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ARCHEOLOGIA, STORIA E STORIA DELL'ARTE IN ROMA

**La storiografia tra passato e futuro
Il X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche
(Roma 1955) cinquant'anni dopo**

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a cura di

Hans Cools, Manuel Espadas Burgos, Michel Gras
Michael Matheus, Massimo Miglio

premessa di

Walter Geerts

redazione di

Gerhard Kuck

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CHARLES S. MAIER

RETURN TO ROME:
HALF A CENTURY OF AMERICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY
IN LIGHT OF THE 1955 CONGRESS FOR
INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL STUDIES

To summarize fifty years of history – even of just the history of history – in a brief report requires a very selective choice of themes. Despite the stringency demanded, I will allow myself to begin on a personal note. Retrospectives whose subject, though now decades past, still falls within the lifetime of the historian provide occasions not only for scholarly analysis but for the intrusion of personal memories. Let me open, therefore, by acknowledging the subjective dimension arising from the material that the 1955 Rome Congress bequeathed. As I examined the volumes of *relazioni* and communications, I was struck by the richness of the conference that took place at EUR in 1955. Many of the ideas being tested and debated would soon find their way into the very works of history that I would be reading as a student five to ten years thereafter. I have thus revisited some of my own intellectual history in preparing this report. Indeed as the historians opened their congress in 1955, I was just returning from my first exposure to Europe, as a sixteen-year-old summer exchange student in Germany whose national history later became one of my primary areas of study, although I had no idea then of taking up academic history.

This paper attempts to survey the American historiography that has intervened in the half century since the mid-1950s in light of the themes that emerged at the Congress. It is also appropriate to reflect on American participation in the life of the international history community. Unfortunately, I have to begin with the confession that even academic historians in the United States have relatively little concern for the work of the International Committee for Historical Studies (ICHS). To a degree their indifference reflects my country's attitude toward participation in international institutions in general – to which it often gives a decisive founding impulse, but then tends to treat with increased wariness. There are also reasons spe-

cific to the organization of the historical discipline. The life of scholarship is not always the life of scholarly committees. The historians who staff the permanent committees of the ICHS that supposedly follow and animate ongoing research, worthy researchers though they may be, are not always the preeminent scholars of the country. The American Historical Association and its delegates solicit proposals in a broad way, so that the final selection can vary in terms of quality.

In part, the relative disinterest reflects the structure of academic chairs or «cattedre» or «Lehrstühle» in the United States, which do not come laden with the representative and administrative functions they have in the European countries including the ancient universities in Great Britain. In the United States, there are many professors in a department; the individual faculty member teaches and researches but his importance depends upon his quality in those functions. Even an endowed chair does not impose the duties of heading a department, unless the chair holder is additionally called to direct a center or other institute. And our institutes do not have the responsibility of granting degrees or recruiting faculty.

So the progress of historiography in the United States remains oriented less on the ICHS and its congresses than on the leading centers of research and the most innovative historians practicing elsewhere. This does not mean that American historians are not acutely aware of, and practitioners of, international scholarly currents – some of our best historians have always taken part, among my own age cohort, Robert Darnton – only that the quadrennial ICHS forum is too remote and often too institutionalized to foment and orient the research they carry out. It follows from these considerations that the impact of Rome in 1955 could not be an event major enough in the life of the American profession to orient the diverse fields of history. But it included many of our best American historians who gathered to discuss work developing on our own shores.

When they succeed, the Congresses reflect the scholarly passions of the day, and sometimes the political ones as well. Reading the résumé of congresses written originally by the late Karl Dietrich Erdmann and revised by Jürgen Kocka and the late Wolfgang Mommsen, *Toward a Global Community of Historians*¹, and perusing the contents of the 1955 *Atti* one finds a congress in which promising American historians played a role – Oscar

¹ K.D. ERDMANN, *Toward a Global Community of Historians: The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences 1898-2000*, edited by J. KOCKA and W. MOMMSEN (†), in collaboration with A. BLÄNSDORF, New York/Oxford 2005. Original edition: *Die Ökumene der Historiker. Geschichte der Internationalen Historikerkongresse und des Comité International des Sciences Historiques*, Göttingen 1987.

Handlin, H. Stuart Hughes, Richard Pipes – along with some already magisterial delegates, such as John King Fairbank, and their reports are often excellent. What the Congress report offers is a chance to observe debates that would further develop and thus to find a vantage point from which to take stock. It is in that spirit that I have returned to those debates – as guideposts to the major developments already underway and that might in most cases be significantly altered. I will not provide a survey of major work, field by field: that would make this report into just a listing. What I hope to suggest is the major fluctuations of historical culture over half a century. In part I am assisted by the volume, *The Past before Us*, edited by Michael Kammen and published by the American Historical Association in 1980 – half way between Rome 1955 and Rome 2005². As a younger and provocative historian I wrote the chapter on international relations for that survey, which ruffled a lot of feathers by suggesting that this field had become provincial and unexciting since the great prewar volumes of William P. Langer who had died about five years earlier. I would not write that now, for reasons I'll suggest below. But that volume allowed me to catch the development of a half century of historiography *in medias res*.

When American historians study their own history, they are a stubbornly national school, and from the fifties until very recently the model of American «exceptionalism», what we might call the American «Sonderweg» has underlain much of their narratives and explanations, at least until the long war in Vietnam and the rise of what in the 1960s and 1970s we termed Cold-War revisionism undermined the sense of special grace and innocence³. But there still persists a temptation to exceptionalism and a sort of residual feeling (which I think other national schools share with respect to their own national histories) that somehow Americans do the really important work in their own history. American history – no matter how respectfully one acknowledges the contributions by non-Americans – remains *cosa nostra*. Often this prejudice is reinforced by the linguistic poverty of many American historians, who find it a burden to read work in another language. If it's about us, the attitude is, it should be in English. But of course since most history written in the United States is written about the United States, these tendencies have produced a sort of historiographical autarky, hardly a rare phenomenon, but which should be overcome whenever possible. This does not mean that American history is provincial or uninformed

² M. KAMMEN, ed., *The Past before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, Ithaca, NY, 1980.

