Eric Erbacher, Nicole Maruo-Schröder,
Florian Sedlmeier (eds.)

Rereading the Machine in the Garden

Nature and Technology in American Culture

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Introduction: Rereading *The Machine in the Garden*

Eric Erbacher, Nicole Maruo-Schröder, Florian Sedlmeier

Marking an anniversary, such as the fiftieth of the publication of Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964), one creates and singles out an event, suggesting a need to return to this event and to reassess its implications for past, present, and future conditions. In this sense, the notion of an anniversary carries the connotations of both a celebration and a re-envisioning. In and of itself, however, the marking of an anniversary does not necessitate a critical reexamination. After all, one could leave the respectful tone of the anniversary and easily dismiss Marx's study as a relic of bygone times, guilty of a range of inadequacies that subsequent critics have exposed in a plethora of articles and books. Similar to other representatives of what Bruce Kuklick (1972) labeled the "Myth and Symbol School," Marx has been charged with participating in the tale of American exceptionalism that continues to haunt American Studies, a tale grounded in the sermons of John Winthrop, the political rhetoric of Thomas Jefferson, and others; with rearticulating the belief in a holistic national ideal; with glossing over discourses of difference and with not systematically accounting for their effects on the societal fabric; and with foreclosing the possibilities of the recently fashionable and reactivated transnational approaches. These political objections are sometimes complemented by a critique of the philosophical underpinnings of Marx's argument, most notably of what Kuklick identified as its pervasive humanism and its supposed indebtedness to Cartesian thought, i.e. its marked separation of thought and the material.[1] And they find their aesthetic equivalent in the critique of an understanding of the arts and literature that is regarded as suspicious because it positions the declared masterpieces of the American Renaissance and modernism as privileged objects

1 While Kuklick's article became a point of reference for revisionist scholars if mostly because it coined the label, Alan Trachtenberg (1984) has provided perhaps the most succinct defense of the Myth and Symbol School.

of study and because it conceives of these texts as being structured according to a single master trope: the machine in the garden. In order to substantiate his claim, critics have argued, Marx not simply ignores a large number of texts (both popular and 'high literary' ones); John Lark Bryant criticizes him for deploying "extravagant argumentation" (1975, 68) in his readings of Renaissance masterpieces to position the machine in the garden as the one tropology that best describes America.[2] The validity of many of these arguments depends, of course, on the degree and mode of historicizing them, i.e. on examining them for the ideologies they necessarily contain. And if we seek to legitimize this volume by marking not just *The Machine in the Garden*'s anniversary but also its continuing significance, we inevitably engage in modes of historicizing as well.

The well-known charges just sketched are indicative of the narrative of a generational shift from Americanists to New Americanists, a term coined by Frederick Crews.[3] This shift manifests itself, among others, in a changing understanding of the political function of scholarship, in a different conception of scholarly argumentation and writing, and in the emergence of theory.[4] Against this backdrop, the present collection of essays reexamines *The Machine in the Garden* on two basic grounds. First, the volume, and this introductory essay in particular, aim at historicizing the study by redirecting the well-known and necessary critiques of the New Americanists, informed by cultural studies, gender studies, new historicism, ethnic studies, and poststructuralist theory. Such a task of historicizing is not least suggested by Marx himself, who, challenged by other scholars, reevaluated his own and his generation's positions in the changing field of American Studies, defending, expanding, and refining his initial argument in a series of articles, some of which are included in his collection of essays *The Pilot and the Passenger* (1988).[5] At stake in this project are shifting codifications of

2 See also the reviews of Steiner (1964) and Mills (1970) for a criticism of Marx's method of *literary* analysis as well as the scope of analysis and selection of texts.

3 See Pease (1990, 1); see also e.g., Lipsitz (2001), Rowe (2002) for discussions of this paradigm shift.

4 For an up-to-date discussion of the generational shift from the integrationist Americanists to the revisionist, pluralist New Americanists see Johannes Voelz (2010), who shows that this shift relies on the narrative, or "the thesis of an epochal break" (23), which he finds reiterated in accounts by Gene Wise (1979), Donald Pease and Robyn Wiegman (2002), and Leo Marx (2005), among others. For a discussion of the function of theory in this narrative of a shift see also Voelz (2010, 24–27).

