

A Concise Companion to
American Studies



Edited by
John Carlos Rowe

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

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John Carlos Rowe

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In memory of Emory Elliott
“One of those people on whom nothing is lost”

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Introduction

John Carlos Rowe

American Studies is a field in crisis, divided between its original nationalist focus on the United States and new interests in the interrelations of the different nations and cultures of the western hemisphere. Some scholars have defended the traditional emphasis of American Studies on the United States, because such an interdisciplinary project is sufficiently complex as to require its own methodology and national boundaries (Ickstadt 2002: 543–7). Other scholars contend that the multicultural and multi-ethnic US cannot be understood adequately without considering its transnational sources, hemispheric interests, and global relations (Rowe 2002: xiii–xxviii). Intellectuals advocating the former position insist that American Studies should not try to cover too many subjects and thus complicate the proper object of study. Scholars advocating the broader contexts of the field contend that American Studies should lead the way in developing new methods of inquiry better suited to global, transnational conditions. In many different fields, the national paradigm for knowledge is no longer an unquestioned universal; the crisis in American Studies is simply one more example of the epistemological problems facing Comparative Literature, American Literature, English, French, German, Italian, and History.

Most of these fields developed their scholarly protocols as higher education in Europe and the Americas contributed to twentieth-century modernization. The economic, political, social, and cultural aspects of such modernization revolved around the strengthening of Western nation-states, many of which were historically young, even if they often claimed venerable cultural legacies. The United States and France, for example, trace their national origins to the late eighteenth-century revolutions in which their respective republics were born. Most postcolonial nations in the western hemisphere date to nineteenth-century revolutions against European imperial powers, and modern Italy and Germany achieve national identities in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, respectively. The notable defensiveness of US writers and intellectuals in the nineteenth century regarding the “lack” of national history – a common theme in Irving, Cooper, Emerson, Hawthorne,

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Melville, Fuller, Thoreau, and their contemporaries – is by no means an exception but rather the rule in the development of Western nation-states. Most modern nations defined their geopolitical borders through cultural, legal, and social practices that reached historically and geographically far beyond national boundaries.

Nation-specific knowledge is actually very historically limited and useful primarily to students of civics. Even if we were able to generalize across the great regional, ethnic, class, and sexual diversity of the United States what it means to be “a good American,” such a definition would have relatively limited applicability when we consider its historical scope – 233 years of US democracy – and its demographic scope: 300 million Americans versus a global population many times larger. Nevertheless, traditional American Studies focused almost exclusively on this restricted issue: what distinguishes the “true” or “good” American, just as many other nationally based disciplines tried to characterize the essential qualities of the German, French, Italian, or English, to mention only a few. What has subsequently been criticized as the “exceptionalism” of American Studies – its focus on the qualities of “Americanness” as distinct from other nations – justified itself in part by appeals to universality intended to legitimate the US national model. Thus, precedents for the good American “citizen” could be found in Plato’s philosopher-kings, Dante’s democratic vernacular, Shakespeare’s self-reliant characters, Hegel’s defense of French revolutionary democracy, and many other anticipations of US democracy. US nationalism could thus be viewed retrospectively as the historical destiny leading from feudalism to modernity and so realizing in the democratic American individual the promise of the past. As a consequence, history was read retrospectively for signs of US democratic success in ways manipulated for ideological purposes.

From F. O. Matthiessen’s *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941) to Richard Slotkin’s *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (1973), the Myth-and-Symbol School shaped the exceptionalist purposes of American Studies for three decades. The great Myth-and-Symbol School scholars, such as R. W. B. Lewis, Henry Nash Smith, Charles Feidelson, Jr, Alan Trachtenberg, and Leo Marx, focused on American myth-making and its expression in specific symbolic structures, such as the American Adam, the Frontier, literary symbols like Hawthorne’s “scarlet letter” and Melville’s “great white-whale,” the Brooklyn Bridge, the Mississippi River, and the nature/culture distinction in general, to understand how Americans interpreted and expressed themselves. None of these influential scholars fully believed such national symbology; all understood its ideological purposes. Fully committed to what today would be considered the theory of “socially constructed knowledge,” the Myth-and-Symbol scholars articulated a national self-consciousness in its historical variations.

The work of the Myth-and-Symbol School was politically liberal and deeply critical of US failures to achieve the promises of liberty and equality for all. Even so, many of the scholars in this mode were captivated by American idealism and

optimistic that social problems eventually would be overcome. The intellectual focus on organizing symbols and unifying national myths tended to reinforce consensus-based history and assimilationist ideals in the settler society of the US. In many of the Myth-and-Symbol School's accounts, we were Americans first, members of more specific regional, ethnic, or other identity-based communities second. Everyone, from the most recent immigrant to citizens with deep ancestral roots in the US, could find a particular relationship to such national myths and symbols. Certain common traits cut across the different archetypes, so that R. W. B. Lewis's *American Adam* (1955) depended upon a youthful innocence that also distinguished the frontier spirit of the pioneers exploring Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* (1950), just as Alan Trachtenberg's *Brooklyn Bridge* (1979) drew upon the technological ingenuity of Americans that Leo Marx analyzed in the complex subordination of nature to culture, crucial to US modernization in *The Machine in the Garden* (1964). Even the symbolic qualities of the expressive forms typical of "American Literature" that Matthiessen interpreted as central to our *American Renaissance* in the middle of the nineteenth century would be claimed subsequently by Charles Feidelson, Jr, as intrinsic to *Symbolism and American Literature* (1953), perhaps even part of American novelty and technological ingenuity.

From this perspective, Americans were characteristically self-reliant, youthful, hardworking people, willing to use their political, economic, and geographical freedom to pursue new opportunities. They refused to be bound by the past, were curious and inventive, and adaptable to new circumstances, whether in the wilderness or the city. Often lacking formal education, these Americans advocated the "boot-strap" mythology and demonstrated their abilities in specific achievements, including self-expression, rather than abstract honors and inherited privileges. Of course, my brief sketch of the "typical" American vastly oversimplifies the virtues celebrated by the scholars of the Myth-and-Symbol School, but it approximates well enough those characteristics to allow us today to understand why this method was so profoundly criticized beginning in the 1970s. First, such an American is likely to be a white male of European ancestry, who learned his commitment to hard work and technical innovation as part of the "Protestant work-ethic," as Max Weber would name this ideology long after it had become central to the American "civil religion" (Weber 1958: 1–20). The material rewards of such labor, self-reliance, and ingenuity were available to this Protestant, white male thanks to a capitalist economy in which he occupied a privileged position, whereas other peoples of color, including indigenous peoples, occupied positions ranging from legal slaves to exploited servants and formal wards of the nation-state. In the nominally "classless" society of US democracy, the "American Adam" held a position of distinct social and economic superiority, which was readily visible in his physical appearance, ranging from actual skin pigmentation to dress and possessions.

What of the other inhabitants of the United States who did not fit this profile? Of course, they could emulate this central mythology, "passing" for white in

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various ways, suppressing their own religious beliefs in favor of the secularized Protestantism assumed to be central to the civil religion, and even disguising or manipulating their gender or sexuality in the cases of women and gays wishing to function within the public sphere. Otherwise, minorities and women would have to accept their second-class status, including the exclusion of African Americans, Chinese Americans, Native Americans, and women from full political and civil rights and citizenship. Nineteenth-century abolitionists referred to their movement as the “second” Revolution, reminding their contemporaries that the founding fathers had avoided the issue of slavery in the compromises they made to forge a new nation. The first national Women’s Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, but women did not gain voting rights and thus full citizenship for another 72 years with the passage of the nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Although declared ambiguously members of “sovereign dependent nations” by the Marshall Supreme Court in 1831, Native Americans were “removed” from those “sovereign nations,” murdered and starved, and forced to assimilate economically and culturally for almost 150 years before being granted US citizenship in 1924. Oppressed by the corrupt ruling Manchu dynasty in China and suffering from crop failures, Chinese immigrants came to the US on the promise of decent jobs, but were excluded from legal immigration and citizenship from the Burlingame Treaty (1869) to the end of formal “Exclusion Laws” during World War II (1943), when China was America’s political and military ally.