³ For a recent critique see T. BENDER, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History*, New York 2006.

by the newest methodologies that were signaled at each international historical congress. In this respect many American historians set examples that historians of other countries followed. The application of quantitative and cliometric methods took major methodological steps forward when applied in the 1960s and 1970s by Robert Fogel to the study of railroads and then slavery. In recent years the methods of cultural anthropology have informed our study of the indigenous or Indian communities of the early Americas and the dynamics of encounter and conflict⁴. Doubtless, though, the establishing of an American political narrative has remained the predominant activity of historians within the United States. It has also remained the historical enterprise that the non-academic public follows most closely. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., David Kennedy, Alan Brinkley were major contributors; biographers and «popular» historians such as David Donald, David McCullough have always played an influential role⁵. Such work can be iconoclastic, such as Richard Hofstadter's at the beginning of our period, and important for reinterpretation, such as that of C. Vann Woodward and John Hope Franklin, who from the 1950s on compelled a broad public to wrestle with painful reassessments of race and politics⁶.

⁴ R. W. FOGEL, *Railroads and American Economic Growth: Essays in Econometric History*, Baltimore 1964; R. W. FOGEL, and S. L. ENGERMAN, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, Boston 1974. The impact of cultural anthropology, especially the work of Clifford Geertz, on history writing in the U.S. has been immense. See an early influential specimen by R. DARNTON, *The Great Cat Massacre*, in *The Great Cat Massacre and other Episodes in French Cultural History*, New York 1984. For the study of relations with American Indians informed by anthropological perspectives see D. K. RICHTER, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1992, published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA; J. H. MERRELL, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1989. Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA. B. BAILYN/P. D. MORGAN, eds., *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the first British Empire*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1991, published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA.

⁵ A. SCHLESINGER, JR., *The Age of Roosevelt*, Boston 1957-60; A. BRINKLEY, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*, New York 1982; D. G. MCCULLOUGH, *Mornings on Horseback*, New York 2001, and *John Adams*, New York 2001; D. H. DONALD, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War*, New York 1920, *Look Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe*, Boston 1987, and *Lincoln*, New York 1995.

⁶ R. HOFSTADTER, *The American Political Tradition and the Men who Made It*, New York 1948; *The Age of Reform: From Bryant to F.D.R.*, New York 1955; C. V. WOODWARD, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction*, Boston 1951, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, Boston 1955, and *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, Baton Rouge, LA, 1951; J. H. FRANKLIN, *Reconstruction after the Civil War*, Chicago 1961.

American historians who study other cultures and countries really form a different sort of community. Their reference group are the national historians of the country they write about – the British historians of the Seventeenth Century, the French historians of the Revolution, the German historians of Germany, the ancient historians of the Atlantic world in general, or the Indian historians in India, etc. Sometimes American historians made extraordinary contributions to other national histories: for example, the role that Robert Paxton, and his Canadian co-author, Michael Marris, had in discrediting the comfortable French conventional wisdom about the Vichy regime's role vis a vis the German occupiers. It was revealing that at Rome in 1955, Professor Lopez's work on economic medieval history was part of an international panel, while R. R. Palmer, who would shortly publish his two volumes on the Atlantic revolution against the corporatist world of the *ancien régime* should appear with Jacques Godechot. Lopez's call for a study of economic connections between East and West, his hope that one might follow the web of trade and commerce all the way to Japan, his stress on slaves as one of the primary commodities of the medieval economy was in fact a remarkable report; for many of the topics he pointed to have returned precisely in an age of globalization. As a result, the investigation seems remarkably fresh and foresighted.

The Palmer-Godechot collaboration created a less favorable impression as one that was politically motivated. The argument rested on the possible assumption that the historian might think of the Atlantic as a large Mediterranean and study it as the center of an encompassing civilization by testing, for example, the density of trade flows and migration. A few years later Palmer would publish what I remember as a very young student was an exciting comparative study on the Atlantic revolutions, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (1959-64), which envisaged a general Western breakdown of statist institutions from France to Britain, France, and the Netherlands. At the Rome Congress, however, the Palmer-Godechot report was taken to be in effect a piece of NATO historiography and a contribution to the Cold War conceptualization of an Atlantic community and western alliance⁷. Historians from the socialist countries, in particular, understood the Palmer-Godechot argument to be a historical buttressing of cold war policy, and doubtless it may have been influenced by the pervasive concept of an Atlantic community that seemed almost universally accepted in the United

⁷ The report drew a sharp rebuke from Eric Hobsbawm who declared that such questions should be off-limits, which in turn prompted David Landes to rejoin that no hypothesis should be suppressed *prima facie* (Landes presided at a dinner perhaps fifteen years later given precisely to honor Hobsbawm's work as path-breaking).

States. Nonetheless, even under radically changed political conditions after the collapse of the communist regimes, the unity of Atlantic and Caribbean history has remained a premise of much of the U.S. historiography on the so-called colonial and revolutionary periods. Professor Bernard Bailyn has organized a yearly training seminar on Atlantic history, but the intention was precisely to overcome the excessive focus on early American history as merely an offshoot of Great Britain. Increasingly the imperial policies of the French and Spanish and their interaction with indigenous American Indian nations and the forcibly transplanted African settlers has motivated research. On the other hand, in the eyes of critics, the Atlantic emphasis still privileges an Anglocentric narrative of American development.

Certainly one of the major themes that any résumé of historiography in the United States must stress would be the continuing reconceptualization of early American history in which Professor Bailyn has played a leading role, first by the remarkable work on *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* in the 1960s and then for his graduate seminar which trained many of the leading generation of early American historians now in their late 60s, who took his training throughout the country. For Bailyn, the American revolution rested on what he (following upon the British historian Caroline Robbins) termed a «Commonwealthman» or radical democratic ideology, which interpreted British imperial policy as a plot on American liberties. Bailyn spent great effort documenting this view and demonstrating how it amounted to a coherent ideology that in light of British policies between 1765 and 1776 had almost necessarily to drive the colonists to revolt. Among the many students he trained were Gordon Wood, who carried on similar intellectual investigations of the formation of the state and federal constitutions, Michael Kammen, Peter Wood, James Henretta, and – allow me a bit of personal pride – my wife Pauline Maier, who focused on the resistance movement of the 1760s and 1770s, then on the Declaration of Independence⁸.