5 Later writings include Marx's "Afterword: The Machine in the Garden" (1999/2000), included in the thirty-fifth anniversary edition; several articles on technology (1984;

the arts and literature as well as culture, nature, and technology. Second, the contributions to this collection seek to retrieve the trope of the machine and its intrusion into the pastoral landscape as a vital configuration for a broad range of artistic, filmic, and literary texts, spanning from the early nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. While the trope, for various reasons, can certainly not account for the grand cultural and literary history Leo Marx had in mind, its significance in artistic productions from a U.S. context has to be acknowledged and construed. The present volume probes the unabated relevance of this cultural tropology for the analysis of representations of nature and technology in artistic, filmic, and literary texts. And in doing so, this introduction and the contributions also assess the lasting impact of Marx's method and rhetoric for the present condition of the field of inquiry named American Studies, looking for points of entry that *The Machine in the Garden* might retrospectively offer for current debates.

Institutional Concerns: American Studies as a Field of Inquiry

In a sense, the poles of Marx's dialectical trope are inscribed in three institutions: Marx is a Harvard graduate, who received his PhD in History of American Civilization in 1950, and he held academic positions at the University of Minnesota—hence in the upper part of the Midwest, that geographical and cultural region most commonly associated with notions of the middle landscape and the heartland—and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, where he was appointed Kenan Professor of American Cultural History in 1976. The denominations and trajectories of these institutional appointments should make us aware of a key aspect of the project of American Studies: it was initially conceived as a field of inquiry geared toward identifying the possibilities and the structures of a cultural history. As such, American Studies, in its inception, is not a discipline but a specific method; it is positioned against the empiricism and scientific rigor of the natural and social sciences, and it is devoid of the philological tradition that continues to inform European languages

1997); an essay that contextualizes the early Americanists in the institutional context of the University of Minnesota (1999); and an exchange across generations of Americanists with George Lipsitz in *American Literary History* (see Lipsitz 2005; Marx 2005).

and literatures and its academic institutions. In effect, Marx, his teacher Henry Nash Smith and others repeatedly insisted on this peculiarity of the emerging field, not the least in order to legitimize its specific position in the departmental organization.

Smith poses the central institutional and methodological question that concerned early Americanists in the title of his influential essay: "Can American Studies Develop a Method?" (1957). Reading Mark Twain for his various prose styles and the social positions they represent, Smith calls for "a method of analysis that is at once literary […] and sociological" (201). Partly drawing on Matthew Arnold, he positions the conceptual metaphor of culture "to embrace 'society' and 'art'" (ibid., 206). Culture is presented as a third alternative that avoids the pitfalls of the social sciences, which hold that "all value is implicit in social experience, in group behavior, in institutions, in man as an average member of society," and which questions the assumption of New Criticism "that value lies outside society, in works of art which exist on a plane remote from […] our actual experience" (ibid., 206). The construction of culture as a third conceptual metaphor between these notions of the social sciences and 'purely' literary criticism allows Smith "to conceive of American Studies as a collaboration among men working from within existing academic disciplines but attempting to widen the boundaries imposed by conventional methods of inquiry" (ibid., 207). Anchoring the field in "practice" rather than method, he means "to resolve the dilemma posed by the dualism which separates social facts from esthetic values" and suggests to explore the mental and symbolic structures, or "the image in our minds" (ibid., 207) in which both supposedly merge; the singular, of course, betrays the search for and the belief in a single, unifying "image." American Studies, for Smith, emerge from within the institutionalized disciplines, breach their methodologies, and put their lines of demarcation to a practical test. As such, the field is per definition envisioned as inter-disciplinary in the perhaps truest sense of the word: it is between the disciplines, from within the institutional confines of which it intervenes, without being and becoming a discipline of its own.