New immigrants, ethnic minorities, women, and gays have suffered personal violence and discrimination throughout US history. Their political, economic, and social organizations have helped them resist and improve their civil rights, and they have properly reminded us that their struggles have been realizations of democratic promises often denied them by the dominant population and the US state. These larger social and political struggles are represented centrally in the academic programs and departments in Women’s, Gender, and Ethnic Studies that were founded in the late 1960s and 1970s at many colleges and universities in the US. Most of these new academic units were established only after lengthy struggles by faculty, students, and staff for the rights to represent their own cultural histories. Although American Studies often helped provide support and sometimes even an academic home for some of these emerging disciplines, many advocates of these programs opposed the synthetic and consensus-based model of the Myth-and-Symbol School. There were also crucial epistemological differences between American Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Ethnic Studies.

Whereas American Studies tended to rely on the canonical model of representing the Arnoldian ideal of the “best that has been thought and spoken,” Women’s and Ethnic Studies were intent on recovering rich cultural legacies that had been repressed and effectively “minoritized.” Many specialists in different Ethnic Studies also argued that the cultural media favored by traditional American Studies did not include the media of greatest importance to particular minority communities.

Legally excluded from literacy in the slave-holding South, many antebellum African Americans developed alternative means for cultural representation, including music, dance, and other performing arts. Even though the great fugitive slave narratives, such as Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* ([1845]1982) and Harriet Jacobs's fictionalized *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* ([1861] 1987), often turned on the protagonist's education in letters, these and other narratives also testified to the value of orality and performativity in folklore, spirituals, gossip, and religious and political organization. The Myth-and-Symbol School privileged literature and history as the foundations for the interdisciplinary work of American Studies, but scholars in African American, Chicano/a, Native American, Asian American, and Women's/Gender Studies distrusted conventional histories from which their stories had been excluded and protested that literature did not express fully the cultural vitality of their communities. The *tejano corridos* of the Texas–Mexico borderlands combine story and song, as well as the context of their performances, in ways that cannot be matched in the private reading experience. Popular romance literature did play a crucial part in nineteenth- and twentieth-century women's culture, but the best-selling women writers were judged by the Myth-and-Symbol School to be of relatively little interest, shaping at best what Ann Douglas judged *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977).

Women's and Ethnic Studies in the early 1970s also departed from American Studies in terms of the geopolitical boundaries of their fields. The Myth-and-Symbol School certainly took into account the international goals of the United States, connecting westward expansion with other imperialist ambitions in Latin America and the Pacific, but its object of study remained centrally the United States. Second-wave feminists understood their political and academic work to transcend national boundaries. With its traditional reliance on the bourgeois, nuclear family and patriarchal authority, US nationalism was part of the problem, not the solution. Like their predecessors, second-wave feminists looked to women who had struggled throughout history for equal rights and such transnational perspectives helped criticize and reform intransigent US patriarchy. Feminist scholars cited the powerful feminine deities of pre-Christian religions, as well as women who enjoyed legal and civil equality in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, to counter prevailing US gender hierarchies. In similar ways, African American activists and scholars pitted "Black Nationalism" against what they considered the illegitimate US state, whose rhetorical promises of freedom and equality masked the racism that had permitted slavery and then replaced it with economic and social racism. Black nationalism drew upon international and trans-racial ideals of the Pan-Africanism of African and African American leaders who protested European colonialism, in which they often implicated the United States. In some cases, this return to African cultural identification included a rejection of the Christian West in favor of the Muslim "brown belt" that better united the "yellow and brown peoples" exploited by Western imperialism and capitalism.

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In a similar fashion, Asian American scholars turned away from the prevailing Eurocentrism of traditional American Studies in favor of transnational routes and cultural influences more relevant to the many different Asian communities to which they traced their origins. Puritan New England is deeply invested in British cultural influences from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, but the same can hardly be said for San Francisco in the era of the Gold Rush and the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. However fiercely “Yankees” attempted to prevent Chinese immigration, nineteenth-century Chinese workers had a dramatic impact on the cultural identity of California and the West. In *China Men* (1980), Maxine Hong Kingston demonstrates that Chinese immigrants brought as much to “Gold Mountain” as they took from the US, and it is only the provincialism of traditional US nationalism that prevents us from understanding the impact of Confucian culture, the Chinese novel and drama, Chinese cuisine, and many more Chinese influences on our national culture.

El Movimiento also insisted upon an alternative “nationalism,” in this case the utopian “nation” of Aztlán, whose origins are traceable back to the pre-Columbian Mexica (Aztec) people and whose imaginary location could be anywhere from ancient Mexico to the Spanish Southwest or Alta California. Less an actual political state than a state of mind, Aztlán represents a counter-narrative to US imperialism from the Mexican–American War to the present. Chicano and Chicana literature and the arts appeal repeatedly to the utopian promise of Aztlán, reminding us of how many people living within the geopolitical borders of the US think and dream beyond those boundaries. In an analogous sense, the American Indian Movement (AIM) set a political agenda at distinct odds with US nationalism and insisted upon Native American sovereignty, as guaranteed by countless legal decisions and broken treaties. Indigenous peoples have rarely accepted national borders in the Americas and Canada, insofar as such artificial distinctions have generally violated Native Americans’ territorial identifications. Tribal and kinship oriented, rather than nationalist or assimilationist, many indigenous peoples have viewed the nation-state as an inconvenient fiction.

Nevertheless, the central focus for most research and teaching in Women’s, Gender, and Ethnic Studies in the US was on US history and culture, so it is not surprising that American Studies was influenced significantly by these complementary disciplines. By the late 1980s, the panels organized at the annual American Studies Association conventions were dominated by scholarship central to Women’s, Gender, and Ethnic Studies, and traditionally defined Myth-and-Symbol School approaches were in the minority. In this same period, driven in part by the rapid globalization of first-world economies, many dependent upon cultural exports as well as material goods, the international dimensions of American Studies gained central importance in scholarly debates. One-way globalization, of course, was criticized as yet another aspect of first-world neo-imperialism or what earlier scholars had designated “free-trade imperialism” (Rowe 2000: 58–60). The focus of traditional American Studies on the unique

characteristics of the US nation was especially subject to such criticism, especially given the new global economy's emphasis on the exportation of cultural values and lifestyles. Interested in possible counter-narratives to one-way globalization, intellectuals paid more attention to American Studies outside the US. In Germany, for example, centers for "North American Studies" overcame the problem of US nationalism by treating both the US and Canada as related areas. Scholars outside the US were also more attentive to the consequences of US foreign policies and cultural exports for other peoples. By 2004, when ASA President Shelley Fisher Fishkin devoted her Presidential Address to the "Internationalizing of American Studies," considerable attention had been paid to the ways non-US scholars and perspectives enriched the field (Fishkin 2005: 17–57). Organizations such as the International American Studies Association, and new research and teaching centers such as the Clinton Institute for American Studies at University College, Dublin, were founded, and new international journals, like *Comparative American Studies*, published abroad. International American Studies was by no means new. Many universities around the world had offered curricula and sponsored research in the field since the end of World War II, but a great deal of the previous scholarship had been deeply indebted to the nationalist model of the Myth-and-Symbol School. The "internationalizing" of American Studies in the 1990s represented a second-stage development of the field, in which the intellectual critique of US neo-imperialism and one-way globalization was central.