Only slowly did the more conservative premises of Bailyn's work become visible, as when he presented Thomas Hutchinson, the pre-revolutionary governor of Massachusetts as really an Enlightenment victim of American fanaticism, and not just a reactionary Tory. Of course to insist on

⁸ B. BAILYN, *General Introduction*, in *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1776*, Cambridge, MA, 1965; later published as *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Cambridge 1967; C. ROBBINS, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman*, Cambridge, MA, 1959; G. S. WOOD, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, Chapel Hill, NC/Williamsburg, VA, 1969; *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, New York 1991; P. MAIER, *From Resistance to Revolution*, New York 1973; *American Scripture: The Making of the Declaration of Independence*, New York 1997.

the development of the American revolutionary movement as preeminently a development in intellectual history or of ideas, even obsessive ideas, was itself a challenge to any left or Marxian interpretation. As Bailyn turned in the 1980s and 1990s to the settlement of America by diverse ethnic groups (a theme that David Hackett Fischer took up with respect to the different British regional communities that brought their respective folkways to different geographical sections of the colonies), his initial impulse was to still treat the Atlantic seaboard as the preeminent site of settler development and as a fringe of British civilization⁹. But historians have increasingly turned to the encounters in the Southeast or the Southwest of North America, where Spanish culture collided with the Indian nations of the Carolinas and the Gulf Coast or even the arid plains. Likewise, they have emphasized the role that the French played in the St. Lawrence valley and the Mississippi regions. Most significantly they have turned to the American Indian «tribes» or nations – what Canadians have termed «first peoples» – as equal actors in the struggles to dominate these vast areas. Hence the last two decades have brought a de-Anglicization of early American history, whether as a necessary intellectual recognition on the part of those whose starting point was the Anglo-Saxon narrative, or as an eager effort to embrace a history of multiple American cultures – an ideological stance that reflects the intense effort to accommodate an interracial pluralism in the United States, reconstructing the history of African Americans and increasingly Hispanics (and for later periods now) Asian-Americans. Jack P. Greene, professor emeritus of Johns Hopkins has led in this multiple conceptualization of diverse centers and peripheries in early American history¹⁰.

But let us return to that paper by Godechot and R. R. Palmer in 1955 – who believed they were following Braudel in examining whether the Atlantic served as a larger Mediterranean, whereas in fact they made the link between the *longue durée* and the *événementielle*, as Braudel had not. Although Palmer's comparative work might have responded to the Cold War's ideological construction of an Atlantic Society or of Western Europe, it also was a brave effort at transcending American exceptionalism. Palmer went on to attempt a major assault on the exceptionalist tradition by seeing America too as an estatist society, that is, as an *ancien régime*. It is worth

⁹ B. BAILYN, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, Cambridge, MA, 1974, *The Peopling of British North America: an Introduction*, New York 1986; D. H. FISCHER, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, New York 1989.

¹⁰ J. P. GREENE, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788*, Athens, GA, 1986; cf. the volume to which he contributed: *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, C. DANIELS and M. KENNEDY, eds., New York 2002.

recalling that precisely in 1955 one of the major statements of American exceptionalism – Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* appeared. Hartz's thesis was exactly the opposite of Palmer's: America was different from Europe; it had no feudalism, no landed elites, no established church, therefore no real conservative ideological tradition – nor any major socialist tradition that had grown up in opposition¹¹. The United States was the happy home of political liberalism, a centrist insistence on democratic rights. Precisely this paradigm, however, was shattered by real world events and responsive historiographies in the following twenty-five years. The upheavals of the late 1960s and 1970s – the Civil Rights movement and later African-American upheavals in such cities as Los Angeles and Detroit, the student protests against the war in Vietnam, the emergence of a strong women's movement – decisively separated the historiographical vision of the American national past that followed from what it had been earlier.

One upheaval was in the history of American foreign relations – a field that had virtually no presence at the 1955 Rome congress. But within a few years a two volume history of the cold war appeared in the United States by Denna Fleming – not a professional historian – which argued that contrary to the generally accepted version, the United States and not Russia bore decisive blame for the Cold War. This thesis became the major organizing principle for fundamental work through the 1960s; and indeed as a young historian who had worked in this area, I did my best to come to terms with it in a review essay in 1970. It was obviously no coincidence that the argument surged during the years of American involvement in Vietnam and the turmoil of the student movement. It corresponded to the fundamental divisions in the country. Some revisionists claimed that President Truman had truculently reversed Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy; others, more structurally inclined – such as Gabriel and Joyce Kolko argued that all of American policy was consistently anti-Soviet because it proceeded from capitalist premises, that is, a search for markets that refused to allow the war-devastated Soviet Union to impose a zone protected from an aggressive search for investment. It is hard to convey the bitter divisions these arguments created; they clearly had an impact on judging candidates for teaching positions. The generation of statesmen who had been, to use Dean Acheson's words, «present at the creation», felt themselves personally impugned. And

¹¹ L. HARTZ, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution*, New York 1955; cf. a modified view by the historical sociologist S. M. LIPSET, *The First New Nation: America in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, New York 1979, who analyzed the U.S., Canada, and Australia, as «fragment societies», each incorporating different aspects of the British colonial heritage.

since so much of the debate hinged not on new data, but the interpretation of actions long known, the topic was hardly resolvable by the usual criteria of disproof¹².

This was precisely the situation raised by so much of the methodological discussion at Rome: how might one separate «facts» from values? Much of the ICHS debate seems curiously archaic in its underlying premise that the realm of fact was cleanly separable from the realm of interpretation. That assertion comes up over and over again perhaps because Rome, too, was a Cold War congress, although, taking place, as it did, during the so-called «thaw», it proved less confrontational than the subsequent international historical congresses were to be. In any case, the «revisionist» controversy raged into the 1970s and then gradually wore itself down. A historical controversy, I believe, ends not when there is agreement – that is impossible – but when at least the points of disagreement that cannot be resolved by evidence become evident and only two well-defined sides are left. By the 1980s the historian John Gaddis, who would write a series of major works on the Cold War period, declared himself a «post-revisionist», by which he meant to adjourn the debate – although in effect what he claimed was a post-revisionist consensus had now settled on a modified orthodox position. And, logically enough, by 1989-90 the collapse of the Soviet Union retrospectively seemed to confirm the traditional view. Gaddis's book, *We now Know* in the early 1990s represented the scholarly atmosphere of the post-Berlin Wall¹³.

Ironically enough, that belief that the United States had acted wisely in mobilizing a broad Atlantic alliance against communism allowed historians to accept what was harder to acknowledge in the 1950s and 1960s, namely that Washington had been co-responsible for its half the Cold War: Carolyn Eisenberg's book, *Drawing the Line* claimed provocatively that the U.S. and not the Soviet Union was responsible for the long partition of Germany, but in the new post-Cold War atmosphere, this could now be recognized as an act of statesmanship. But Stalin was too easy a historical target; bracketing him with Hitler depoliticized Cold War history. Criticism of U.S. policy

¹² D. FLEMING, *The Cold War and its Origins, 1917-1960*, Garden City, NY, 1961; G. KOLKO, *The Politics of War, 1943-1945*, New York 1968; J. and G. KOLKO, *The Limits of Power: The World And American Foreign Policy, 1945-1954*, New York 1972; see also G. ALPEROVITZ, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam: The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power*, New York 1965.

