstraction to be named "theory," and finding both a historical template and the most useful analytical insight in what the "Prospectus" that opens *Social Text* 1 terms "the Marxist framework."[22] The "fundamental elements" of Marxism were not taken as a set of polished and inviolable dicta to be parroted; instead they were understood to "define problems and directions of research that need to be worked out afresh and reinvented in terms of today's situation."[23]

The cowritten four-page "Prospectus"—composed in what Brenkman remembers as a "round robin" of collaboration among the three editors, who each revised and edited the document in turn—is perhaps the clearest statement of the editors' initial aims. It is at once a statement of purpose and also something of a call for papers, sketching broad rubrics of inquiry they hoped the journal would cover: "Everyday Life and Revolutionary Praxis"; "The Proliferation of Theories"; "Symbolic Investments of the Political"; "The Texts of History"; "Ideology and Narrative"; "Mass Culture and the Avant-Garde"; "Marxism and the State"; " 'Consumer Society' and the World System." It is unavoidable that some of these rubrics seem opaque or outdated, even quaint, today. As Brenkman (whose essay looking back on the "Prospectus" is included in this issue) observes, "One of the great things about the beginning of a journal is that you have a certain kind of conception, but you can't write the articles yourself. I mean, you can write some of them but you can't write all of them. The journal takes shape out of what you happen to get." As the interview excerpts on the first issue make clear, the juxtaposition of pieces the editors were able to acquire—the first two essays in the first issue are Edward Said's devastating "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims" (one of the key sections of his book *The Question of Palestine*) and Bruce Boone's groundbreaking essay on queer poetics, "Gay Language as Political Praxis: The



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Poetry of Frank O'Hara"—was itself a forceful statement about what the journal would strive to accomplish: it would force the reader to move, with the sustained intensity of theory, between "high art" and "mass culture," between aesthetics and politics, between the particularities of contemporary culture and the grand currents of global history.

In 1977 the MLG had named its summer program at St. Cloud the Institute in Cultural Studies, and indeed *Social Text* is still habitually described as a journal of "cultural studies." But it is worth remembering that in St. Cloud, that phrase was a resonant neologism, an attempt to point to an inchoate space of investigation, rather than a declaration of any sort of direct link between the currents that led to the journal and the scholarship that was developing at the time at the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. As Jameson puts it bluntly, *Social Text* "was founded as a Marxist journal. . . . We really had no access to the work coming out of Birmingham. They didn't have a journal and so we just got rumors about what they were doing." Brenkman likewise notes that although "in retrospect the journal did quite a lot to establish and give a shape to cultural studies in the US," at the time of its founding the editors were not "particularly thinking in terms of trying to create a field or a new kind of discipline in the academy." In the first issue, Michael Brown (discussing the work of Raymond Williams) calls "cultural studies" a "problematic" term.[24] Even among those who joined later in the 1980s, there is a consensus that "cultural studies" was not at the center of the journal's concerns, nor the most accurate term to describe the mix of elements it brought together. That said, *Social Text* never held a posture of decided hostility to Birmingham cultural studies, and it proved hospitable to some of the first discussions of that work as it was "internationalized" in the 1980s.[25] And a number of members of the *Social Text* collective were prominent participants at the conference that was organized by the MLG in collaboration with the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the summer of 1983, leading to the field-defining anthology *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*.[26] But even a decade later, the *Social Text* position on "cultural studies" still struck a certain distance, as evidenced by the scare quotes in the title of Jameson's 1993 essay "On 'Cultural Studies.'"[27]

*Social Text* is also commonly described as an "interdisciplinary" journal, but that term had little or no meaning for the early collective. Embedded in the very notion of the interdisciplinary—the idea that one can work across or between disciplines—is an acceptance of disciplines as units or categories of inquiry with established methodological practices and standards of review and self-replication. And *Social Text*, if anything, begins with the rejection of that presupposition, with the aim to "break down barriers" in every sense, as Aronowitz phrases it, using the tool



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of theory. From the other side of the era of "high theory," it is perhaps difficult to recall the leverage that term provided in the 1970s, the way it seemed to open up interpretative possibilities while retaining the allure of synthesis: the hope that with the right approach, one could still "understand the totality," in the words of Anders Stephanson. It is a worthwhile exercise to note just how little of the work of the major twentieth-century intellectuals one might now list under the category of theory was available until the 1970s. Jameson's *Marxism and Form*, for instance, was celebrated not only for its insights into the work of mid-twentieth-century French and German thinkers, but also for its deep work with the originals, given the fact that much of the work of Theodor W. Adorno, Georg Lukács, Ernst Bloch, and even Walter Benjamin was still then "inaccessible to the English-language reader."[28] In the early 1970s, there appeared for the first time translations into English of classic works by many of the major intellectuals of the European tradition, including Lukács, Max Horkheimer, Adorno, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, and Pierre Bourdieu.[29] *Social Text*, although it never made translation central to its editorial goals (as did peer journals such as *Telos* and *New German Critique*), did play an important role in bringing foreign intellectuals into the U.S. academic conversation, and the collective worked hard, albeit with limited success, to develop a roster of international "corresponding editors" that at various times included scholars in Japan, Sweden, and Great Britain. One of the more striking features of the first decade is the prevalence of important translations of new work by thinkers such as Michel de Certeau, Jacques Attali, and Roberto Fernández Retamar.[30]

The impulse to break down barriers also led to one of the more unusual formal features of the early journal: the section of short essays, poems, and short fiction called "Unequal Developments" that appeared at the end of almost every issue. There was no generic expectation of "uniformity" to these pieces, as Aronowitz explains; they were "occasional, random, smaller." Jameson's metaphorical title, echoing the jargon of Marxist economics, was meant as a serious joke: it made the point that these "smaller interventions" (to use Jameson's description) had to be taken somehow next to — and of equal importance to — the large, ambitious essays in the first part of each issue. They could take up a current film (Jameson wrote pieces on *Diva* and *The Shining*), muse on the historical implications of P. T. Barnum, consider the politics of cruising in gay culture, or discuss a recent book by Bruno Latour. Brenkman, who came up with the idea to include a section of short pieces — he was inspired by a similar section in *Tel Quel* as well as the aphoristic *Denkbilder* of Adorno and Benjamin — describes "Unequal Developments" as "one of my favorite parts of the journal," and says he had hoped it would become even more central to *Social Text*'s identity.