The relations among these different approaches inside and outside American Studies are still unsettled, but the characteristics of a new American Studies can be generally described. No longer focused exclusively on consensus history and assimilationist ideals, American Studies takes into account the many different and constantly changing communities that constitute the United States. Of equal importance are the routes followed by different immigrants to the US, including both the Pacific and Atlantic rims as well as the North–South paths within the western hemisphere. Immigration and diaspora are not just *travels*, of course, but complex processes of cultural and social movement, including changes in the basic tools of human interrelation. American Studies is thus a poly-lingual field, which should require competency in several different languages relevant to a student's area of specialization. Indeed, another crucial development of the new American Studies is the rediscovery of the polyglot history of the United States, as Werner Sollors and Marc Shell have demonstrated in *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature* (2000). The new American Studies is also attentive to the ways the US has participated in traditional imperialism, both in Manifest Destiny and slavery, and has developed its own neo-imperial practices, such as it used in the Vietnam War and current occupation of Iraq. Although it is a more controversial claim, the new American Studies should take all of the different nations and communities of the western hemisphere as its objects of study, contending that we cannot understand the United States apart from its historical and geopolitical relations with its neighbors in the hemisphere. Whether or not we accept the

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hemispheric scope of the new American Studies, the field should be understood as profoundly *comparative* and *transnational*, even when it concentrates exclusively on the internal diversity of the US.

How shall we do the work of research and teaching associated with the new American Studies? There are no simple answers to this question, but it is clear that however we define the field it cannot be covered in traditional ways. Even if we choose the more restricted model of a US-centric American Studies, there are simply too many communities, languages, cultural media, historical events, and social and political issues, for us to offer a two- or three-year Major, two or three years of graduate coursework, or a single model for scholarly expertise in such a field. The crisis in American Studies is also a challenge to our theories of knowledge and education. This volume offers a variety of approaches to these issues, mapping out possible boundaries to the field rather than specifying its precise and rigorous contours. Neither a definitive history of American Studies nor a polemical argument for the new American Studies, this volume brings together some of the best scholars in American Studies, and Ethnic Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, to write critically about areas and problems central to the field.

This *Companion* is divided into four large sections: I. Foundations and Backgrounds; II. Ethnic Studies and American Studies; III. The New American Studies; IV. Problems and Issues. Although there is some sense of a loose historical development, from such foundational approaches as "Puritan Origins" (Gura, chapter 1) or "The Laboring of American Culture" in the 1930s' left (Denning, Chapter 3) in Part I, to the more recent challenges of Ethnic Studies' scholars, such as George Lipsitz and Richard T. Rodríguez (chapters 7 and 9), in Part II, and interventions by new American Studies' theorists, such as Harilaos Stecopoulos and Donald Pease (chapters 12 and 13), in Part III, each section of this book is intended to be *contemporary* by addressing the continuing relevance of traditional approaches, and *historical* by considering the backgrounds to current approaches. The problems and issues in Part IV, for example, consider some long-standing problems in American Studies, such as "Regionalism" (McNamara, chapter 18), "The West and Manifest Destiny" (Madsen, chapter 19), and "Popular, Mass, and High Culture" (Streeby, chapter 22), but in ways that suggest how newer approaches – regionalism after nationalism and a "new" West that includes women, minorities, and indigenous peoples – change these conventional areas of American Studies.

In Part I, contributors address some of the most enduring foundations for the field, relevant both to traditional and new American Studies. The five essays in this section are not organized according to specific "schools" or movements, but instead by influential areas of interest in a field that has always been interdisciplinary. Although "Puritan Origins" once designated the solid grounding of the Myth-and-Symbol School in Protestant orthodoxy and pre-national utopianism, Philip Gura offers a fascinating account of how the Puritans have changed from our cultural "founding fathers" to a very specific colonial community clinging to

fragile material and spiritual existences in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England. Yet, if the Puritans have diminished in significance for the national mythology, Gura argues that they are even more interesting to us for inhabiting the intersection of European, American, indigenous, and natural worlds still very much at the center of our intellectual, psychological, and national lives. Less familiar to most American Studies scholars is the long and rich legacy of cultural anthropology that Michael Elliott recovers in “Cultural Anthropology and the Routes of American Studies, 1851–1942” (chapter 2). From Lewis Henry Morgan’s *League of the Ho-de’-no-sau-nee* (commonly known as *The League of the Iroquois*) (1851) to Zora Neale Hurston’s African American ethnography, *Mules and Men* (1935), and Afro-Caribbean ethnography, *Tell My Horse* (1938), Elliott reminds us of the roots of contemporary Ethnic Studies in cultural anthropology that sometimes served US imperialism, and at other times criticized it.

Michael Denning’s “The Laboring of American Culture” (chapter 3) recalls the fundamental importance of the 1930s’ left in the development of American Studies as a discipline, and it does this work by reconsidering the intersection of cultural and economic production in the practices of labor organization and the emergence of the Cultural Front. Denning’s influential book, *The Cultural Front* (1997), develops at length this argument; in this essay, Denning considers the relevance of the old left’s class solidarity for our contemporary age, both in the current economic depression and for our everyday practices as scholar-activists of American Studies. Paul Lauter reconsiders the old claim that US democracy promised a “classless” society, even though the historical reality is that from its very beginnings the US created new class distinctions, often modeled on older European models, in order to confront new circumstances and yet still retain wealth in a relatively small group. The fact that most US laws relate to property, rather than to civil and human, rights is one indication that ownership and citizenship have been closely linked since the founding of the nation. What, then, of indigenous peoples who had very different conceptions of land use from enclosure and ownership and also eschewed accumulation in favor of shared resources? We know that under the Dawes Act (the General Allotment Act of 1887) Native peoples were coerced to follow Euro-American notions of ownership and accumulation, rejecting their own tribal socialisms for Western capitalism. Lauter makes the valuable point that the “awakening” of “class consciousness” in the US has been traditionally a difficult task, despite these obvious signs of a profoundly hierarchical national culture. Once again, American Studies and Ethnic Studies converge in their efforts to criticize the apparent universalism of a national culture that is of very recent invention and an obvious European import.

Language and Religion are two other basic areas of study for traditional American Studies, each of which has undergone a considerable revival and transformation with the advent of new American Studies. Jay Mechling (chapter 5) challenges us to rethink the role of religion in ways that go far beyond the usual emphasis on the development of a “civil religion” out of the various religious heterodoxies

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that drove many dissenters to colonial America. Not only did 9/11 and the Bush administration's "war on terrorism," often characterized as a "new crusade," bring religious conflicts into the mainstream of American politics, but the rise of religious fundamentalisms and various religious denominations' command of electronic and other digital media demand much more serious consideration of the diverse powers of contemporary religions in American lives. Joshua Miller's essay on American languages (chapter 6) reminds us that the US has always been multi-lingual, not just as a consequence of the different languages spoken by recent immigrants but also thanks to the many different dialects spoken across the US. The common misconception that the US *has* an "unofficial" national language of English is belied by demographics throughout US history demonstrating the wide range of languages used in everyday communication. English may be the dominant language, but there are countless other functional languages that make any legal motions for "English Only" doomed both to legislative and practical failure.

In Part II, we have made an effort to treat the most influential approaches to Ethnic Studies, including "Ethnic Studies" as a field (Lipsitz, chapter 7), Native American Studies (Gamber, chapter 8), Chicano/a and Latino/a Studies (Rodriguez, chapter 9), African American Studies (Sexton, chapter 10), and Asian American Studies (Lowe, chapter 11). But these essays are not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of such complex and independent disciplines. George Lipsitz's "Blood Lines and Blood Shed: Intersectionality and Differential Consciousness in Ethnic Studies and American Studies" analyzes the shared anti-racist and activist goals of scholarship, teaching, and social reform, rather than offering a narrow definition of the distinctive qualities of Ethnic Studies. In his formulation, the field encompasses prison reform not simply because the majority of those incarcerated in the US are people of color; gay studies and queer activism are not just for the sake of gays from ethnic backgrounds. Lipsitz writes comfortably about "Ethnic Studies and American Studies," ignoring the sort of disciplinary controversies between these two disciplines. Intellectual coalition-building is what Lipsitz advocates, so that the struggle for greater social justice includes all those peoples deprived of equal civil and human rights. "Ethnikon" has an interesting range of meanings in Greek, although most often it is translated by modern scholars as "nation," even though national belonging would have been alien to the ancient Greeks. The very ambiguity of the term "ethnic" suggests in Lipsitz's approach to "Ethnic Studies" the sorts of affiliations that come from shared struggle and mutual identification, rather than from ancient cultural traditions or racial classifications.