¹³ J. L. GADDIS, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold-War History*, New York 1982; see also his early major works, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, New York 1972; *Strategies of Deterrence; A Critical Appraisal of postwar American National Security Policy*, New York 1982. Most recently: *The Cold War: a New History*, New York 2005.

increasingly focused on American choice to intervene in the Third World. As Vietnam turned into a clear defeat, a host of books emerged to criticize our engagement there including some accomplished biographies intended for the general audience such as Neil Sheehan's study of the American counter-insurgency guru, John Paul Vann and Michael Halberstam's effort to explain the leadership that committed itself to the war¹⁴.

With the growing dissatisfaction of foreign policy under the current Bush administration among liberal academics, I have no doubt that a dissenting historical tradition will emerge again. And it will probably crystallize around the question of American imperialism, which is an older issue of controversy than that of Cold War origins. William Appleman Williams of the University of Wisconsin, published *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* four years after the Rome gathering and a decade later he followed it with *Roots of the Modern American Empire*. It is with his work that one finds the most substantial dissenting tradition of historiography of American foreign policy – largely a home-grown radical critique of an expansionist American agriculture and capitalism, which carried on the prewar progressive tradition of Charles A. Beard. Of course, it represented a minority opinion – the solid work, of traditional historians, some with impressive government service and writing with a great sense of gravitas, set the authoritative tone. Preeminent were former Treasury official Herbert Feis's large scale *Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin* and George Kennan's historical works¹⁵. Rome 1955 could have no impact on this confrontation between these Catos of the American Republic and their rather disheveled and sometimes self-righteous critics.

It would be a mistake, though, to describe the historiography of American foreign relations as only an artifact of ideologies. Over the last generation it has become far more sophisticated. Ernest May, one of my teachers, insisted that all his students must do multi-archival work and gradually impelled what we used to call diplomatic historians out of their provincial

¹⁴ C. EISENBERG, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949*, New York 1996; N. SHEEHAN, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, New York 1988; M. HALBERSTAM, *The Best and the Brightest*, New York 1972.

¹⁵ W. A. WILLIAMS, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, Cleveland, OH, 1959, and *The Roots of the Modern American Empire*, New York 1969; H. FEIS, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*, Princeton, NJ, 1957, and *Between War and Peace: The Potsdam Conference*, Princeton, NJ, 1960; G. F. KENNAN, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950*, Chicago 1951, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*, Boston 1961, and *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920*, 2 vols., 1956-1967; see also G. F. KENNAN, *Memoirs*, Boston 1967.

perspective even as he taught at the same time the importance of bureaucratic and organizational politics¹⁶. Those of who chose European topics for doctoral dissertations in the 1960s already knew this lesson. The first postwar generation of historians went to the captured German records then gradually to Bonn and Koblenz. My cohort had the good fortune to find a liberalized French archival regime as well as the opening of business records¹⁷. And thus we could help to build up with European colleagues, not only a multi-archival history, but one that followed non-governmental as well as governmental actors. Most recently, that is in the past two decades the history of American foreign relations has been transformed again by a heightened attention to cultural factors: in effect a postcolonial history that begins at home¹⁸. Such a venerable topic as the history of imperialism has been remade by examining colonialism as a reciprocal process in which the consequences of domination, plantation agriculture, intermarriage, efforts to define citizenship play back upon the metropole. And whereas the earlier history of imperialism was largely informed by economic data and theory, increasingly the new history of imperialism exploits postcolonial theory. At the end of this process, the history of America is confronted finally as the

¹⁶ E. R. MAY, *The World War and American Isolation*, Cambridge, MA, 1959; *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power*, New York 1961, were among the first of many books that have covered U.S. diplomacy and military politics from the Monroe Doctrine to the Battle of France in 1940, and the Cold War. Other leading U.S. diplomatic historians of the 1950s and 1960s included Richard Leopold at Northwestern University and Bradford Perkins at the University of Michigan. A. J. MAYER stressed the transnational clash of Left and Right in his *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1918-1919*, New Haven, CT, 1959 (reissued as *Wilson versus Lenin*, Cleveland, 1964); also *Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles: The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking*, New York 1967.

¹⁷ G. FELDMAN, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany, 1914-1918*, Princeton, NJ, 1964 – and followed over the next forty years by multiple studies of the German inflation, and of German business and its involvement with National Socialism; Ch. S. MAIER, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I*, Princeton, NJ, 1975; S. A. SCHUKER, *The End of French Predominance in Europe: The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan*, Chapel Hill 1976; M. TRACHTENBERG, *Reparations in World Politics: France and European Economic Diplomacy, 1916-1923*, New York 1980; see also his important study for the second postwar era: *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*, Princeton 1999.

¹⁸ A. IRIYE, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945*, Cambridge, MA, 1981; *Across the Pacific: An inner History of America-East-Asian Relations*, rev. ed. Chicago 1992, and *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, Baltimore, MD, 1997; E. S. ROSENBERG, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945*, New York 1982.

history of empire. Many dissent from this view, but it is no longer considered just eccentric¹⁹.

An awareness of empire has transformed American historiography in other areas. One of the achievements of which U.S. historiography, I believe, can be most proud is its encouragement of so rich a confrontation with the history of other civilizations. If some Americanists remained self-preoccupied and resistant to comparison, U.S. universities were plentiful and rich enough to sustain a large number of historians working on non-U.S. subjects. The average university history department probably has about a third of its faculty devoted to early and late American history, a quarter devoted to Europe, and the remainder to Latin American, Africa, and Asia. Increasingly, there are experts in functional areas, such as environmental history or the history of gender. But the scholarship on the history of global societies, early and modern has continued to flourish during the past half century. John King Fairbank read a general *compte rendu* of the western impact on Asian history at Rome in 1955. He was a scholar famous for his course on Qing Documents as well as his accessible book, *The United States and China*, and his success at establishing the Yenching institute into the leading center for Chinese history outside China. At the Rome Congress, Owen Lattimore, the great historian of inner Asia, comparable to France's René Grousset, delivered a communication on the frontier in history – reflecting on his own work in inner Asia and the trope of the frontier that had largely been abandoned by the 1950s, at least outside Wisconsin. Fifty years later, Peter Perdue of MIT and Mark Elliott of Harvard have turned out fundamental works on the Qing dynasty, its Manchu rulers, and its expansion into western Asia. Jonathan Spence (British, but professor emeritus at Yale) remains the historian of China most widely read for his imaginative narratives that illuminate the turmoil of so much of nineteenth and twentieth-century China, although the late Joseph Levenson, Joseph Fletcher, Benjamin Schwartz and Fred Wakeman (as well as the still active Philip Kuhn) contributed studies of equal depth on the Confucian premises of imperial culture²⁰.