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By the publication of *Social Text* 5 in 1982, Stanley Aronowitz had taken a teaching position at the City University of New York (CUNY). As the other founding editors were pulled into new commitments at different institutions (Brenkman moved to Northwestern University, and Jameson left Yale for the University of California at Santa Cruz and then Duke University), the New York collective became the de facto *Social Text* collective, and the core of the group began to be composed of scholars at CUNY, NYU, Rutgers, Princeton, and Columbia. Beyond its membership, the journal was deeply shaped by the intellectual and political conditions of Manhattan in the early 1980s. Lacking a permanent space, the journal held its editorial meetings on Sunday afternoons in people's homes — sometimes uptown (at Serafina Bathrick's apartment at 92nd and Amsterdam or Loren Shumway's place at 108th and Riverside), but more often downtown (at the apartment shared by Sohnya Sayres and George Yudice on East 10th Street near NYU or later Andrew Ross's loft in SoHo or Bruce Robbins's place in Tribeca) — and, as evoked in the section of quotes on "the social life of the collective" in this issue, the intimate, nonacademic setting fostered open-ended, freewheeling (and sometimes heated) discussion and cultivated a sense of camaraderie among the participants.

Manuscript review was often a time-consuming process since submissions were read by the entire collective (rather than parceled out to two or three "expert" field reviewers as in the peer review model of scholarly editing). Each submission was presented by an "advocate" on the collective and then discussed, sometimes in great detail, and finally voted on by the entire group. Generally, after submissions had been considered, the meeting turned into a general discussion centered on a recent article or book, current events, or contemporary politics. The topics could vary greatly, according to the interests and concerns of the members, from the specific (a Terry Eagleton essay in the last *New Left Review*) to the general (representations of the intellectual in contemporary theory or the state of the Green Party), and occasionally participants would offer informal presentations: for instance, at one October 1986 meeting, Cornel West initiated a discussion of John Rajchman's book on Michel Foucault.

The collective also periodically hosted open "soirées," which attracted a broader and motlier audience of academics, activists, journalists, and artists. Most often they were hosted by Sayres and Yudice, or by Michael Brown at his loft on Sixth Avenue in SoHo. The entry fee provided access to an evening of speakers, discussion, and a simple buffet of food and drink. Typically, a soirée would focus on a particular topic, although these varied as widely as the discussions in collective meetings; one proposed in 1985 addressed the "hegemonic notion" of market socialism among the Democratic Socialists of America, while another the following year featured a lecture by Chantal Mouffe on communitarianism and right-wing



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politics, with a response by Aronowitz. In September 1985, the journal hosted a small panel (featuring Cornel West and John Gay) that discussed the antiapartheid struggle in South Africa and the divestment movement. The goal of the soirées was not simply to raise money — although the funds these events generated, along with membership dues paid on a sliding scale and yearly grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, constituted the journal's primary means of support for the first half of the decade. More crucially, these events were a means for establishing *Social Text* as a forum for fresh debate and agenda-setting on the Left, providing an opportunity for intellectual and activist engagement beyond the confines of the university. There was a potent political symbolism at work in the fact that these convivial scholarly gatherings were staged outside the context of the university seminar room, away from the bite-sized blandness of institutional catering.

Perhaps because of this sense of oppositional space, those who participated in the soirées talk about them today with some wistfulness. They speak of an atmosphere of intense engagement, with pitched debates lasting well into the evening. Such characterizations may sound romantic, even prelapsarian, but they are also in keeping with the political tenor of the period. Activist collectives were flourishing in 1980s New York. The real estate speculation that would ultimately gentrify the Lower East Side was an expansion opportunity for many collective-based groups that, like the Nuyorican Poets Cafe and Artists Space, purchased their downtown spaces in this period. Collectives like Paper Tiger, producer of the alternative cable-access programming network Deep Dish TV, were founded at the beginning of the 1980s, and toward the end of the decade, new activist collectives such as ACT-UP reawakened the sense of urgency in collective political practice. Members of the early *Social Text* collective circulated in these worlds and enabled varying degrees of cross-pollination in the process.

However, the local organization with which the journal was most closely enmeshed was the annual Socialist Scholars Conference. Founded in 1983 by the CUNY chapter of Democratic Socialists of America, the Socialist Scholars Conference attracted a broad range of leftist intellectuals, as well as activists from the labor movement and student radicals from the United States and elsewhere. Panels at the Borough of Manhattan Community College in lower Manhattan would routinely draw crowds in the hundreds. (Barack Obama apparently attended this or a similar conference at Cooper Union when he was a student at Columbia; he recalled finding the discussions lacking in intensity compared to his experiences at Occidental College.)[31] *Social Text* was a sponsor of the Socialist Scholars Conference from the beginning, organizing several panels each year and frequently publishing papers that had been presented there.[32] There was


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a sense that the conference served as a form of political and intellectual life support in a period marked by the hegemony of Reagan populism and late–Cold War geopolitical unease. As Stephanson described it in a report on the third conference, the Socialist Scholars Conference was crucial in that it allowed socialist intellectuals "to feel that they are part of some kind of movement and not always in a precarious state of isolation."[33] It was also important in that it served as a space for dialogue among a variety of coalitions and collectives on the left, and in particular among progressive periodicals, many of which (including the *Nation*, *Socialist Review*, *Semiotext(e)*, *Monthly Review*, and *Radical History Review*, in addition to *Social Text*) arranged panel sessions. The conference functioned, then, to "open up a public sphere where things can be ventilated and contested without sectarian control."[34] It gathered, in the words of Andrew Ross, the full "spectrum of the Left" in the United States.