Other contributors to this section offer more specific disciplinary definitions, such as John Gamber does in his "Native American Studies," but all recognize the need to maintain flexible definitions in this transitional era. Students understandably ask, "What *is* the 'proper' term for 'Indians?'" They know that naming the diverse indigenous peoples of the pre-Columbian western hemisphere according to Christopher Columbus's infamous "mistake" can hardly be correct, but they

also know that the activist group, the American Indian Movement, uses the term, and that academic departments and programs carry different names: Native American Studies, American Indian Studies, and Indigenous Studies. Gamber does not try to settle these nominal differences, but instead uses the terms in relation to the specific groups that choose and prefer them. Similarly, Jared Sexton takes up the familiar dispute regarding such disciplinary titles as Black, African American, Africana, or African Diaspora Studies to address the much larger questions of how black people in the US understand their relationships to the peoples and cultures of the Caribbean, Brazil, Africa, Mexico, and many other regions traditionally ignored by traditional American Studies. Sexton argues that these terms are inadequate to the complexity of racial and ethnic identifications across national and within US borders. What, for example, are the “proper names” for mixed-race identities and how should such subjects negotiate the intersections of racial and ethnic communities historically at odds with each other?

Many of the contributors to this volume work explicitly to deconstruct the familiar boundaries of their respective disciplines, suggesting that another characteristic of the new American Studies is a critical self-consciousness regarding strict disciplinary boundaries. In “Reckoning Nation and Empire: Asian American Critique” (chapter 11), Lisa Lowe focuses on Chang-rae Lee’s *A Gesture of Life* (1999), and suggests that the Korean American novel invokes Japanese colonial militarism in Asia as an allegory for US wars in Asia and the Middle East, in order to highlight how the Asian American criticism of US exceptionalism continues to be as important today, after the “war on terror,” as it was during the Cold War when the field began. Her essay points to Asian American Studies as a field at a crossroads: the study of Asian Americans can provide stories of immigrant inclusion and assimilation, suggesting that the US nation has transcended its imperial past, or it can connect the formation of Asian Americans to the US Cold War role in East Asia and then bring these insights to bear on the ongoing wars of the US empire. For Lowe, Asian American Studies is not a discrete discipline about identity-formation or assimilation, but part of a broader critical account of global imperialism.

Part III consists of six essays dealing with the distinctive features of the new American Studies. In “Hemispheric Drama and Performance,” Harilaos Stecopoulos (chapter 12) takes up the challenge to American Studies in a genuinely hemispheric and thus postnational framework, focusing on drama and performance theory as ways of thinking and acting across borders and outside narrow national contexts. From Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* to Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s postmodern, transnational performances, drama has allowed audiences to engage new worlds and negotiate different discursive, even linguistic, practices more readily than other literary genres. Of particular interest in Stecopoulos’s treatment of hemispheric drama are indigenous peoples and cultures from Shakespeare’s Caliban to Gómez-Peña’s and Coco Fusco’s collaboration, “The Year of the White Bear and Two Undiscovered Indians Visit the West” (1992–4),

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in which they pose as two unknown specimens of the fictional Guatınai people, presumed to inhabit an island off the Northwest coast of Yucatan. We are reminded that whenever we lift the veil of strictly nationalist knowledge, we begin to “see” indigenous peoples and their pre-Columbian realities. Donald Pease’s “Postnational and Postcolonial Reconfigurations of American Studies in the Postmodern Condition” (chapter 13) provides the comparative American Studies practiced by Stecopoulos with its proper theoretical frameworks in the postcolonial work of Homi Bhabha, Pease’s own postnationalist arguments, and the broader postmodernity to which both respond. On the one hand, we identify postmodern theories, such as Derridean deconstruction, with radical challenges to the dominant ideology, including the mythology of the US state; on the other hand, we recognize in postmodern theories many of the characteristics of a new, postmodern economy on which first-world nations since the mid-1960s have relied to export digital technologies, Western culture, and complementary fashions and lifestyles. Pease shows us how American Studies can avoid the trap of a new, “global” America – the familiar US nation rendered as a cosmopolitan illusion or mere advertisement – by turning instead to the diverse and resistant “Americas” articulated by such Latin American intellectuals as José Martí in his classic essay, “Our America” ([1891] 2002), and his postmodern heirs, Enrique Dussel, Rodolfo Kusch, and Walter Mignolo.

In my own contribution to this section, “Culture, US Imperialism, and Globalization” (chapter 14), I follow Pease’s lead by suggesting how US neo-imperialism has worked recently to create an illusory internationalism that actually duplicates the basic values of traditional US nationalism, permitting the US to appear to be attentive to cultural and social differences around the world when in fact it works to internalize and control such “foreignness” within a familiar American mythology. If we truly wish to internationalize American Studies, we will have to consider comparatively other social, political, and state organizations to measure the successes and failures of the US and the other nations of the western hemisphere. Such US neo-imperialism has a long history, which Rebecca Walsh (chapter 15) helps us understand by focusing on a forgotten story, “The Foreigner,” by Sarah Orne Jewett. Walsh’s interpretation of this story written by Jewett during the Spanish–American War, arguably America’s first public venture in traditional imperialism, is Walsh’s means of reminding us how gender hierarchies and US imperialism were deeply imbricated from the very beginning. Combining several different feminist approaches from second-wave cultural recovery work to more radical gynocriticism as a means of undermining patriarchal assumptions, Walsh transforms the “local color” author, Jewett, into a much more interesting critic of emerging US foreign policies in the Caribbean and Pacific, as well as exploring the relationship of US imperialism to such domestic issues as the marginalized status of women, who were struggling in 1900 for such basic political rights as the vote.

David Nye’s “The Rapprochement of Technology Studies and American Studies” (chapter 16) and Matthias Oppermann’s “The World Wide Web and

Digital Culture: New Borders, New Media, New American Studies” (chapter 17) offer complementary approaches to the ways in which technological innovation continues to transform the field of American Studies. Focusing on the modernization process, Nye describes the relatively recent conjunction of Technology Studies and American Studies in the 1990s, when both approaches criticized the presumed liberal progressivism of modernization that contributed to imperial expansion and global domination. Oppermann’s essay follows the historical direction of Nye’s argument by observing that the primarily print-based core of American Studies is only now beginning to take account of the dramatic transformation in the “national form” produced by the World Wide Web and other transnational media. Attentive to the “Americanization” of the Web, the dominance of English as its language, and other aspects of what we might term digital imperialism, Oppermann nonetheless understands the rapid emergence of the new technologies and practices as profound challenges to the nation-state and spatially specific communities for individual affiliation. The multiple, transnational, multi-lingual positions afforded to users of the Web require a thorough reconceptualization of “American society” in relation to the global social networking already available on the Web and the growing global economies dependent on the Web. As Nye and Oppermann point out, the most elementary practices of our scholarly research have already been transformed by digitization; teaching can no longer be imagined as the transmission of “information” in the oral context of the classroom, reinforced by “homework” completed in print-based “reading and writing.”