¹⁹ The literature on empire and colonialism included most recently: Ch. S. MAIER, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors*, Cambridge, MA, 2006; F. COOPER, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley, CA, 2005; British authors teaching in the United States who treated the theme included Anthony Pagden and Niall Ferguson.

²⁰ Owen Lattimore's explorations of Mongolia dated from the 1920s; his career was blighted by his scapegoating for «the loss of China» in the McCarthyite period. For inner Asian history: J. FLETCHER's contributions were included in *The Cambridge History of China*, 10, part 1 (Cambridge 1978) and his essays have been collected in *Studies on Chi-*

The study of Japan has produced work of originality and distinction as well; over the last decades the study of national politics has been complemented by important work on the early Japanese labor movement, and a renewed interest in the issue of what modernity means in Japan²¹. Whereas China has tended to confront American historians with a massive and unique historical entity to be explained on its own terms such as carried out in the meditative studies by Benjamin Schwartz, Japanese history has often invited our scholars to comparison with Western experiences. Reading Fairbank's report of 1955 this bifurcation was clearly visible. Increasingly, however, the emergence of China in the 1990s and the current decade has prompted a reexamination of such implicitly comparative issues as when and why the East Asian economy fell behind Europe's: Kenneth Pomeranz offered the most recent major exploration of this perennial theme²².

In retrospect we can see that the crisis years of the 1960s and 1970s also dealt a heavy blow to another paradigm, which had inspired both historiography and political science in the 1950s, namely, the idea of «modernization» as a unilinear or monotonic process that would bring national societies toward the liberalism and market economies the United States had

nese and Islamic Inner Asia, B. F. MANZ, ed., Aldershot 1995; also M. C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*, Stanford, CA, 2001; P. PERDUE, *China Marches West: the Qing Conquest of Central Asia*, Cambridge, MA, 2006. Among the historians of China, see for a sample, B. I. SCHWARTZ, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, Cambridge, MA, 1951, and *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, Cambridge, MA, 1985; J. LEVENSON, *Confucian China and its modern Fate: A Trilogy*, Berkeley, CA, 1968; P. A. KUHN, *Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864*, Cambridge, MA, 1980, and *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768*, Cambridge, MA 1990; F. E. WAKEMAN, *The Great Enterprise: the Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China*, 2 vols., Berkeley 1985; J. SPENCE, *The Search for Modern China*, New York 1990. For another notable synthesis, F. W. MOTE, *Imperial China, 900-1800*, Cambridge, MA, 1999.

²¹ A. M. CRAIG, *Choshu in the Meiji Restoration*, Cambridge, MA, 1961; C. GLUCK, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*, Princeton, NJ, 1985; A. GORDON, *The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japanese Heavy Industry, 1853-1955*, Cambridge, MA, 1985, and *The Wages of Affluence: Labor and Management in Postwar Japan*, Cambridge, MA, 1998; S. GARON, *State and Labor in Modern Japan*, Berkeley 1987; H. D. HAROOTUNIAN, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Commerce in interwar Japan*, Princeton 2000. Two preeminent scholars active throughout were T. C. SMITH, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, Stanford, CA, 1959 and M. B. JANSEN, *The Making of Modern Japan*, Cambridge 2000. J. W. DOWER culminated his studies of wartime and postwar Japan with *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of world War II*, New York 1999.

²² K. C. POMERANZ, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, Princeton 2000.

attained – a view of development best represented by the economist Walt Whitman Rostow, and in some respects based on the influential sociological theories of Harvard's Talcott Parsons. Modernization narratives thrived in the regional studies centers at American universities, often aided by the Ford Foundation, established in the 1950s. Conversely the deconstruction of these narratives immensely enriched and stimulated the history of India and South Asia as well as East Asia. This critical revision, now two decades on, has encouraged historians to research what they term «multiple modernities» including South Asia and the Islamic arc of states from Indonesia to the Maghreb²³. There is no scope here to survey the rich United States contributions to the histories of colonial and modern Latin America and Africa, fields that have grown theoretically more sophisticated as well as increasingly researched and have compelled the historians of Europe and the United States to approach their earlier normative narratives with far greater awareness of their contingency and singularity.

Nonetheless, perhaps understandably enough, but nevertheless regrettably, what we might call the 9/11 effect has also reimposed a search for cultural deviation from western norms. Even so learned a scholar as Bernard Lewis – British by origin but for long decades active at Princeton – has increasingly cast his works and current commentary according to the trope of modernity *manqué*. It is not for me to say that this perspective cannot be justified or ultimately reduces to an erudite «orientalism». But it pulls the history of the Middle East in a different direction and toward different questions²⁴. My sense is that in fact the Rome Congress debates of half a century ago were less preoccupied by such teleological approaches than were the intervening International Historical Congresses of the 1960s. A generation of comparative historians did not yet believe in imposing a linear scale on cultures – in this sense the modernization paradigm of the sixties represents the great detour.

The 1955 Congress is instructive in another respect: when historians discussed the long periods of historiographical development at the gathering, they tended to look back to the scholarship of the 1920s. Not only did the Rome conference encourage a sense of stock-taking and retrospection – whereas ironically the historians convening in Paris in 1950 had looked

²³ «Daedalus» 129/1 (1998): *Early Modernities*, revised and reissued as *Multiple Modernities*, Cambridge, MA, 2000.