Smith's inquiry reverberates in Marx's writings. In effect, most of the articles he published after *The Machine in the Garden* are concerned with institutional and methodological questions, starting with "American Studies: A Defense of an Unscientific Method" (1969). In "Reflections on American Studies, Minnesota, and the 1950s" from 1999, he reviews the

project of his generation vis-à-vis both the institutionalized New Criticism and the shift toward cultural studies. He locates the beginnings of American Studies "outside the academy in the work of independent, unaffiliated writers and intellectuals" (44), among whom he counts thinkers as diverse as W.E.B. Du Bois and Lewis Mumford. Explaining the subsequent institutional divide in the English department at Minnesota between the contextualism and historicism practiced by Americanists and the closed textualism of the New Critics as well as the reactionary parochialism of the Southern Agrarians, he argues that the actual impact of the divide was smoothened by the identification "of a common enemy: McCarthyism and other hyper-nationalistic expressions of paranoid anti-communism" (ibid., 42). The stakes in the emergence and institutionalization of American Studies were not least the values of intellectual independence in a political climate of censorship. And these values manifested themselves in the search for a meaningful structure of myths and symbols that might reclaim a national cohesion as a cultural one from the governmental and medial hijacking of the nation in paranoid nationalistic terms. The precariousness of this constellation accounts for a positioning such as "secular, left-liberal humanist values" that Leo Marx ascribes to Americanists of his generation, whom he deems "committed to the labor movement, to 'progressive' […] principles of social and economic justice" (ibid., 41). Against the backdrop of the 1950s, which betrayed the political legacy of the New Deal, Marx reclaims "the nation's distinctiveness" as grounded in "singular political innovations" (ibid., 43). Note the choice of vocabulary: it is about distinctiveness and singularity, not about exceptionality and uniqueness. Elaborating upon Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, he further contends: "the United States is a nation defined neither by its location nor its ethnic composition, but rather by a 'proposition'—a cosmopolitan, multicultural, potentially universalizable set of principles" (ibid., 43).

This intricate piece of rhetoric testifies to the conceptual struggles Marx faces in reexamining and retroactively legitimizing his project. The United States expresses an ideal and a promise, tied neither to a definition of the nation as based upon the geography of the nation-state, nor to an understanding of the nation that would be contingent upon ethnic difference. Rather, the idea of a nation that Marx has in mind aspires both to a notion of intellectual cosmopolitanism, which might effectively recode the nation as a non-nationalist organism composed of a single community of citizens of the world, and to an understanding of multiculturalism that respects

cultural variety without prioritizing ethnic difference as a category of analysis. This implies not to give up on aspirations to liberal consensus in the framework of a reactionary narrative of 1950s Cold War consensus: Marx reclaims a leftist liberalism from within and against the liberalisms of libertarian economics, consumer culture, and limited government. Consequently, he stresses two institutional and two societal motivations for the project of American Studies. Inside the university, Americanists strove for "the introduction of distinctively American subject matter in the study of history, literature, philosophy, and art" (ibid., 45) in order to defy "snobbish Anglophilia" (ibid., 46); this challenge to the elitist literary standards of English departments resulted in "a desire to circumvent barriers to interdisciplinarity" (ibid., 46). Outside departmental reform, Marx goes on to argue, Americanists were "essentially ideological" (ibid., 46) to the extent that they committed themselves to the complex retrieval of the foundational ideas just delineated.[6] In doing so, they sought to apply "democratic standards of multicultural equity in recruiting faculty members," which during the 1950s meant an extension of the pool of WASP males "to candidates of Jewish, Irish, German, Polish, and other non-WASP white males" (ibid., 48).

For Marx, "the affirmative commitment" that he deems the unifying characteristic of his generation of scholars faces a challenge, a "crisis of legitimacy that developed in 1968–75" (ibid., 50, 49). This crisis fosters a renewed skepticism toward the idea of national-cultural holism—a skepticism manifesting itself in what Marx calls an "activist political radicalism of the academy," which corresponds to a "conceptual radicalism characteristic of post-structural critical theory, social constructivism, and their variants" (ibid., 49). For him, the "affirmative commitment" now shifts from presumably macroscopic to supposedly microscopic scales of analysis. We could certainly criticize such a view for reproducing an anxiety of the fractions and frictions that characterizes the so-called "culture wars" of the 1980s and 1990s, and we could equally contend that the developments which grew out of the new social movements are no less and maybe even more macroscopic. But we can also take Marx's argument as a point of

6 The retrospective concession of being openly "ideological" reacts to the various charges of ideological complicity New Americanists directed at Marx. His embrace here is not without irony once we keep in mind that declaring oneself to be an ideologue of sorts—and hence admitting the inevitability of ideological complicity and cooptation—marks a scholarly taboo in the context of American Studies in the U.S.

entry for reexamining the politics of experience that is by now firmly institutionalized. After all, the institutionalization of discourses of difference and identity politics as paradigmatic preconditions for the production of certain literary histories often commands a strategic employment of the memoir, which is used as a mode of writing and reading to validate arguments and their representativeness for communities.[7] The lesson to be learned here, from a contemporary point of view, rather concerns the persistency of "affirmative commitment" as a strategy in scholarship across the shifts of scope.