Part IV addresses continuing problems and unrecognized issues of central importance to the new American Studies. Kevin McNamara’s “Regionalism” (chapter 18) traces regionalism back to the politics of nineteenth-century sectionalism, especially in the debates over abolition. Rather than viewing regionalism as a stubborn provincialism, opposed to cosmopolitanism, McNamara notes the modern emphasis on “transnationalism” within regional accounts of metropolitan centers of immigration. Regionalism has undergone a renewal in the field, thanks to environmentalists who have articulated the local ecology’s relationship to larger, transnational conservation movements. Deborah Madsen’s “The West and Manifest Destiny” (chapter 19) shows how significantly an older category of American Studies has been transformed by newer approaches. The West is, of course, part of regionalism, even if it has been treated so broadly and abstractly in US history as to make such a designation almost useless. Like McNamara, Madsen recognizes the importance of environmentalists in our understanding of the “new” West, especially in these scholars’ attention to water rights, leading to conflicts between agribusinesses and family farmers that dramatically shaped the settlement of the West. Madsen shows how scholarship on the new West has reinhabited it with the real people who contributed to this important aspect of the American modernization process: women, Chinese Americans, African Americans, poor white workers (often recent immigrants, like Irish Americans), Native Americans, and gays.

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Alyssa MacLean's "Canadian Studies and American Studies" (chapter 20) addresses directly a problem often treated in passing or only nominal ways. Transnational and comparative hemispheric scholars of American Studies are often asked, "Where does *Canada* fit?" Often this question is intended to address the mere omission of "Canada" in the title "Hemispheric American Studies," which can be easily answered by advocates of "North American Studies." But actually fitting Canada, with its long history of multicultural and poly-lingual laws, into the broader projects of hemispheric or transnational American Studies is more difficult at the conceptual and practical levels. MacLean argues that the dominance of the US in North America poses an imbalance that has yet to be interpreted in its full imperialist contexts. The US intimidates and overwhelms Canada not only in their political, economic, and legal negotiations but in cultural relations as well. MacLean locates some of these problems in the scholarly debates themselves, noting how recent US scholars have blamed Canadian scholars for "withdrawing" from the "hemispheric conversations," ignoring some of the reasons why Canadians might be reluctant to join a movement initiated by US-based scholars.

Henry Giroux's "The US University under Siege:" (chapter 21) addresses yet another neglected topic in American Studies: the politics of the late-modern university. American Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and Ethnic Studies all had to fight long to win formal places in the US university curricula, but American Studies' scholars have paid relatively little attention to the ideology of higher education. Recent neoconservative groups conducting surveillance of university classrooms and targeting specific professors' research and teaching have prompted critical responses from a broad spectrum of scholars, but American Studies has not sufficiently taken the university as an object of study. Native American suspicion of Western education is venerable and well-founded, and it should teach us that the "crisis" in higher education evident in these entrenched disputes between political interests may have much to do with the *nationalist* character of traditional liberal arts' education. If the new American Studies challenges the universality of knowledge that often turns out to be nation-specific, then we need to examine critically the places where we live and work. Such self-consciousness about our university situations might constitute yet another "new regionalism."

Shelley Streeby's "Popular, Mass, and High Culture" (chapter 22) concludes this section and our volume by identifying several areas of traditional emphasis in American Studies, but areas not always treated in their necessary relationships. "Pop culture" was once a specialization in American Studies, whereas "high cultural" American Studies was treated primarily in English departments as "American Literature" and in Art History departments as "American Art." Indeed, the divided history of American Studies and American Literature is a story that remains to be told, but whose micro- and macro-political conflicts may now be long behind us. But the troubling middle term – mass culture – carries with it dogmatic Marxist associations that alienate many scholars and explain the

failures of new American Studies to theorize better the complex weave of these three different classifications of media for cultural representation. Streeby argues that, insofar as their relations are historically and regionally specific, their mutual study is crucial. How can an undergraduate struggling with *Moby-Dick* understand its conventions and innovations without also having read *The Wide, Wide World* or *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

This volume is a *Companion*, not an encyclopedia or exhaustive history, each of which would require a multi-volume effort. We understand the concept of the *Companion* to serve the purpose of providing provocative reading as scholars and their students work through a curriculum (whether formal or extemporized) in the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. We have made polemical judgments about “traditional” and “new” American Studies, with which not all of our readers will agree, but our purposes are to provoke debate not attract followers. The field of American Studies is, after all, neither a calling nor a mission, but an intellectual problem we encounter every time we tell our friends and neighbors what we do. “American Studies? What’s that?” We hope this *Companion* will help our readers formulate their own answers.

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PART I

Foundations and Backgrounds

Puritan Origins

Philip F. Gura

“American Studies” as an academic discipline arose in the aftermath of World War II, in good measure from the nation’s self-congratulation at the triumph of democratic principles which it believed it best exemplified. The movement’s origins, however, lay a generation earlier, among writers and intellectuals who sought to understand what they regarded as the nation’s uniqueness. Central to their attempts was renewed consideration of New England Puritanism, which, distasteful as they found its tenets, they acknowledged as undeniably shaping the American “mind.”

The linkage of colonial New England to the nation’s origins, however, originated earlier; it was in full flower by the time of the much-ballyhooed bicentennial of the Pilgrims’ landfall at Plymouth. The nineteenth-century Romantic historian George Bancroft, for example, confidently linked New England’s early congregational polity and representative General Courts to the outbursts of popular democracy in the 1770s. In this, he was seconded by none other than his almost preternaturally observant contemporary, Alexis de Tocqueville. After touring the United States in the late 1820s, the sharp-eyed French visitor noted the primacy of the influence of New England’s “principles” in the founding of the New Nation. They had “spread at first to the neighboring states” and then quickly to others, he wrote, until “they penetrated the entire confederation.” By the time of his visit, Tocqueville continued, New England’s institutions had exerted their influence “over the whole American world” (2000: 31–2).

Incipient democracy in Church and colony government was one thing, however, and Puritanism per se, another. By the late nineteenth century, in many mainstream Protestant denominations, Calvinist dogma, which had steeled some Americans against the horrors of the Civil War, fell out of favor. The “Social Gospel” – whose adherents believed that Christian principles should be applied to social problems – made it appear anachronistic or, worse, downright irrational. Liberal Protestants, for example, ridiculed such central Puritan tenets as belief in man’s innate depravity and lack of free will, because they could so easily encourage

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acceptance of the status quo. By the turn of the century, Puritanism was the butt of both severe criticism and caustic humor. Cultural critic Van Wyck Brooks, for example, in his influential *The Wine of the Puritans* (1908), argued that Puritanism was the source of the debased idealism that ruled American culture. The prominent journalist and wit H. L. Mencken pilloried it as “the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy” (1949: 626).

Alongside such dismissal and derision, however, grew a small but increasingly influential school whose adherents insisted that, whether or not one was sympathetic to Puritanism, to deny its significance to the nation’s culture was to trade in caricature as gross as any proffered by Puritanism’s detractors. In particular, this new appreciation was linked to the investigation of the nation’s literary heritage as scholars, fortified now by reading Sigmund Freud, burrowed into veins of literature whose power seemingly derived, as Herman Melville had put it of his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne, from “that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or another, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free” (1955: 192). If such a residue of Puritan ideas contributed to the achievement of *The Scarlet Letter* or *Moby-Dick*, now squarely in the Modernists’ sights, perhaps early New England thought was worthy of more sustained inquiry.

