

Virtual Symposium 'Democratization of Cultural Criticism'

Costica Bradatan

Symposium

A Virtual Symposium on George Cotkin's article "The Democratization of Cultural Criticism"

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Have cultural barbarians vanquished the life of the mind?

Absolutely NOT, observes intellectual historian George Cotkin, a Professor of History at California State University, San Luis Obispo. He decries the "mourners" among "our present generation of cultural critics" who believe, in the wake of postmodernism and the commercialization of culture, that the practice of cultural criticism "has been cast adrift, without any firm basis for judgments."

In an article published in the July 2, 2004 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, Cotkin challenges the view that seems to prevail among a certain group of "Jeremiahs" who, he asserts, "huddle around their sad conclusion that serious cultural criticism has fallen into a morass of petty bickering and bloated reputations." To other observers of the same cultural trends, the barbarians have not merely vanquished intellectual discourse they have obliterated the landscape of the mind. Our brave new world is not controlled by an all-powerful state but a seemingly benign market-Big Brother has been trumped by Big Sam Walton.

The virtual symposium will begin at 10:00 am (EST) on Thursday, April 28, 2005, at which time Professor Cotkin's Chronicle article, along with a new introduction, will be published electronically on the H-Ideas website, www.h-net.org/~ideas/.

Rejoinders by Professors Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University and David Steigerwald of Ohio State University will be published electronically shortly thereafter. After a further round of

responses by the three primary participants, the symposium will be opened up to members of the H-Ideas community.

Together with our distinguished participants, the members of the H-Ideas editorial team look forward to the active participation of the general public and the academic community at-large. Following electronic publication of the papers and the first round of responses, H-Ideas subscribers will have the opportunity to participate in what we hope will be a healthy intellectual debate on the current state of cultural criticism. In order to participate, you must register as a participant in the forum.

Please follow the four steps listed below:

Visit <http://www.h-net.org/~ideas/forum/> and click on the button titled "Register".

You will be asked to agree to the "Registration Agreement Terms".

The next screen will ask you to enter a username, password and some information about yourself. Please try and fill in at least your "Location", "Occupation" and "Interests".

Click on "Submit" at the bottom of the page and your registration is complete.

Panel Participants

George Cotkin: Professor of History at California State University, San Luis Obispo and author of most recently, *Existential America* (Johns Hopkins, 2002).

Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn: Professor of History, Maxwell School of Syracuse University and author of most recently, *Race Experts: How Racial Etiquette, Sensitivity Training, and New Age Therapy Hijacked the Civil Rights Revolution* (W. W. Norton and Co., 2001) and a forthcoming book on post-WWII cultural critics.

David Steigerwald: Associate Professor of History at Ohio State University and author most recently of *Culture's Vanities: The Paradox of Cultural Diversity in a Globalized World* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

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Reference:

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