²⁴ B. LEWIS, *What went wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, New York 2002; earlier works include *The Arabs in History*, London 1950, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London 1965, *The Political Language of Islam*, Chicago 1988. Among other major U.S. contributions was I. M. LAPIDUS, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 2002.

aggressively forward – there was an apparent desire to overcome or even deny the rupture of 1933 to 1945 on scientific work. German historians returned to the international discussions after the catastrophic interval of National Socialism and their immediate postwar isolation. Gerhard Ritter surveyed recent history, which he ended largely with the era of the French Revolution, and emphasized the progress of social history while pleading for the remaining importance of political history. The congress in Paris in 1950 had represented the moment of – to borrow Charles Morazé's titles about the bourgeoisie – «les annalistes conquérants». At Rome there was an effort to step back from the one-sided emphasis on «annaliste» and structural history methods, even if most reports acknowledged how important economic history had become in each time period. Like St. Augustine contemplating chastity, the historians at Rome prayed: Give us social science, but not yet, or at least not too much. Historicism in the Crocean sense had its credentials renewed at Rome. Arnaldo Momigliano suggested that the sense of crisis which pervaded the era had stimulated research into the decline of antiquity. Looking back from the vantage of 2005, the language of crisis has hardly diminished – it remains one of our profession's over-used tropes. But so far as early history is concerned, scholars in the intervening half century have tended to soften the sharp caesura between antiquity and medieval civilization. This reassessment, identified with the work of Peter Brown – another British historian who had settled in the U.S. – in particular, has largely been a common agenda²⁵.

Not surprisingly, much of the agonizing effort to find a balance among fields and historical approaches seems almost antique today. In the United States as elsewhere, one might describe the historiographical trajectory of the past fifty years as the long rise and then gradual dethronement of social history. Contemplated as the wave of the future in the 1950s, it triumphed in the 1960s and 1970s and then lost its place to cultural history infused by anthropology in the 1980s and 1990s, and increasingly since then to a revived form of international history based on post-imperial perspectives often allied with literary theory. But this succession of methodological approaches is connected to the ongoing debates that arose out of the particular and unique historical challenges that United States historians faced from their own national history: preeminently the legacy of slavery and African American or Black history.

Let me try to clarify this connection of method and topic. United States historians wrestled with the question of slavery and prejudice at the very

²⁵ P. BROWN, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, Berkeley, CA, 1967, and *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750*, New York 1971.

time that American society was dismantling its legal structures with the civil rights revolution of the 1960s. The historians applied different methodologies – the classic work of cliometrics, Robert Fogel and Stanley Engermann's *Time on the Cross* (1974) sought to demonstrate that slavery made sense for slaveholders in economic terms and thus it would not have withered away in its own right. The results and methods seemed offensive to some readers, especially when the authors purported to demonstrate that the economic institution was not cruel and left the slaves with ninety percent of the income they produced. In the same year Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* took an entirely different approach and argued that slaves retained a sphere of autonomous agency that preserved their dignity and autonomy, whereas a decade earlier white historians afflicted by conscience felt it appropriate to stress the total abjectness that racism and the plantation system instilled. By the 1970s, however, slavery was no longer analyzed as analogous to a concentration camp experience; it was a site of partisan resistance! And the Black family since slavery, Herbert Gutman suggested, was likewise not a foyer of disfunctionality (as the famous Moynahan Report of 1965 implied), but a nexus of adaptation in a hostile white world²⁶.

In retrospect we can discern a comparable impact of the new history of North American slavery and E. P. Thompson's history of English radicalism, which exerted a tremendous impact in the United States. Both Genovese and Gutman sought to capture the lived experience of a subaltern community, to give voice to those whom even radical historians had so long denied the now modish concept of «agency». Both allowed themselves more sympathy for the pre-capitalist world of the old master class than they could for nineteenth-century individualist liberalism. The young historians they inspired committed themselves to incorporate into the national narrative those allegedly left out of American historiography – slaves, women, the poor, the immigrants. This effort continues and not merely for slavery. The new left historians, committed to race and gender equality, likewise represented an American counterpart to the German historians of the postwar decades who

²⁶ FOGEL cited above, note 4. For the concentration camp analogy: S. M. ELKINS, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, Chicago 1959; E. GENOVESE, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The world the Slaves Made*, New York 1974 (following on E. GENOVESE, *The World the Slaveholders Made*, New York 1969); for pervasive racism, W. D. JORDAN, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1815*, Chapel Hill, NC, and Williamsburg, VA, 1968; for the issue of African-American family structure raised by the Moynahan Report (*The Negro Family and the Case for National Action*, Washington 1965), see H. GUTMAN, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*, New York 1976; and among the most recent studies see especially, I. BERLIN, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, Cambridge 1998.

were seeking to understand the long-term causes of German authoritarianism. But whereas the Germans of the 1960s returned to Weber and Marx for structural answers, American historians often adopted a more anthropological approach. The Germans sought to explain the social and bureaucratic institutions that ensured domination and the failure of liberalism; Americans examined the cultural and family resources that empowered resistance.

For such reasons the writing of American social-history underwent a spectacular trajectory from the rise in the 1960s of analytic social-science to the rapid turn toward interpretive and hermeneutic approaches and a stronger emphasis on «culture» – and not only to understand slavery but history in general. Robert Darnton and Natalie Davis – «neighbors» of Clifford Geertz at the Princeton Institute of Advanced Study – exemplified the transition. So did Joan Scott, also recruited to the Princeton Institute, whose work progressed from a focus on working-class community to theorizing the history of gender²⁷. The analytical social-science enthusiasm of the 1960s – seconded with such emphasis in the so-called Bass report of the Social Science Research Council (and which economic historian David Landes had a major voice in drafting) – flagged in the succeeding decades.

Ironically enough the practitioners of cliometrics and quantitative history who turned to American political development had tended to support a conservative interpretation of United States politics that denied the importance of traditional class, but stressed that of religious distinction. Paul Kleppner and Richard Jensen used sophisticated statistics to dismantle supposed class differentiation and by implication buttress conservative findings²⁸. There was a sober realism to this view – in effect they turned out to be explaining the «Red State-Blue State» phenomenon of the 2000 and 2004 elections in their studies of politics in the 1970s.

Nonetheless, for many academics these findings that emphasized religious practice rather than class or economic interest was unwelcome news, as well as requiring sophisticated statistical expertise most did not possess.

²⁷ N. ZEMON DAVIS, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, Stanford, CA, 1975, and *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Cambridge, MA, 1982 (made into a successful film); R. DARNTON, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800*, Cambridge, MA, 1979, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, Cambridge, MA, 1982, and *The Great Cat Massacre* cit.; J. W. SCOTT, *The Glassworkers of Carmaux*, Cambridge, MA, 1974, and *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York 1999, among other writings on feminist theory.