The philosopher George Santayana recognized this as early as 1911 when he traced the sources of “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy” to New England’s bifurcated heritage: Calvinism and Transcendentalism. The heart of the Puritan had been divided, Santayana noted, between “tragic concern at his own miserable condition” and “tragic exultation about the universe at large.” Admittedly, he wrote, by the time of Emerson this “sense of sin” had “totally evaporated,” but in American society at large it persisted into the twentieth century, the Genteel Tradition the result of the dialectic between these two ways of considering the self (1968, 2: 87–9). In his remarkable *In the American Grain* (1925), a searching study of the European appropriation of the New World, the poet and novelist William Carlos Williams concurred. In a discussion of the early eighteenth-century Jesuit missionary, Père Sebastien Rasles, for example, one of the lengthier sections of the book, Williams observes to Valéry Larbaud of Cotton Mather’s books that they were “the flower of that religion [Puritanism].” Williams admired such work’s “rigid clarity,” he continued, “its inhuman clarity, its steel-like thrust from the heart of each isolate man straight into the tabernacle of Jehovah without embellishment or softening” (1925: 111, 129). To Modernist critics, such sentiments flowed directly into the worlds of Hawthorne and Melville. If one regarded these writers as representative of what another seminal cultural critic, Lewis Mumford, termed “the Golden Day” in American letters, one had to acknowledge the shaping force of Puritanism on American culture (*passim*).

Most of these early critics and historians, however, were not as interested in understanding Puritanism as in making a case for its metaphorical significance to later thinkers and writers; they appreciated it as a crude, if necessary, prelude

rather than an engaging symphony. A few scholars, however, began to break this mold, particularly members of the English and History departments at Harvard University. In 1925, for example, English professor Kenneth Ballard Murdock published *Increase Mather: Foremost American Puritan*, and five years later his colleague in History, Samuel Eliot Morison, issued *Builders of the Bay Colony*, which comprised biographical sketches of chief members of New England's early generations. These works – unapologetic and sophisticated – opened the sluice gates to powerful streams of scholarship that in the next two decades revised our understanding of American Puritanism. In addition, their and others' work soon thereafter led to incarnations of academic programs that, when linked to those at other universities after World War II, contributed significantly to what became the American Studies movement.

Although Murdock, commandeered for administration, published little else in this field, he remained central to this renovation. As Acting Chair of Harvard's English department and, later, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, he was committed to building the university's offerings in American History and Literature, in terms of both faculty and programs. Among those whom he lured to Cambridge were the already well-established scholar Howard Mumford Jones, and a newly minted PhD from the University of Chicago, Perry Gilbert Eddy Miller, undoubtedly his most remarkable hire.

Miller, a mid-Westerner, had returned to the university after spending time in other parts of the United States – he had lived in the Rockies for a while as well as in New York City – and, more importantly, the Belgian Congo, where, he later reported, he had been vouchsafed an “epiphany.” Recalling the great work of the historian Edward Gibbon, the inspiration for which came as he was sitting in the ruins of the Capitol at Rome, Miller had a comparable moment of discernment in the middle of Africa. Disconsolate “on the edge of the jungle,” he recalled, he had thrust upon him “the mission of expounding” what he “took to be the innermost propulsion of the United States” (1956: viii). To do this properly he had to begin at what he took to be the beginning, and, discounting the Virginia enterprise because to his mind it lacked the requisite intellectual coherence, he commenced with the New England Puritans. His dissertation director, the English professor Percy Holmes Boynton, though not convinced of the project's significance, indulged his student's whim. The resultant dissertation became Miller's first book, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630–1650: A Genetic Study* (1933), a treatment of the significance of covenant theology to the Massachusetts Bay Puritans.

In his foreword, Miller explained that he had embarked on a new enterprise. He sought to describe “a great folk movement with an utter disregard of the economic social factors” on which recent historians such as James Truslow Adams (one of Miller's particular *bêtes noir*, Mencken another) had anchored their interpretations of New England's founding. He also aimed at those Freudians who dismissed religious ideas as “just so many rationalizations constructed by the subconscious to disguise the pursuit of more tangible ends” (1933: xi).¹ Miller

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also explained that he had made a “concerted attempt to realize the continuity of thought extending from the initial stages of English Puritanism to the peculiar institutions of New England,” an attitude indicative of a lifelong interest in and appreciation of the European backgrounds to American thought (*Orthodoxy*: xii–xiii).² Further, although it would be a few more years before he articulated it so baldly, the book exemplified the foundational premise to all Miller’s work, his insistence that “the mind of man is the basic factor in human history” (1956: ix). In this, Miller helped define the new field of intellectual history, for, coupled with William Haller’s work on English Puritanism and Arthur O. Lovejoy’s on European history generally, his oeuvre exemplified this new direction in historical study.

Over the next two decades, Miller published three path-breaking works. In *The New England Mind* (1939) he compiled “a map of the intellectual terrain of the seventeenth century” that remains the *vade mecum* for those who wish to comprehend the Puritans’ intellectual universe upon their departure for New England. Then, in his monumental *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (1953), he set that Puritanism in motion in the New World, describing with unparalleled sophistication the fate of Puritan ideas from the time of the adoption of the Half-Way Covenant in 1662 through the deaths of Increase and Cotton Mather in the 1720s.³ Remarkably, even as he was completing this massive work, he published (in the “American Men of Letters” series) *Jonathan Edwards* (1950), bringing the history of New England’s religious thought through this theologian’s death in 1758. In the 1950s, Miller shifted his attention primarily to the nineteenth century, planning to continue his monumental history of ideas at least through the period of the Civil War; but his work in Puritanism defined and dominated the field of early American Studies through the mid-1960s.

Simply put, Miller insisted that there was such a thing as the “American mind,” and its roots lay in Puritan New England. Further, to study it was not merely an academic exercise but a way to gain particular insight into what the United States represented in the twentieth century. In the 1930s others in the academy began to share this view. A similar belief in the coherence of American culture that derived from the European settlers, for example, underlay Herbert Schneider’s *The Puritan Mind* (1930), Henry Bamford Parkes’s *Jonathan Edwards: The Fiery Puritan* (1930), and, most importantly, Vernon Louis Parrington’s *Main Currents in American Thought*, (1927), the first volume of which (eventually there were three) covered the period through 1800 and about which Miller always spoke with respect. A legion of other scholars – Henry Nash Smith, Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Aaron, Leo Marx, and Louis Hartz among them – soon enlisted under the banner of what became known as “American exceptionalism” and extended such study into the nineteenth century and beyond, Miller’s grand synthesis the unassailable anchor to their efforts.

Such scholarship about the purported uniqueness of the American experience coincided with the establishment at the college and university level of courses and

programs that eventually coalesced into the American Studies movement. In 1931, for example, at Yale University the historian Ralph Henry Gabriel joined his colleague in English, Stanley T. Williams, to teach a course on “American Thought and Civilization” and six years later published a textbook, *The American Mind*, which had eventuated from their classroom work. In 1936, Miller joined a cohort of senior colleagues at Harvard to form the interdisciplinary program in the History of American Civilization. The group included not only such scholars of early New England life and thought as Morison and Murdock but F. O. Matthiessen, whose *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941) quickly became a landmark in the emergent field. George Washington University started a comparable program the same year, and by 1947 more than 60 institutions had undergraduate concentrations in the field and 15 offered advanced degrees as well (Wise 1999: 179). The stage was set for the establishment of the American Studies Association, chartered in 1951.

Thus, through the early 1960s, to study American Puritanism was to read what Miller wrote about it; few scholars had the temerity to challenge what seemed his undeniable erudition. This began to change, however, shortly after his untimely death in the autumn of 1963, only days after John F. Kennedy’s assassination. Perhaps his most well-known student, Edmund S. Morgan, put it most dramatically. “When at last [Miller] was gone,” Morgan recalled, “one sensed a subdued relief at the funeral service,” as though his colleagues knew that they finally were free from the tyranny of his example (1964: 59). Psychology aside, a new generation of scholars, most trained in the discipline of history and one of them, Bernard Bailyn, a young scholar whom Miller himself had praised as contributing to the ongoing renovation of early American Studies, began to question the accuracy of Miller’s depiction of Puritanism and, by extension, his notion of an American “mind” (1956: ix).