The commitment to sustaining a climate of intellectual and political community placed substantial demands upon the collective. Between the work of putting out the journal, the Socialist Scholars Conference, and extant institutional responsibilities, membership on the collective involved a significant expenditure of time and resources. Core members would end up meeting several times a month, and groups would branch off to study particular theorists, many of them newly translated European authors (including Bloch, Jürgen Habermas, and Mikhail Bakhtin) whose work had come to the collective's attention. Being a member of the collective involved a formidable amount of reading in addition to submissions, as these study groups often assigned articles for discussion at general meetings as part of a broader project of self-education. There were also specific challenges inherent in the very nature of collective work. Meeting minutes, reports, memoranda, and sundry ephemera from this period register the complexity of putting out a serial publication under conditions of voluntary labor governed by a consensus-based decision-making structure. Keeping track of manuscripts, a thankless task that began with an unwieldy index card system and evolved through successive record-keeping formats, was a frustrating endeavor, dependent upon the responsiveness of collective members assigned to be "corresponding editors" for each submission under review. (It was the corresponding editor's duty to collate readers' reports and to supervise the process of revision and production for a given contributor.) Other aspects of collective work, like financial record keeping and grant writing, were vital to the ongoing viability of the journal, but although they required significant time and attention, they were not particularly visible within the culture of the collective.

Alongside the effort to build and sustain an infrastructure were insistent countercurrents to the bureaucratic process, manifested in ongoing modes of internal debate and autocritique. Members of the collec-



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tive periodically wrote multipage assessments of the journal's editorial organization and its political commitments. Many criticized the pull of rationalization, linking divisions of labor to the distribution of editorial power. In 1984, after the publication of the eighth issue, Omar Dahbour composed an internal critique of the journal's direction, arguing that the collective had strayed too far from the rubrics of inquiry outlined in the "Prospectus" in the first issue.[35] Even earlier, there had been debates about the organizational structure and editorial protocols of the collective itself. In October 1982, in response to the flux of membership and the need for organizational continuity, the collective had appointed a Committee for Administration (later renamed the "executive committee") that was "charged with the general task of keeping things afloat."[36] Later the collective would begin electing two coeditors for the *Social Text* collective to take on this responsibility.[37]

The collective flirted with such divisions of labor throughout the next decade, and they were the source of much debate: many worried that putting the management of the journal in the hands of an executive core of a few collective members would bring organizational stability at the price of the open interaction and self-determination of the collective as a whole. Still, even those who, like Stephanson, appreciated the "artisanal" and "self-consciously utopian" quality of the pure collective model recognized that over time the journal became "more of a centralized operation by default because people didn't have the time." Stephanson, perhaps the collective member most committed to finding ways to ensure the institutional stability of the journal, wrote a number of documents on the topic and regularly addressed it in his minutes when he was managing editor in the mid-1980s. In 1991, he penned a four-page memorandum titled "On the Present Organizational State of the Collective," which reviewed the journal's internal history over the preceding decade and concluded with a plea for a more sustained conversation about the relation between the journal's structure and its broader political aims: "We have got to ask ourselves the larger question that I raised in 1984 and which in fact has been raised periodically ever since 1979 when I joined the journal: what are our aims, what are our political, theoretical and strategic aims?"[38]

Bound up in this process of periodic autocritique was a persistent acknowledgment of the onerous conditions of independent publishing. For years, the collective debated the advantages of signing with a university press as its publisher. The material benefits were obvious; there had been times in the journal's history when there was no money to put out the next issue. Grants from the New York State Council on the Arts could not be relied upon and, at one point, even paying off a loan for purchasing desktop publishing equipment was a struggle. Starting in 1983, Stanley Aronowitz was able to arrange for *Social Text* to have access to mailroom and photo-


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copying facilities at the CUNY Graduate Center, but the journal received no funding or office space. As is evident in the interview excerpts gathered in this issue under the title "Production," many collective members still remember sitting in the hallway outside Aronowitz's office, sorting manuscripts and licking envelopes. A procession of unpaid or underpaid managing editors, many of them graduate students and assistant professors at CUNY, Columbia, NYU, and Rutgers, shouldered the main burdens of publishing a journal in the pre-Internet, pre-desktop publishing age. In the 1980s, the collective members who took on managing editor duties (not all of whom were acknowledged on the masthead) included Lou Amdour, Wendy Graham, David Wildman, Philomena Mariani, Anders Stephanson, Sohnya Sayres, Nancy Anderson, Michael Denning, Bruce Robbins, Betina Zolkower, and Trish Rosen. Every element of the production process was handled in-house: the distribution of submissions to collective members; the tracking of manuscripts through the submission process; correspondence with contributors; copy-editing; typesetting; layout and design; art; the production and proofing of galleys; correspondence with the printer and distributor; the solicitation of advertising exchanges with other journals; the management of subscriptions; billing and account management; and correspondence with subscribers, whether individual or institutional.