²⁸ P. KLEPPNER, *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900*, New York 1970, and *The Third Electoral System, 1853-1892: Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1979; R. J. JENSEN, *The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict, 1888-1896*, Chicago, 1971. JENSEN was also the co-author with C. M. DOLLAR of the widely used *A Historian's Guide to Statistics*, New York 1971.

This may be one of the reason that the enthusiasm for cliometrics ebbed. The cultural history approach that validated both the subjection and the persistent agency of Blacks and women in America and of heretics and rebels in early modern Europe delivered a more welcome message. Moreover, cultural history fit the new *Zeitgeist* of the 1970s and 1980s: it was compatible with a renewed American critique of Marxism, which (parallel to the emergence of the *nouveaux philosophes* in France) and reflected disillusionment with the Brezhnev-era crackdowns against dissenters in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and support for such human-rights initiatives as Charter 77 and Solidarnosc.

Such general moods encouraged different historiographical responses. Insofar as many American historians remained vaguely on the left (and many were critical of the new policies of Ronald Reagan) some continued to apply Michel Foucault's critiques of power and modernity. Foucault's history of the asylum and then of the penitentiary seemed to inspire or at least confirm the theoretical underpinning of a number of American historical works that insisted on the ultimately elitist effort at social control underlying alleged liberal reforms, whether in area of education, economic management or medical institutions²⁹. Such explorations fit into a more general tendency to critique episodes of liberal reform that in the 1940s or 1950s still seemed innocently progressive and emancipatory, but by the 1960s and 1970s were read as inherently conservative. The question had to arise: was it at all possible to find much less celebrate an American liberal or radical tradition? (The 1960s witnessed similar thrusts by Italian historians who were debunking the liberal attainments of unified Italy, and German historians who took the Social Democrats of the Weimar Republic to task for their alliances with big business and the military). Could any social and political «reform» short of a socialist revolution count as really democratic?

Just as Foucault's work on the asylum and on punishment strengthened a historical literature of social control, his subsequent work on the history of sexuality powerfully augmented American contributions to women's history. The rise of women's history had not been anticipated at all at Rome; but within a few decades gender history had become perhaps the most mas-

²⁹ M. B. KATZ, *The Irony of Early School Reform*, New Haven 1974, and *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*, New York 1986; D. J. ROTHMAN, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, Boston 1971, and *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and its Alternatives in Progressive America*, Boston 1980. Michel Foucault's more accessible works appeared in translation as *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity*, R. Howard, trans., New York 1973, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, A. Sheridan, trans., New York 1977, and *The History of Sexuality*, R. Hurley, trans., 3 vols., New York 1988-1990.

sive new branch of American historical writing. Early contributions tended to reassert the often obscured historical role of women – whether in American society and politics, or in the French revolution and European politics³⁰. Within a decade, however, the agenda for women's history became a more general and critical one especially as a growing body of feminist theory informed the newer works. Joan Scott insisted that gender was as fundamental a category of social analysis as class or race. Some brilliant social and cultural analyses followed as women analyzed the practices and artifacts of American life – whether domestic furnishings and organization of the household, advertising, or consumption patterns – to show how «gendered» they remained³¹. The rise of post-colonial literature helped to encourage similar analyses to the practices of European, American, and eventually Japanese imperialism³².

Indeed, looking back across a half century there were moments when American historiography seemed ransom to one explanatory fad after another – whether the enthusiasm for cliometrics in the 1960s and 1970s, the

³⁰ G. LERNER, *The Woman in American History*, Menlo Park, CA, 1977, *The Majority Finds its Past. Placing Women in History*, New York 1979, and *The Creation of Patriarchy*, New York 1986; A. F. SCOTT, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, Chicago 1970, and papers collected in *Making the Invisible Woman Visible*, Urbana, IL, 1984; L. K. KERBER, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in revolutionary America*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1980; C. R. BERKIN/M. B. NORTON, *Women of America: A History*, Boston, MA, and M. B. NORTON, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*, Boston 1980; J. B. LANDES, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca, NY, 1988, and *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in eighteenth-century France*, Ithaca, NY, 2001; R. BRIDENTHAL/C. KOONZ, *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, Boston 1977. For a sophisticated analysis of the comparative gendering of welfare, see S. G. PEDERSEN, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-45*, Cambridge 1993.

³¹ For Joan Scott see note 27 above; L. T. ULRICH, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in northern New England, 1650-1750*, New York 1982, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard based on her Diary, 1785-1812*, New York 1990, and *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*, New York 2001; V. DE GRAZIA, ed., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, Berkeley, CA, 1996; DE GRAZIA also published *How Fascism ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*, Berkeley 1992, and at the close of our period: *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through twentieth-century Europe*, Cambridge, MA, 2005.

³² See F. COOPER/A. L. STOLER, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a bourgeois World*, Berkeley, CA, 1997; also A. L. STOLER, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley 2002; F. GOUDA (Dutch by birth but for 30 years active in the United States), *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies, 1900-1942*, Amsterdam 1995, and GOUDA/J. CLANCY-SMITH, *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, Charlottesville, VA, 1998.

influence of Clifford Geertz and «thick description» and the impact of Foucault a decade later, and then by the 1990s, an enthusiasm for the work of Jürgen Habermas, whose *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, originally published in 1962, over a quarter of a century earlier, finally penetrated and then conquered historiographic circles in the United States. Following the fall of the European communist regimes, the 1990s seemed to usher in the triumph of «civil society» and «the public sphere» and these concepts became historiographical tropes as well. At the same time, studies of nationalism took a renewed lease on life from Benedict Anderson's idea of «imagined communities», which inspired scores of investigations³³. Often just the slogans were pressed into service without critical confrontation with the theories themselves. Indeed by the 1990s it became almost obligatory for young historians to claim that their investigations exposed the trio of «socially constructed» categories of oppression: «race, class and gender». By a half century after the Rome Congress, it would have been a lonely historian who claimed that the divisions earlier assumed to be «primordial» in human societies – including race or gender (and occasionally even sex), ethnicity and certainly nationality – were not in fact just inscribed by elites in a continuing process of constructing hegemony. American historians had been introduced to enough Gramsci (though not enough Pareto) to have some insight into the process.