Miller’s earliest critics came from the new school of Social History, those who sought to study History “from the ground up” to unearth and relate the stories of all manner of people (that is, not just the intellectuals) in any given period. In 1965, for example, Darrett Rutman published *Winthrop’s Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630–1649*, in which he emphasized the great heterogeneity – and interest in commerce rather than religion – that characterized that community’s first years, soundly challenging the notion of a coherent Puritan “mind” whose representatives were bent on the spiritual world. A few years later such emergent scholars as Philip Greven, Michael Zuckerman, Kenneth Lockridge, and others (many of whom Bailyn had tutored) began to publish detailed demographic studies of individual New England towns that similarly revealed a much more complex social system than Miller accounted for. If Puritanism had been central to the development of the American mind, such studies implied, scholars greatly misgauged how much conflict (and, some argued, downright apathy) it had engendered.

Soon enough Bailyn himself entered the fray, first with a lengthy introduction to an edition of *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750–1776* (1964) and then

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with his award-winning *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1968). In these works, he argued persuasively that New England Puritanism had not supplied the terms through which incipient patriots understood their quarrel with England; rather, they parsed the grammar of the opposition “Country” or Whig party in England whose ideology was aimed at a social and political situation that seemed uncannily congruent to what the colonies faced. Bailyn’s arguments crossed those of Miller’s one-time research assistant and successor at Harvard, Alan Heimert, who in 1966 in *Religion and the American Mind, From Awakening to Revolution*, extended his mentor’s project through the eighteenth century, taking as a blueprint Miller’s “From the Covenant to the Revival” (1961).

Like Miller, Heimert was a consummate intellectual historian; he insisted, for example, that fully to apprehend an idea “depends finally on reading not between the lines but, as it were, through and beyond them,” an attitude that his many critics condemned for its encouragement of a willful misreading of texts (1966: 11). Not only did Heimert insist on the relevance of religious ideas to the Revolution; he discounted a century and a half of scholarship by arguing that among the ministry it had not been New England’s liberal, proto-Unitarian clergy who led the way to 1776 but rather those who had inherited and extended the Edwardsean, revivalist legacy. Such Edwardsean concepts, Heimert argued, as the necessity of a “new birth,” the “happy effects of union,” and “the wisdom of God in the permission of sin” took on new meaning as the British progressively encroached on American liberties. Despite Heimert’s undeniable erudition (and perhaps because of his scarcely disguised hubris), most scholars, however, found more convincing Bailyn’s measured dismissal of the legacy of New England Puritanism as constituent of the ideology of the New Nation. Others of his students, most notably Gordon Wood in *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (1972), similarly downplayed religious ideas in their studies of the period beyond the 1770s.

Other scholars began to chip at Miller’s monument, pointing out his undeniable blind spots as well as matters of fact or interpretation that were wrongheaded. Scholars agreed, for example, that in his biography of Roger Williams, Miller simply was off track, and, retrospectively, some pilloried his understanding of Edwards as somehow supremely relevant to the horrors of the Atomic Age. For some, such exaggeration called into question the accuracy of Miller’s understanding of Reformation theology in general (Emerson 1981: *passim*). He had not, after all, been trained in such scholarship but, autodidact that he was, had picked it up as he needed it. Another matter concerned the whole problematic concept of a distinctive Puritan “mind,” for the more that scholars focused on individual Puritan writers – like Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, and John Cotton, say – the more apparent were subtle but important differences in their views. Thus, Miller’s presumption that it was permissible to treat “the whole literature as though it were the product of a single intelligence” became less tenable (1939: vii).

Yet another issue was Miller’s seeming lack of interest in writing qua writing; for a professor of English, he paid little attention to the literary traditions within

which Puritan clergy worked. To identify the jeremiad as a literary form was one thing, but for Miller to say *nothing*, for example, about typology in his volumes on the New England mind now seems extraordinary. Scholars regard this use of scriptural analogy as foundational in Puritan rhetoric, of as much (if not more) significance than the Ramist logic that Miller emphasized. Finally, there is the matter of his sources themselves, essentially the works included in Charles Evans's *American Bibliography* and Donald Wing's *English Books and Books Printed in England*. That is, Miller rarely worked in the manuscript archive, for in writing about the "mind" he was concerned primarily with that which had been made known to others through publication. Given the inclusion in his landmark anthology *The Puritans* (1938) of the works of the newly discovered poet Edward Taylor (which his co-editor Thomas H. Johnson had discovered), one would have thought Miller might have combed the repositories for other significant, if not equally extraordinary, finds. If he quoted manuscript sources, they tended to be items such as Cotton Mather's or Samuel Sewall's diaries, already edited and made available in modern format.

Despite such criticism, however, even in this period, Miller's formulation of Puritanism and his insistence on its centrality to the formation of the American mind never fully lost its luster. As historians of early America began to insist, for example, that the American colonies, "no matter how distant they might be from Britain or how much latitude they may have had in internal development" were all "cultural provinces of Britain," other scholars, particularly those based in Literature departments, continued to connect New England thought to subsequent American culture (Greene 1984: 3). This contributed to a "continuities" thesis that emphasized the relations between Puritan ideas and the achievement of the chief writers of what Matthiessen termed the "American Renaissance."

In 1979, for example, Emory Elliott, in a collection entitled *Puritan Influences in American Literature*, noted that "the task set before the present generation of students" is to "properly assay the impact of colonial Puritanism upon the development of American literature." Elliott assumed that "Puritanism contained the seeds of political and social ideals, structures of thought and language, and literary themes which inspired both the content and forms of much American writing from 1700 to the present" (1979: xii–xiii). Similarly, Mason I. Lowance, in the *Language of Canaan* (1980), sought to show "how Puritan epistemology influenced symbolic modes in American literature during the nineteenth century" (1980: 2). Indeed, as recently as 1994, Janice Knight, one of Heimert's last students, still worked in Miller's paradigm. In her *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism*, whose title, as a revision of that of Miller's first book, promised something new, she merely parsed the Puritans' theology more precisely, arguing for a long-standing conflict between a rational and a mystical side to Puritanism from the days of Thomas Hooker and John Cotton on. Like her mentor, she was intent on showing the persistence of a mystical, antinomian side to the movement; and she found it and made large claims for its persistence: in Emerson's

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“conversion on the Cambridge Common,” for example, which she reads as “a romantic embodiment of the Brethren’s notion of private sin and divine effulgence,” and in Whitman’s “chant of the body politic,” a “secularist incarnation of the Christian community.” “Rather than discovering the embryonic voice of American imperialism or the prefiguration of bourgeois subjectivity,” she concluded (obviously with Sacvan Bercovitch in mind), “an appreciative reading of the Brethren might uncover a utopian alternative within Puritanism itself,” one, of course, that was available to later generations (1994: 199).

Even in the 1980s, though, literary historian William C. Spengemann had had enough of such argument and decided to reveal the emperor’s new clothes. He condemned the search for such continuities as a brand of self-serving academic wish fulfillment by those who sought ways to fertilize the overworked field of nineteenth-century American Literary Study. His colleagues, he wittily put it, were engaged in “a kind of verbal shell game, in which the prestidigitator places his thematic pea under one shell labeled ‘Puritan,’ makes a lot of rapid movements on his typewriter, and then produces the pea from under another shell marked ‘American literature’” (1981: 179).