This precarious reality meant that there was little controversy when in 1991 (during the period when *Social Text* 31/32, the special double issue "Third World and Post-Colonial Issues," was being prepared) the journal was given a staff line with benefits for the managing editor at the Center for the Analysis of Contemporary Culture at Rutgers.[39] Starting in 1991, for the first time in the journal's history, those who held the managing editor position (Philomena Mariani, Monica Marciczkiewicz, Michèle Sharon, and Livia Tenzer) found themselves working in an actual dedicated *Social Text* office, and this remains the situation at Columbia, where the journal moved in 2007.

The move to an institutional home was generally viewed as a necessary and fortuitous development. But signing the contract with Duke University Press in January 1992 was another matter. It involved signing over ownership of the journal, and with it the intellectual independence that had made *Social Text* such an influential organ in leftist scholarly culture. At the core of the concerns about signing with a publisher was the question of editorial control. The contract for the book series with Minnesota University Press, sparked by the success of *The 60's without Apology*—which originated as the journal's first special issue, *Social Text* 9/10, in 1984—had shown that university collaborations could prove beneficial, providing royalties as well as a vehicle for broadening the journal's readership. But the Duke contract was taken by some collective members



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to signal the closing of "the frontiers of what the journal could be and do," as Randy Martin recalls.

The collective debated the merits of affiliating the journal with a publisher for a number of months, and held tentative conversations with a number of presses (including not only Duke but also Oxford, Chicago, Minnesota, and Guilford). Even after the Duke contract, many collective members continued to express reservations about the consequences of the move. According to the minutes of meetings in this period, these members were not only concerned about the potential loss of editorial autonomy; they also worried that the loss of flexibility in the publishing schedule would make it harder to devote the necessary time to the preparation of issues. Before the contract, the publication schedule was sometimes erratic — for instance, in 1982 there were two issues of *Social Text*, but in 1985 there was only one — but starting with issue 30 the journal became a quarterly, assembled according to the fixed timeline expected by the press and by institutional subscribers. As Sayres puts it (in the selection of interview excerpts titled "Independent Publishing" included in the pages that follow), the production schedule imposed "a kind of bind" on the editorial process: previously, "when we were in whatever discursive breakdown we were in, we had time to recollect, to think about it, and start afresh. But with a press, it's rationalized, you're in a mechanical production problem: that commercial machinery puts you on a conveyer belt of some kind. If you want to gather in for a year or two and really think through new avenues, new ways of doing things — suddenly there's no time."

Even collective members who strongly supported the move recognized the potential problems. In the meeting where the collective discussed what to say in an editorial note for the first issue published by Duke, coeditor Robbins took notes on the conversation that capture some of these concerns: "not defeatist!" "refusing the narrative of the fall," and "chance to reaffirm commitment to get non-academics." But the sense of anxiety these notes capture did not find its way into the actual statement that ran. A brief avowal of the journal's continued independence, the note cited as reasons for the move "a decline in the funding of cultural organs (especially those of a political nature), the expansion of the university sector to incorporate most of the critical areas of intellectual life, and, in the case of *Social Text*, a depletion of its editors' capacity to attend to all of the labor-intensive details of desktop production."[40]

The stress exerted by all of these factors is readily apparent in the archive of the journal's first two decades. Indeed, in their very obsolescence the material forms of its contents — mimeographed typescripts, dot matrix printer fonts, chalky-thick fax paper, square black floppy disks — convey the challenges of publishing in the paleodigital era. But equally evident in the archive is a sense of what changed around 1992. The soirées stopped


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happening. The journal gradually stopped publishing poetry and fiction, and the "Unequal Developments" section was dropped. Meetings became more businesslike — there were fewer discussions of assigned readings. And there were fewer mentions of the Socialist Scholars Conference in the minutes. Still, these changes were not direct results of the move to Duke. The transformation of the collective's work that occurred in this period was also symptomatic of changes in the milieu in which it operated, including broader shifts in methods of political organizing and the increased professionalization of the academy.[41] For most of the 1980s, prior to the widespread adoption of e-mail and the Internet, the evolving project of leftist intellectual politics depended upon continuous face-to-face discussions and the outreach activities that sustained them. With its soirées and its visible presence in the Socialist Scholars Conference, as well as its links to the collective-oriented culture of New York activism and art, *Social Text* provided a powerful space for consolidating a leftist intellectual community in and around print culture in the 1980s. It is worth asking whether the emergence of digital life and its demands upon attention supplanted the interpersonal dynamics of self-education and political networking that sustained the journal in its first decade.

If this question is impossible to answer, it is not simply because of the unavoidable indeterminacy involved in trying to identify the impact of an absence. It is also because of a more general problem that any effort to narrate the history of the journal in the 1990s must face, namely, the catastrophic event of the Sokal hoax. From the perspective of the present-day collective, the effect of this 1996 event is as much historiographic as it is political. Not only does it threaten to blot out everything else that happened in the journal in this period, but it also imposes a sense of historical rupture, introducing a before and after into the narrative of *Social Text* — and indeed, of leftist cultural critique more generally — in the 1990s. This historiographic distortion plays out in a number of ways, most notably in the way it positions the politics of collective work. Alan Sokal's subsequent enshrinement by some as a whistle-blowing hero, taking on the cultural studies mafia all by himself, is a narrative of individual agency that obscures the hoax's debt to modes of radical intervention developed *by* collectives — groups such as the Situationists, the Yippies, and the British anarcho-punk collective Crass. Indeed, after the hoax was perpetrated, at least one member suggested that the *Social Text* collective perpetrate its own political prank in response, a suggestion one might read as an effort to reclaim the collective dimensions of such strategies. Moreover, although Sokal and his supporters attributed his success to the slipshod tyranny of a collective-based editorial process that eschewed the disciplinary gatekeeping mechanisms of peer review, it is also possible to see his actions as the result of a gradual weakening of collective bonds, associated in part with



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the journal's institutionalization. Considering the episode from today's vantage point, at a welcome remove from the maelstrom of the "culture wars" in the 1990s — and at an even greater distance from what one might describe as the "golden age" of collectivism in the 1970s — there seems more than a little irony in the fact that Sokal's authorial duplicity was championed so vociferously by conservative forces intent on restoring accountability in scholarly publishing.