The Machine in the Garden: A Cultural Tropology and its Intellectual Sources

The Pastoral

One way to historicize *The Machine in the Garden* more thoroughly consists in reconstructing the key concepts, the intellectual sources and their relation to Marx's research design. His interest in the technological and the pastoral can be explained by looking at the institutionalized intellectual traditions of his contemporaries. When Marx resorts to the pastoral as both a conceptual metaphor and a literary convention, he inscribes himself into an institutionalized discourse of English departments, where scholars such as William Empson and Frank Kermode established this category of analysis from the 1930s through the 1950s, and which Raymond Williams would take up again in the 1970s. Leo Marx, then, operates from within and against a master trope that goes back to antiquity and that figures prominently in the debates of English New Criticism, which was notably different from its American variant in its thinking of the relation between art, politics, and society.

In *Some Versions of the Pastoral* (1935), William Empson develops an understanding of proletarian literature as pastoral in the sense of "folk-litera-

7 Werner Sollors's work is a vital reminder that the writing of literary histories according to discourses of difference and identity politics, which we now almost take for granted, is but one way of writing such histories (see 1986, 14); among others, Kenneth Warren underscores the central significance of the memoir for legitimizing and administering African American studies as a field of inquiry (see 2011, 122).

ture," written "by the people, for the people, and about the people;" for Empson, such a broad conception of proletarian literature is "not dependent on a system of class exploitation" (1966, 15). "The essential trick of the old pastoral," he writes, was to bring forth "a beautiful relation between the rich and the poor" (ibid., 19), based upon representations of feelings that were "common to all classes" (ibid., 18). As such, it harbors a unifying, reconciliatory social quality that, in Leo Marx's reading of Empson in his chapter on the garden, "served as a mask of political purposes" (2000, 129). Marx adds an asterisk that features, against Empson, his own distinction "between those versions of pastoral which enable the reader to enjoy an easy resolution of the conflict and those which enforce the poet's ironic distance from the pastoral dream, that is, between sentimental and complex pastoralism" (ibid., 129). This argument is framed by a reading of "Jefferson's idealized portrait of the husbandman," whom Marx takes to be a cultural translation of "the literary shepherd" (ibid., 130). Even more: the credibility of "this democratic Everyman," he writes, derives from the circumstance that "the pastoral ideal has been so well assimilated into an American ideology" (ibid., 130). Then comes the moment where Marx makes clear the specificity of the pastoral for American culture vis-à-vis Empson's reading of the pastoral as an allegory of reconciling economic class differences. He positions the democratic everyman as one who

> achieves the political results outside literature formerly achieved by the shepherd. In the age of [Andrew] Jackson there no longer will be any need to insinuate a beautiful relation between the rich and the poor. By his mere presence the "common man" threatens—or promises—to supplant them both. In the egalitarian social climate of America the pastoral ideal, instead of being contained by the literary design, spills over into thinking about real life. (ibid., 130)

Two brief observations—one conceptual, the other methodological—are important. On the conceptual side, the difference Marx draws between the continental pastoral tradition and the American version echoes the familiar tale of America as a classless society. It is decisive that Marx writes about an "egalitarian *social* climate." This explains the ambiguities at stake in the quoted passage. The figure of the common, agrarian, and egalitarian man is socially classless because it does away with factors such as family name, prestige, etc. And as such, this figure holds the promise to be socially classless from its inception. At the same time, it "spills over" into "real life" and threatens to disguise the nevertheless existing socioeconomic class differences instead of reconciling them. Both the threat and the

promise of Thomas Jefferson's poeticized political rhetoric show in the aspired actualization of a transposed and modified literary figure as a political and societal vision. On the methodological side, Marx's literary reading of Jefferson's political rhetoric serves to draw a line of demarcation to the literary analyses of Empson. It once again positions American Studies as being interested in a broad spectrum of texts, downplaying the institutionalized importance of canonized poetry and extending the methods of literary analysis to cultural phenomena.