Perhaps this half century of methodological eclecticism just testified to the breadth and vigor of the historiographical community. In fact, while many historians just remained consumers of social theory, some confronted theory in sophisticated histories of ideas. Intellectual history remained a vigorous specialization throughout the half century. Originally the ideas were about politics – witness the work of Felix Gilbert, who had studied with Friedrich Meinecke, or Fritz Stern – or the social contextualization of ideas, as represented by the work of H. Stuart Hughes, who had also appeared at the Rome Congress, and later by Peter Gay³⁴. This tradition would remain a powerful strand across several decades as wide-ranging historians such as James Kloppenberg and Daniel Rogers traced the interaction of American and European intellectuals and ideas. An earlier tradition of grappling with ideas as intellectual systems in their own right, as repre-

³³ J. HABERMAS, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, T. Burger, trans., Cambridge, MA, 1989; B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. London 1991. Anderson was British by origin but taught Southeast Asian politics at Cornell.

³⁴ F. STERN, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, Berkeley 1961; F. GILBERT, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy*, Princeton, NJ, 1961.

sented preeminently by Arthur O. Lovejoy, tended to recover ground by the 1970s and later. Increasingly historians turned to the history of what we might call intellectual systems such as Peter Gay's interpretation of the Enlightenment. Martin Jay wrote on the Frankfurt School both as a source of theory and as a community, then turned to particularly important themes such as the idea of totality and the French privileging of «vision»³⁵. Studies of context and of text remained in an uneasy but fruitful tension. But so too did intellectual history as history and the philosophical or social-theory products in their own right. Philosophy and «theory» – political, social, anthropological, feminist, post-colonial – remained allied categories with which the historian had to argue even as he or she had to record and interpret as intellectual activity rooted in particular times and places.

The history of science remained another powerful branch of intellectual history although sometimes separated in its own faculty. Historians of science became increasingly ambitious in the range of topics they tackled in the name of science as a social practice. Under the impact of the seminal work by Thomas Kuhn that appeared in the very year of the Rome Congress the history of science evolved over the interval from classical approaches to individual scientists to the praxis of science as a communal endeavor defined by its sites – the laboratory or the hospital – and the type of evidence it accredited³⁶.

As a historians' congress, the Rome gathering had to be implicitly retrospective – its participants could not be expected to envisage the output and trends of the half century ahead. Summarizing these trends, moreover, leads to a certain bias against the many important achievements that were undertaken as monuments of individual scholarship. Major works of legal history, whether Willard Hurst's explorations of property or Morton Horwitz's analysis of the judicial order and the affirmation of American capitalism, helped establish the momentum of particular fields. Alfred Chandler's

³⁵ P. GAY, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation*, 2 vols., London 1966-1969; M. JAY, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research, 1923-1950*, Boston 1973, *Marxism and Totality*, Berkeley 1984, and *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in twentieth-century French Thought*, Berkeley, CA, 1993; J. T. KLOPPENBERG, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920*, New York 1986; D. T. RODGERS, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*, Cambridge, MA, 1998.

³⁶ T. S. KUHN, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago 1955; J. L. HEILBRON, *The Dilemma of an Upright Man: Max Planck as Spokesman for German Science*, Berkeley, CA, 1986; J. L. HEILBRON/R. W. SEIDEL, *Lawrence and his Laboratory: A History of the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory*, Berkeley, CA, 1989; P. L. GALISON, *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics*, Chicago 1997.

studies of American and then comparative international corporate structure made the field of business history a far more theoretically interesting enterprise³⁷. United States historians, many as independent scholars, most as faculty in a massive university system, produced a vast number of historical works, above all about their own country – which as of 1955 seemed to have been tremendously successful in overcoming a depression, helping to lead a wartime coalition against fascism, and organizing the West against communism. If compelled to sum up in a few words – that is to caricature – we can say that the last half century began with American historians still largely holding to a model of triumphant exceptionalism; the United States was allegedly special and unique; its political historians dedicated themselves to showing the triumph of «reform», a narrative still largely undarkened in their public readership by the woeful story of race relations or the uprooting of indigenous inhabitants, and heedless of gender. Its literary historians of half a century ago – preeminently Perry Miller after the early death of F. O. Matthiessen – were determined to establish the grandeur of an American tradition of letters from the Puritans to Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and Henry James; its European historians preoccupied often by the failure of democracy elsewhere; its international historians concerned that «interest» occasionally trumped «idealism».

Within a decade after the Rome Congress, these cheery paradigms started to unravel under the pressure of three developments – the stubborn hold of racial discrimination, economic, residential, educational, even after electoral access was secured in the South by 1965; the mobilization of a student movement and defeat by a poor adversary in a persistent war in south-east Asia; finally the emergence of a powerful feminist consciousness. Every country in the last half century has had to come to terms with harsh and formative experiences: British historians had to discover the dark side of the industrial revolution and class division and of the empire. France had to wrestle with the ideological excesses of Jacobinism and later the accommodations of Vichy. Germany had to come to terms with National Socialism, whose crimes and popular base it had first to acknowledge. Italy had to interrogate

³⁷ J. W. HURST, *Law and Economic Growth: The Legal History of the Lumber Industry in Wisconsin, 1836-1915*, Cambridge, MA, 1964, and *Law and the Conditions of Freedom in the nineteenth-century United States*, Madison, WI, 1967; M. J. HORWITZ, *The Transformation of American Law, 1780-1860*, Cambridge, MA, 1977, and *The Transformation of American Law, 1870-1960: The Crisis of Legal Orthodoxy*, New York 1992; A. D. CHANDLER, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*, Cambridge, MA, 1977, and *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism*, Cambridge, MA, 1990.

the structural and regional limitations of Risorgimento liberalism including its descent into fascism and the persistence of its Southern problems.

U.S. historians had similarly to revisit slavery, the dark side of labor relations, and increasingly the national record of ethnic cleansing and imperialism, even if they never abandoned explaining what they still saw as undoubted successes: the creation of a stable and liberal national republic, the absorption of a massive immigrant population, and the exertion of global leadership against cruel and expansive dictatorships. Most Americans wanted to believe that this last enterprise, renewed at so many intervals across the twentieth century, was singularly virtuous. Historians came to recognize, first with respect to Vietnam and Central America and perhaps recently with respect to Iraq, that America's interventions could look more like other's imperialism than they liked to admit. So we return to the theme that in 1955 had attained its zenith in American historical interpretation – exceptionalism – and its subsequent deconstruction. American exceptionalism has not entirely disappeared. The current moment is distinguished by a remarkable hagiography of the founding fathers. This is unlikely to last. Good history must be subversive and not merely celebratory. For American historians, the Rome Conference allowed moments of pride, but it took place at the brink of an era of painful reevaluations. The writing of history emerged stronger and better for them.