The point here is not so much to adjudicate between interpretations, nor to rehash tired arguments from more than a dozen years ago, but rather to historicize the hoax within a continuous and dynamic concern with the politics of collective work in the editorial milieu of *Social Text*. Readers who are familiar with the journal only through the Sokal hoax might be surprised to see how little attention it receives in the pages of this anniversary issue. But the process of stock taking demanded by the occasion has made clear how little the event means within the broader history of the journal as a collective endeavor. As Ellen Willis pointed out in a perceptive essay at the time in the *Village Voice*, Sokal's role in political culture was less transformative than diagnostic.[42] For those who were already worried that something called "postmodernism" or "cultural studies" was corroding the leftist intellectual project, the episode was a decisive symptom, confirming their belief that work on the politics of culture was intellectually bankrupt and methodologically fraudulent, an intellectual poison pill that left us intoxicated by indeterminacy, staggering away from our "true" goals. For members of the so-called cultural Left, positioned by Sokal as a hegemonic force rather than a marginalized one (as it clearly was in the mid-1990s), the episode condensed and simplified the political positions at stake in cultural critique into a one-dimensional stance for or against antifoundationalism.[43] But when the moment of the hoax is bracketed off, the 1990s can be recognized as a moment during which the journal developed new commitments and modes of collective accountability. Queer politics, cultural citizenship and policy, and the labor struggles of university employees emerged as pivotal concerns of the journal in this period, and with these commitments came links to external forms of collectivization — groups such as ACT-UP and Queer Nation, artist and community groups, and trade unions. From the perspective of today's collective, the significance of the period ultimately has more to do with these broad shifts in political affiliation than with the noisy controversy of the affair, as exhausting and embarrassing as it must have been for the collective in 1996.

The Sokal affair also recedes in significance for us today insofar as the process of historical reflection is always refracted through the concerns of the present moment. In the current decade, what we think of as a political hoax has taken on far higher stakes. The United States is in the midst of a savage and ruinous war on the basis of duplicitous assertions about weap-


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ons of mass destruction, and scientific fudgery is now a form of political practice far more closely associated with the Right, most notably in efforts to legitimize "intelligent design" and to undermine evidence of climate change. These conditions provide leftist *blagueurs* with targets far more important than a small academic journal with a largely volunteer staff. It is not surprising that the Bush-Cheney years saw the rise of collective groups such as the Yes Men, which began in 1999 with the publication of a fake campaign Web site, www.GWBush.com, and which has helped to reinvigorate the prank as a leftist tactic with a number of high-profile stunts in the intervening years.[44] Since then, the loose-knit collective has produced a series of viral gems, such as the 2004 intervention where a member pretended to be a spokesman for Dow Chemical and convinced the BBC that the corporation was ready to apologize for the 1984 Bhopal tragedy and the 2008 ersatz edition of the *New York Times* in which headlines trumpeted the end of the war in Iraq, the passage of a national health insurance act, and the nationalization of the oil industry, among other things.[45] As hoaxes, these collective projects were far more successful than the efforts of any individual prankster in focusing attention on the relationship between the media, corporate power, and government.

Just as it is possible to chart the transformations in *Social Text* over its first two decades, one could attempt to outline the ways the journal has changed since the late 1990s. Clearly there are a number of new rubrics of inquiry that have been elaborated, often in individual essays or special issues that have come to be influential in subsequent scholarship; these include globalization, secularism, diaspora, corporate culture, and transnational history. At the same time, although there are central areas of concern that have fallen into dormancy or obsolescence — most notably, the focus on mass culture in the first few issues of the journal and the debates around postmodernism that were so prominent in the late 1980s — the current collective has continued to support work in areas of concern to *Social Text* for decades, such as the politics of academic labor, the complexities of war and imperialism, and, perhaps above all, postcolonial theory and queer theory. Recently, we have started again to publish a section of shorter, occasional essays and *Denkbilder* (though without the title "Unequal Developments"), and in this way we hope to retain the impulse to break down barriers that animated the founding of the journal.

Rather than attempt here to offer an overview of the present decade, however, we will let the collective speak for itself, as it were, in the essays that follow, which are as much a dialogue about the future of *Social Text* as a perusal of its past. Originally we were thinking of the deliberately broad terms used as titles of the essays here ("Affect," "Art," "Aesthetics," "AIDS," "Body," etc.) as something like "anchored keywords." That is, the collective conceived of *Social Text* 100 as being composed of pieces



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that would use particular points (single essays) or threads (themes that are taken up in a number of essays over the years) in the publication history of the journal as the starting point for a consideration of broader issues of knowledge production, critique, or methodology. One model would be the entries in Raymond Williams's *Keywords*, if one imagines a keywords approach that attempts to apprehend not a "vocabulary of culture and society" in the widest sense, as Williams does, but instead a shared vocabulary active in a particular journal as an index to a broader set of dialogues in scholarship, political discourse, and culture.[46] But our motivation here is less etymological and less pedagogical than Williams's book and the numerous projects it has inspired.[47] We are less interested in providing historically nuanced definitions of important terms and concepts for use in future scholarship than in producing, through a critical reading of the past of this journal, a conversation about its future direction, and about the stakes of journal publishing at a radically different conjuncture than the one that gave rise to *Social Text*. This is to say that this issue is at once an effort to speculate on the future of the collective through its history and an insistence that any such effort must itself be a collective endeavor.