The other scholar of the pastoral that can most explicitly be linked to Leo Marx is Frank Kermode. In *English Pastoral Poetry* (1952), Kermode reads English Renaissance poetry and positions the pastoral, conceived as the simple, the primitive and the natural, in opposition to the cultivated. And while he concedes that "this opposition can be complex," he argues that "the bulk of pastoral poetry" rests upon the assumption that "natural men are purer and less vicious than cultivated men" (1952, 19). When Kermode writes that "Pastoral is one of the 'kinds' of poetry, like Epic, Tragedy, and Satire" (ibid., 11), he conceives of it as a mode of representation that foregrounds the relationship between art and nature; and the shift that the Renaissance introduces vis-à-vis antiquity is an understanding that "Nature had been enlarged by new knowledge" insofar as pastoral poetry no longer focused on "the happy peasant or shepherd, but the true natural man of the New World" (ibid., 43).

Kermode's 1954 introduction to The Arden Edition of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611, 1623), a play informed by Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals" (1580), establishes the link between the pastoral and colonial history more clearly—if not systematically enough for later scholars such as the new historicist Stephen Greenblatt (1992) or the postcolonial critic Ania Loomba (1989; 2002), who works out the implications of racial discourse neglected in the accounts of Kermode and others. Kermode classifies *The Tempest* as a "pastoral drama […] concerned with the opposition of Nature and Art" mapped onto Caliban and Prospero, respectively (1954, xxiv). The classification of the play as pastoral leads Kermode to contend: "Caliban is the ground of the play" because he functions "to illuminate by contrast the world of art, nurture, civility" (ibid., xxv). With the foregrounding of Caliban the concept of nature is transformed because he is not "a virtuous shepherd" but "a salvage and deformed slave" (ibid., xxxviii). Contending that Montaigne and Shakespeare develop an economy of representations that "describe the native as purely virtuous or purely

vicious," Kermode brings forth his central argument that the pastoral is mapped onto the primitive in the literatures that explore the conquest of the New World: "Literary men," he writes, "saw in the favourable reports a rich affirmation of a traditional theme of poetry" (ibid., xxxvi). The recoding of the pastoral as the primitive is enacted in the figure of Caliban, who becomes "an inverted pastoral hero, against whom civility and the Art which improves Nature may be measured"—a measurement that oscillates between an affirmation of the superiority of art, understood as a mechanism of disciplining emotions and producing knowledge, and a demonstration of its corruption (ibid., xlii). In any case, with the Renaissance and the colonization of the New World the pastoral, for Kermode, becomes an adaptable convention of representation that traverses genres—travelogue, play, poetry—and cultural contexts.

Leo Marx merely mentions Kermode's analysis in a footnote without discussing it, when he opens his own reading of *The Tempest* in the second chapter of *The Machine in the Garden*.[8] He conceives Shakespeare's play "as a prologue to American literature" (Marx 2000, 72). The inclusion of *The Tempest* serves several purposes at once. First, institutionally, it anchors the project of American Studies in the conventions of the English department. Marx even rewrites parts of English literary history as American. At the same time, in light of debates about the beginnings of American literary history, the inclusion of Shakespeare as a prologue to that history establishes Marx as a precursor to scholars such as William Spengemann (1984), who positions Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) as the first American novel, arguing against the writing of a literary history that rests upon the idea of the nation-state. While he retrieves and returns to the ideals of Jefferson, Marx's interest is less in a national literature than in a structure of tropes that might enable the project of a national-cultural literary history, contingent upon a transcultural validity and a cultural transferability of these tropes. Second, if Marx positions *The Tempest* as a prologue to American literary history—belonging to that history by means of a foreshadowing—this literary history is inevitably inscribed into colonialism. To be sure, Leo Marx can neither perform a poststructuralist nor a postcolonial critique, at least not in the institutionalized version we know today. Like Kermode, he rather focuses on the transposition of a literary convention, albeit with some significant modifications.