## Notes

Assembling this issue would have been impossible without the editorial assistance and dedication of Livia Tenzer, who oversaw the entire process by which members of the collective wrote and revised their individual entries, even setting up a wiki Web site where contributors could read and comment on each others' work-in-progress. We are deeply appreciative of the extraordinary time and effort she put into every stage of this issue's production. We would also like to thank editorial assistants Hiie Saumaa and Alexander Kupfer, the *Social Text* graduate student employees at Columbia and NYU, respectively, who were instrumental in the collecting, organizing, and photocopying of the editorial archive as we gathered it from various former collective members. We are especially grateful to Hiie Saumaa, who transcribed all the interviews, an enormous task that proved crucial for the preparation of this volume.

1. James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," *Representations* 2 (Spring 1983): 139.

2. The phrase "interested affiliation" is adopted from Ron Silliman, Carla Harryman, Lyn Hejinian, Steve Benson, Bob Perelman, and Barrett Watten, "Aesthetic Tendency and the Politics of Poetry: A Manifesto," *Social Text* 19/20 (1988): 272. In the literary realm, one example of an attempt at collective history would be the ongoing serial *The Grand Piano: An Experiment in Collective Autobiography* by ten writers associated with the rise of the Language poetry movement in San Francisco in the 1970s (Rae Armantrout, Steve Benson, Carla Harryman, Lyn Hejinian, Tom Mandel, Ted Pearson, Bob Perelman, Kit Robinson, Ron Silliman, and Barrett Watten): see www.thegrandpiano.org/. See also Watten's essay "How the Grand Piano Is Being Written," available at www.english.wayne.edu/fac_pages/ewatten/posts/post34.html. Another recent provocative model is George E. Lewis's ambitious his-



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tory of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, which explicitly discusses the burden of writing "an autobiography of a collective": see Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), xxvii.

3. The Hegelian understanding of a dialectical history based in speculative thought is perhaps best expounded and exemplified in the work of C. L. R. James; see, for instance, *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin* (Westport, CT: Hill, 1980), 8, 10; and "Lectures on *The Black Jacobins*," *Small Axe*, no. 8 (September 2000): 72. The phrase "read hard"—as in "I read that book very hard"—is one of James's habitual colloquialisms (see "Lectures," 67); as the phrase implies, speculation does not involve flights of fancy, but instead a dogged, almost tactile grappling with the archive.

4. Brent Hayes Edwards and Anna McCarthy, interview with Stanley Aronowitz, Jackson Heights, Queens, 4 October 2008; Edwards and McCarthy, interview with Bruce Robbins, New York, New York, 13 October 2008; Edwards and McCarthy, interview with Sohnya Sayres, Department of Cinema Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, NYU, New York, 22 October 2008; Edwards and McCarthy, interview with Andrew Ross, Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, NYU, New York, 25 November 2008; Edwards and McCarthy, interview with John Brenkman, Department of English, Baruch College, CUNY, New York, 6 December 2008; Edwards and McCarthy, interview with Randy Martin, Department of Art and Public Policy, Tisch School of the Arts, NYU, New York, 18 December 2008; Edwards, telephone interview with Fredric Jameson, 16 January 2009; Edwards and Livia Tenzer, interview with Anders Stephanson, Department of History, Columbia University, 5 February 2009; Tenzer, e-mail interview with Wendy Graham, February 2009; Tenzer, e-mail interview with David Wildman, February 2009. All subsequent quotes from former collective members, both in the introduction and in the selections grouped under thematic headings and interspersed throughout this issue, are taken from these conversations.

5. Although he had already published widely and gained an international reputation as an organizer and sociologist, Aronowitz did not receive his PhD until the fall of 1975, from the Union Graduate School (now the Union Institute).

6. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

7. Sean I. Homer, "A Short History of the MLG," mlg.eserver.org/about/a-short-history-of-the-mlg (accessed 23 April 2009).

8. Homer, "A Short History of the MLG."

9. Patrick Story, "The Spirit of St. Cloud: A Report," *Minnesota Review*, n.s., 10 (Spring 1978): 131. Early issues of *Mediations* are extremely difficult to find, and we have unfortunately not been able to consult copies from the relevant period (between 1975 and 1980). Although the publication was founded as a newsletter, it seems to have contained some theoretical deliberation as well. In the early 1990s, *Mediations* was expanded into journal format by members of its editorial board (including Ron Strickland and Chris Newfield), and it is still active online as the journal of the Marxist Literary Group. See mlg.eserver.org/mediations.

10. Jameson, "Notes toward a Marxist Cultural Politics," introduction to "Special Supplement: The Marxist Alternative to the Traditions," *Minnesota Review*, n.s., 5 (Fall 1975): 35. In the next issue of the *Minnesota Review*, Jameson is listed as an associate editor and there is another supplement of work from the MLG, titled



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"Marxism and Utopia," with contributions by Darko Suvin, Mark Poster, Paul Buhle, and Serafina Bathrick, among others. See "Special Supplement: Marxism and Utopia," *Minnesota Review*, n.s., 6 (Spring 1976): 51–139.

11. Jameson, "Notes toward a Marxist Cultural Politics," 36, 37. With regard to the university, he argues that it offers "an opportunity; but it is also an institution which has very specific social functions to perform—some of them practical and immediate, like government contracts in the sciences or the formation of a technocratic personnel of this or that type—some more deeply ideological through the programming of students to certain life routines and modes of thinking and it is also, on occasion, the setting for a more specific type of political demand and political action. These are not alternatives but dimensions of the same phenomenon of which we must make our students aware just as we maintain our own sensitivity to them: for it would be fatuous to imagine that we are able to use the university without a keen sense of the way in which, in return, it uses us" (38).