8 The first chapter unfolds from the reading of a notebook entry by Nathaniel Hawthorne, which James Dorson takes up in his contribution to this volume.

Key to Marx's claim that *The Tempest* prefigures American literature is his contention that during "the age of discovery […] a note of topographical realism entered pastoral;" at the time of the English Renaissance, he writes in line with Kermode, authors of travel literature began "to set the action in a terrain that resembled, if not a real place, then the wish-colored image of a real place" (ibid. 47). The "note of topographical realism," then, emerges from the setting of the action in "an actual New World" (ibid. 47), and it facilitates what Marx calls a "genetic" connection between Shakespeare's play and American literature. For him, the "topography of *The Tempest* anticipates the moral geography of the American imagination" (ibid. 72).

How does Marx conceive this "genetic" link between colonial topographic realism and American moral geography? If Frank Kermode looks at the play largely in terms of a Manichean opposition between Caliban and Prospero, Marx complements the Caliban-Prospero constellation more elaborately with a differentiation between Gonzalo and Prospero. In contrast to Kermode, he insists upon a "difference between a pastoral and a primitive ideal" (ibid., 65). While Gonzalo projects the utopian vision of a primitive society, Prospero "stands on a middle ground, a terrain of mediation between nature and art, feeling and intellect" (ibid., 65). The complex pastoral he represents emerges from the contradiction between the notions of art, i.e. his position as "reclusive scholar" turned "social engineer" (ibid. 56), and nature, here associated with a structure of emotion that informs his and his court's retreat from the city of Milan to the remote island. If Kermode establishes a dichotomy between Caliban and Prospero, Marx identifies the relation between art and nature as an ambiguous dialectic, holding a vague promise of reconciling the poles by renouncing both in their pure form. He thus complements his "genetic connection between *The Tempest* and America" with one of prophecy or promise that relates to the notion of an ambiguous moral geography (ibid., 68). The decisive aspect for him remains the regenerative, ritualistic and "redemptive journey away from society in the direction of nature," which "offers the chance of a temporary return to first things" (ibid., 69). This colonial structure, Marx contends, resurfaces in texts such as *Walden*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Huckleberry Finn*. And this claim ultimately allows him to construct his literary genealogy.

The temporariness of the retreat to nature that characterizes the plot of these three texts is significant because it disables both a permanent longing

for the primitive and an untainted return to the corruption of the city, which is representative of various technologies. Marx links the "pastoral hope" that emerges from this temporariness to the promise of "political reform," which consists in the "symbolic middle landscape created by mediation between art and nature" (ibid., 71). Such an understanding of political reform leads him back to "Jefferson's vision of an ideal Virginia, an imaginary land free both of European oppression and frontier savagery" (bid., 72). Of course, in the final analysis, this vision, whether Prospero's or Jefferson's, requires an erasure of the cultural 'other' by means of an economy of colonial representation that remains Manichean insofar as the cultural 'other' functions as a structure of fantasy. But Marx's interest lies elsewhere, and his assessment of the possibility of actualizing a political reform that might reconcile art and nature—the liberal vision of a middle ground—is skeptical, to say the least. While he identifies the structural analogy of the ritualistic journey in Shakespeare's play and "our typical American fables," he writes that the "American hero […] often is further than Prospero from envisaging an appropriate landscape of reconciliation" (ibid., 72). While the prophetic vision or promise produces a powerful and elaborate cultural tropology, and while American writers in Leo Marx's reading return and cater to this promise and its tropology, its actualization remains a fragile affair, fraught with contradictions.

If we bring his reading back to the historical context of *The Machine in the Garden*—the erosion of the New Deal, McCarthyism, and the Cold War consensus narrative—we can identify both his insistence on maintaining the promise of a liberal middle ground and his skepticism that such a promise of procedural political reformism can be realized. Beyond that, the major historical achievement of Marx's exploration of the pastoral vis-à-vis Empson, Kermode and other English literary historians lies in the dialectical conceptualization of the tension between notions of nature and an understanding of the technological that includes the arts, industrial capitalism, and science. The ensuing section aims at assessing these multiple codifications of technology in Marx's writing.