12. Jameson, "Notes toward a Marxist Cultural Politics," 38.

13. The session "Toward a Marxist Theory of Culture" included the following presentations: Aronowitz, "Cultural Politics"; Sylvia Wynter (who was then a colleague of Jameson's at UCSD), "Literature and the Third World"; and Carol Lopate (who was a colleague of Aronowitz's at Staten Island), "Marxism and Feminism." See "The Ninetieth Annual Convention of the Modern Language Association of America," conference program, *PMLA* 90, no. 6 (November 1975). It is worth noting that this initial conjuncture privileged a number of topics—not only Marxist theory but also feminism and what would come to be called postcolonial literature—that would prove to be crucial elements in *Social Text*.

14. Story, "Spirit of St. Cloud," 132. On the Summer Institute, see also Gaylord C. Leroy, "The Marxism of the Marxist Literary Group," *Minnesota Review*, n.s., 10 (Spring 1978): 133–41.

15. Story, "Spirit of St. Cloud," 132. Story's account notwithstanding, the collective has historically included strong representation from both of these fields.

16. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, personal communication with Brent Hayes Edwards, April 2009.

17. Brenkman recalls: "One of the key things in how the journal got off the ground is that Fred was absolutely a magnet for new work. He traveled a lot, he gave a lot of lectures, he went to a lot of things. People would just come up to him and hand him manuscripts and so on. I met him that way."

18. According to the narrative in the New York State Council on the Arts grant applications submitted by *Social Text* in the late 1980s, each editor contributed $10,000 out of pocket; issues 4 and 5 were funded by an equivalent contribution by Conrad Johnson.

19. Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, introduction to *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946), v.

20. Ezra Pound, "Small Magazines," *English Journal* 19 (1930): 702. The phrase "strategic containment" comes from the cowritten "Prospectus," *Social Text* 1 (1979): 3.

21. By 1979, Aronowitz was teaching at the University of California at Irvine, and Jameson had left UCSD in 1977 to take a position at Yale University.

22. Aronowitz, Brenkman, and Jameson, "Prospectus," 3.

23. Ibid., 4.

24. Michael E. Brown, "The Politics of Anti-Theater," *Social Text* 1 (1979): 157. He writes that "cultural studies" "is not an original category of Marxism,



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nor does it name something real that is objectively prior to theory. To accept the identification of cultural studies and the recommendation that those studies take account of 'economic determinations' without regard to the 'restoration of the whole social material process' is to do too little and presume too much. It is already to have agreed that theater, literature, the visual arts, and music can be extracted from the social material process with impunity if they are also shown within a causal matrix that includes similarly extracted factors of social and political economy. In that case, Marxism is not distinctive; it simply clarifies a material situation that no one had seriously denied. But Marxism does more than that. It establishes that culture is not merely limited by society but is itself a social material process constituted by the social relations of capitalism. Moreover, Marxism, as the critique of capitalism, begins as a critique of categories, including 'culture.' "

25. One scholar central to the conversations at Birmingham, Richard Johnson, published one of the first overviews of the center's work in the journal: see "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text* 16 (1986–87): 38–80. See also the dossier of essays on Raymond Williams in *Social Text* 30 (1992).

26. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

27. Fredric Jameson, "On 'Cultural Studies,' " *Social Text* 34 (1993): 17–52.

28. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, x.

29. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Seabury, 1972); *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971); Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1977); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

30. See Michel de Certeau, "On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life," trans. Fredric Jameson and Carl Lovitt, *Social Text* 3 (1980): 3–43; Jacques Attali, "Introduction to *Bruits*," trans. Jean-Joseph Goux and Fredric Jameson, *Social Text* 7 (1983): 6–8; Jean-Joseph Goux and Fredric Jameson, "Interview with Jacques Attali," *Social Text* 7 (1983): 9–18; Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Our America and the West," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 1–25. Lindsay Waters, the editor who would acquire *The 60s without Apology* at the University of Minnesota Press, recalls that Jameson functioned for a number of years as a sort of ad hoc conduit for new theoretical work from around the globe, and his recommendations (produced often through *Social Text* connections) led directly to publications such as Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi, with a foreword by Fredric Jameson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); and Retamar's *Caliban and Other Essays*, trans. Edward Baker, with a foreword by Jameson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989). Waters, personal communication to Brent Hayes Edwards, April 2009.

31. Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995; rpt., New York: Three Rivers, 2004), 122.

32. The range of topics on panels organized by *Social Text* at the Socialist Scholars Conference was remarkably broad: at the 1987 conference, for example, the overarching theme of which was "Against Domination: State, Class, Race, Gender," the thirteen *Social Text* panels included "The Crisis of Socialism" (featuring Chantal Mouffe and Bogdan Denitch, among others); "A Black Postmodern Culture?" (with



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Cornel West and Greg Tate); "Critical Legal Studies as a Critique of Domination" (with Kendall Thomas); "The Political Significance of Ecology" (with Barry Commoner and Kirkpatrick Sale); "Popular Culture and Sexual Politics" (with Andrew Ross, James Kavanagh, and Laura Kipnis); "South Africa and Israel—Alliance in Crisis" (with Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, Yerach Gover, and Nubar Novsepian); "Intellectuals and Subalternity" (with Bruce Robbins, John McClure, Aijaz Ahmad, R. Radhakrishnan, and Caren Kaplan); and "Abortion: Women and Moral Agency" (with Patricia Mann, Beverly Harrison, and Francis Kissling).