The Technological

The contradiction and attempted reconciliation of art and nature that Marx identifies in *The Tempest* prepares his readings of the garden (mostly in

Thomas Jefferson and Héctor St. John de Crèvecœur) and the machine in the ensuing chapters. The section on the machine moves from Jefferson, who conceives of the machine as "a token of that liberation of the human spirit to be realized by the young American Republic" (ibid., 150), to the merchant Tench Coxe, for whom "the machine is the instrument and not in itself the true source of America's future power" (ibid., 155), to Thomas Carlyle and Timothy Walker onto a web of readings of artistic, literary, popular and philosophical texts by artists and writers such as George Inness, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Walt Whitman.

In order to better understand Leo Marx's broad notion of the technological, a look at his reading of Carlyle's "Signs of the Times" (1829) and Walker's reply "Defence of Mechanical Philosophy" (1831) is insightful, not least because his construal situates the discussion about the valences of technology in the context of different national-cultural codifications that lead back to the institutionalization of American Studies. The opposition between Carlyle and Walker implicitly sets up a difference between English and American cultural imaginations. Carlyle proclaims "the Mechanical Age" (1829, 442). His central complaint is that "the mechanical genius of our time" does not merely affect "the external and physical" but also "the internal and spiritual" domains, pervading the branches of knowledge from science to art and in effect the whole political and social organization, hence undermining the notion of humanism (ibid., 442). Marx not only clearly carves out that Carlyle's intervention aims at the doctrines of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century utilitarianism and environmentalism, he also identifies a dual conception of "the machine as object (a technological fact) and the machine as metaphor (a token of value)" in Carlyle, whose approach he likens to that of "a modern anthropologist" (2000, 173). He thus inscribes himself into this holistic cultural criticism and the use of the machine as a symbolic structure, legitimizing his own project once again through and against English intellectual history. He creates a point of departure from Carlyle, however, when he takes his complaint about "the subordination of the 'dynamical' to the 'mechanical' aspects of life" as anticipating "the post-Freudian version of alienation" which would provide the adequate vocabulary of both culture and self that Carlyle's early-nineteenth-century morals still lack (ibid., 178).

It is the continuity of the narrative of cultural and individual alienation qua mechanization that Marx identifies and juxtaposes with Timothy Walker's American reply. Walker rejects Carlyle's anxiety of cultural de-

cline; he celebrates and embraces the machine as epitomizing human progress, elevating it to the status of a promise and a prophecy. Marx stresses that the valence of the machine, for Walker, is political insofar as he conceives "the new technology as the instrument appointed to fulfill the egalitarian aims of the American people" (ibid., 187). In this context, he writes about the Industrial Revolution—an "irrepressible epithet" at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which "expresses the close kinship between two new forces, political and technological" (ibid., 187). In a footnote marked with an asterisk, he explains his own position and the use of this label, making clear that the question of cultural historians differs from that of economic historians. While the latter inquire "whether there was a break […] so severe as to justify the name 'revolution'," cultural historians like himself "recognize that we are dealing with a metaphor," the appeal of which can be found in its omnipresent "vivid suggestiveness" (ibid., 187). Conceiving of the machine and the Industrial Revolution as metaphors, Marx is able to view them as "a property of the general culture," as a cultural imaginary so to speak (ibid., 191). Before criticizing Leo Marx for repeating and reinforcing the mythology he proclaims to dismantle, we should bear in mind that his project is above all an analysis of cultural tropes against the backdrop of the empiricism of the social sciences. And it may be a vital reminder today to appreciate the core competencies of cultural and literary criticism amidst the current trend to cater to the rhetoric of innovation and embrace the metaphors and methodologies of the social sciences in the race for funding.

Setting aside these aspects, we can say that Marx mobilizes the Carlyle-Walker constellation in order to distance himself from both approaches to the technological. For him it is not a decision whether the technological is a progressive and prophetic promise or an alienating force, whether it is inclined to liberate or to control. Rather, the task of the cultural historian is first and foremost to expose these diverging valences and unfold their complexity, which emerges dialectically from technology's interplay with the pastoral but also from its semantic overflow that, in turn, might deplete the concept.

During the 1980s, the decade when he was hired by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Leo Marx tried to clarify and substantiate his notion of the technological as a semantic field of sorts, which includes the capitalist mode of production, the methods of the empirical social sciences, and the arts. Engaging Martin Heidegger and his essay "The Question