33. Anders Stephanson, "On the Socialist Scholars Conference 1985," *Social Tex*t 12 (1985): 124.

34. Ibid.

35. Omar Dahbour, "Fulfillment of the Original Prospectus" [internal memorandum to the *Social Text* Collective], 9 September 1984, *Social Text* editorial archive, Columbia University; Omar Dahbour, "Original Prospectus and Subsequent History of *Social Text*; A Theoretical Critique" [internal memorandum], 19 September 1984, *Social Text* editorial archive, Columbia University.

36. Anders Stephanson, "On the Present Organizational State of the Collective" [internal memorandum], 7 January 1991, *Social Text* editorial archive, Columbia University.

37. Although Aronowitz, Brenkman, and Jameson are listed as editors on the masthead of early issues of *Social Text*, the journal was run as a collective: decisions were made by majority vote, and any member was allowed to propose essays for publication, topics for issues, or subjects for discussion in the meetings and soirées. Many former members of the collective in the early and mid-1980s, especially the graduate students and untenured professors, recall with fondness the unique atmosphere of such radical collectivism. (Of course, this is not to imply that the journal was egalitarian on every level: as is to be expected, some took on more of the intense labor of producing the journal than others, and some had more influence on editorial policy than others—in ways that had to do both with their ambition, articulateness, and charisma and with their seniority and connections as writers and intellectuals in various circuits beyond *Social Text*—and this unevenness in the distribution of labor created certain minor resentments and jealousies.)

Some time after the collective began electing an executive committee in the late 1980s, one or two members started to be identified as editor on the masthead, apparently in recognition of their work in managing that body. Sohnya Sayres was the first named editor, in *Social Text* 25/26 (1990); for issues 27 and 28 the next year, which debuted a new cover design, Stanley Aronowitz is listed in that capacity. By issue 29, when the journal had taken its office at Rutgers, Bruce Robbins and Andrew Ross are listed as editors; with issue 34 (1992), the second issue published by Duke University Press, Robbins and Ross are described as "editors for the *Social Text* Collective," as though to make clear that their function is not that of a traditional editor in chief with full authority over journal policy and contents.

38. Stephanson, "On the Present Organizational State of the Collective." Other internal documents offering searching (and at times polemical) considerations of the publication history, editorial organization, and future direction of the journal include Anders Stephanson, "To the Social Text Collective: Regarding 'Sabotage' and Other Matters," 3 May 1993; Randy Martin, "Some Thoughts for *Social Text*," 22 October 1993; Jonathan Lang, "Letter to the Editorial Collective of *Social Text*," 10 December 1993; Sohnya Sayres, "ST/Future," c. 1993; Nanette Funk, "On *Socialtext*," c. 1993, *Social Text* editorial archive, Columbia University.



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39. The founding director of the center, George Levine, taught in the English department at Rutgers with collective members, including Bruce Robbins and John McClure, but Levine was not himself involved with *Social Text*. According to the informal arrangement, the managing editor was a member of the center's staff, but the journal was expressly not supposed to serve as a "house organ" that would publish work developed through the yearly faculty seminars or colloquia at the center.

40. "An Editorial Note," *Social Text* 33 (1992): 1.

41. A number of former collective members emphasized the factor of increased professionalization and careerism in describing the changes in the journal in the late 1980s. As Jameson observes, by the end of the decade, "everybody had to be so specialized to get their jobs; people just didn't have the luxury of this kind of collective work." To put it differently, according to Brenkman there was unavoidably a "tension" between the innovation of the journal (which in its first decade published material that could not have been published in discipline-specific journals) and the need for scholars to "foster their career and establish their credentials." Indeed, the very success of *Social Text* was part of this dynamic: as the journal came to be viewed as a respectable, even privileged place to publish, and as the academy began to value what came to be called "interdisciplinary" scholarship in appointment and tenure decisions, it was, as Aronowitz puts it, "natural that people began to see the journal as a site of certain career opportunities."

42. Ellen Willis, "My Sokaled Life," *Village Voice*, 25 June 1996.

43. One of the sorriest results of the Sokal affair is that, given the hue and cry around the hoax, almost no one actually bothered to take the time to read the special double issue in which Sokal's essay appeared. The issue was organized as a "forum" of direct and indirect responses by scholars in a variety of fields (including the natural sciences, sociology, anthropology, history, and literature) to Paul Gross and Norman Levitt's book *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), which spuriously accused the "cultural Left" of attacking science as an institution. (See Andrew Ross, introduction to *Social Text* 46/47 "Science Wars" [1996]: 7, 12.) The great irony of the hoax is that the issue ended up reproducing the very dynamic it was attempting to diagnose: that is, the fact that *Social Text* was duped into publishing Sokal's self-professed "satire" was taken as a sign of the ineptitude of the "cultural Left" and its purported attack on scientific rationality.

Nevertheless, as is obvious from even a cursory perusal, the other essays in *Social Text* 46/47 are not based in a "postmodern" critique of Enlightenment rationality per se. Aside from Sokal's piece, the contributions are concerned not with physics in particular, but instead with the politics of the *applied* sciences (agribusiness, military technology, waste management, biotechnology, genetic engineering) in corporate capitalism and national security. As Andrew Ross's introduction to the issue makes clear, the point of the issue is to consider the political and ethical stakes of the applied sciences and to reject the obfuscation of those stakes with claims that all scientific inquiry is automatically "value-free." Such a consideration is neither "postmodern" nor "anti-science."

44. On the Yes Men, see theyesmen.org/. The story of the fake Bush campaign Web site can be found at www.rtmark.com/bush.html (accessed 23 April 2009).

45. See theyesmen.org/hijinks/bbcbhopal and theyesmen.org/node/142 (accessed 23 April 2009).

46. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).



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47. For example, *Keywords: Experience*, ed. Nadia Tazi (New York: Other Press, 2004); Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, eds., *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, eds., *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).



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