But Spengemann was crying in the wilderness. His trenchant criticism had little immediate effect, for another major exponent of New England Puritanism and its continuities was replacing Miller as the dominant figure in the field. Indeed, Bercovitch was conscious of his role, noting in 1978 that in earlier versions of his work he had “muted” his dissent from Miller because he was “unwilling to join in the patricidal totem feast” following Miller’s death (1978: 15). But from the beginning Bercovitch’s work was revisionary. In 1972, for example, he edited a series of essays, *Typology and Early American Literature*, that did much to redirect Puritan studies. At home in scriptural exegesis, Bercovitch contributed an introductory essay as well as an invaluable bibliography of typological literature from the Church Fathers on, demonstrating the significance of a mode of interpretation of early American culture whose worth Miller simply underestimated and thus virtually neglected, except in the case of his study of Williams, whose thought he simply misconstrued. In addition to providing the underpinning to Bercovitch’s own work, this method allowed scholars in a variety of fields to stake out new intellectual vantage points from which to survey the culture of the colonial period. To be sure, he did not single-handedly resurrect inquiry into typology in this period – in 1970, for example, the German scholar Ursula Brumm published *American Thought and Religious Typology*, a translation of a work issued in Germany seven years earlier – but he must be credited with demonstrating how completely biblical analogy permeates American Puritan literature and thus, through his own work and his sponsorship of others’, with reorienting scholars to the implications of the complex rhetoric that underlies Puritan thought.

When Mason I. Lowance published *The Language of Canaan* in 1980, with its claims for the persistence of a typological mode of interpretation through the American Renaissance, he merely certified what most had come to believe:

scriptural analogy lay at the heart of the New England Puritan enterprise and so, by implication, beneath American culture as a whole. Bercovitch's revisionary intent was further clarified in his own major works on early New England thought. In such works as *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (1975) and *The American Jeremiad* (1978), he argued as insistently as Miller for continuities between Puritanism and later American history, but with a different emphasis. In the former, for example, an extended reading of Cotton Mather's biographical portrait of John Winthrop, Bercovitch described how pervasively and indelibly Mather's formulation of exemplary biography marked subsequent American literature. As "the literary *summa* of the New England Way," Bercovitch wrote, Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) (which included the life of Winthrop), stood at the head of a line of such American literary masterpieces as Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), works in whose rhetoric an author's personal and corporate identities were similarly twined. As a result of the Puritans' legacy in the realm of the American imagination, Bercovitch observed, all subsequent American writers composed biographies that melded their personal histories with the story of the nation as a whole (*Origins*, chapter 4: *passim*). In *The American Jeremiad*, Bercovitch expanded his investigation of the uniqueness and continuity of Puritan rhetoric in American culture and discussed its part in the establishment and maintenance of that culture's dominant ideology. He argued, for example, that the jeremiad was even more significant than Miller had thought. It was a powerful communal ritual "designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public to private identity, [and] shifting 'signs of the times' to certain traditional metaphors, themes, and symbols." Miller, Bercovitch claimed, had underestimated the pervasive theme of affirmation and exultation that was part of the jeremiad's equation and essential to its longevity. As he saw it, from the days of Winthrop through the American Revolution and on to the Civil War, America's religious and civic leaders had institutionalized a rhetorical mode in which, alongside threats of divine retribution for the Puritans' apostasy from the God of their fathers, they sang an incessant "litany of hope" to the rising glory of America. The jeremiad functioned to "create a climate of anxiety that helped release the restless 'progressivist' energies required for the success of the venture," even as it operated in a very conservative way, as a tool of profoundly middle-class culture and aspirations (1978: 6, 9–18). As Bercovitch later admitted, behind his contentious depiction lay the outsider's – he is Canadian by birth – puzzlement and repulsion at America's insistent belief in itself as a redeemer nation, its self-righteous descent into the quagmire of the Vietnam War the most recent example of such hubris (1993: 1). But, despite the book's withering analysis of the American dream, more than any work since Miller's the *American Jeremiad* legitimated the task of seeking continuities between the literature of the colonial period and subsequent eras.

Another prominent voice in American Studies circles equally critical of Puritanism's legacy was Richard Slotkin. In *Regeneration through Violence: The*

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Mythology of the American Frontier 1600–1860 (1973), he described and analyzed what he viewed as the inherent and persistent violence at the core of the American soul, which he traced to the New England colonists' attitude toward both the New World in general and, more specifically, its indigenous peoples. In this, he followed the Modernist critic, D. H. Lawrence, who in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923) had been much more caustic than William Carlos Williams about white settlers' insensitivity to the American land and its native inhabitants. Slotkin added power to Lawrence's observations by linking them to the myth criticism of Carl Jung and, more directly, of Joseph Campbell to explore the fact and rationalization of violence in two and a half centuries of American writing. Slotkin was at his most convincing when he treated the period before 1800, particularly in his discussion of Indian captivity narratives (a genre Miller virtually ignored) and witchcraft. Slotkin's anger and disgust at the horror of the Vietnam War looms behind this powerful work, as it does Bercovitch's. For these scholars, the nation's recent past was inextricably linked to what it had experienced from the days of settlement on.

Other scholars, however, severely criticized such harsh, negative assessments of American Puritanism and in so doing illustrated how contested a term it remained. One of the most vituperative of these was David Harlan, who took particular umbrage at what he regarded as Bercovitch's misreading of American history. Bercovitch's protestations notwithstanding, Harlan believed that this critic had come "not to honor Miller but to bury him," offering not an extension of his work but "its denial and negation." Bercovitch's Puritanism, Harlan contended, was "mean spirited and hegemonic," and in so mischaracterizing it, he was "rewriting the entire chronicle of American history – its underlying structure, its essential content, its fundamental meaning." Bercovitch was purposefully "reconstructing the American past, recasting who we have been and redefining who we should become." Harlan regretted in Bercovitch's scholarship the lack of the unmistakable moral dimension that he found in Miller's work. Although Miller had never sought to make anyone "believe" in Puritan theology, he clearly thought (as Harlan put it) that Puritan texts had transcendent value. They could "illuminate the dark corners of life," help us "resist the blind cravings of the ego," and encourage us "to challenge to the myths of self-realization and material progress that have come to dominate American culture" (1997: 33–4). Harlan sought to engender a new respect for the importance of Puritanism to American culture, but because of what some took as his moralizing tone, his criticism of Bercovitch, trenchant as it was, had no large effect. But little by little this critic's juggernaut was slowed, *pace* Harlan, through scholarship that further undermined Puritanism's purportedly foundational role in American Culture Studies. And it was not only the academy's reaction to the morass of Vietnam, for example, that redirected scholarship. More and more historians, for instance, in addition to insisting on the increasing Anglicization of the colonies in the years before independence, shifted their attention to other, hitherto understudied, aspects of the European settlement of the

Americas, de-centering New England from its long-privileged place as the most studied region. A group of scholars informally known as the “Chesapeakers,” for example, focused on Virginia and Maryland, producing rich social histories that demonstrated the centrality of the “Tobacco Colonies” to the British Empire. Others extended their view through the Caribbean; their scholarship further removed New England from the center of what eventually became the new “Atlantic History.”

Nowhere was the Puritans’ marginality more on display than in Jack P. Greene’s *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (1988). To Greene, the colonial South, particularly the Chesapeake, left the most profound legacy on the subsequent development of American ideology. “Far from being a peripheral, much less a deviant area,” he wrote, “the southern colonies and states were before 1800 in the mainstream of British-American development” and “epitomized what was arguably the most important element in emerging British-American culture: the conception of America as a place in which free people could pursue their own individual happiness in safety and with a fair prospect that they might be successful in their several quests” (1988: 5). In Greene’s formulation, New England was the odd colony out, not only in deviating from the mainstream of British colonial development but representing a “sharp reaction to, even as rejection of it.” In their attempts to create a biblical commonwealth, he continued, the Puritans were “in so many respects anti-modern,” and conducted a social experiment “intended not to replicate but to move in precisely the opposite direction of the world they had abandoned in old England,” a world in the midst of a capitalist revolution (1988: 36, 38). This jibed with religious historian Dwight Bozeman’s argument, in *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (1988) that, rather than ushering in progressive democracy, the New Englanders sought to return to the purity of Christ’s first churches.

In no sense, then, were the Puritans the vanguard of middle-class America. Such people were found in far greater numbers almost anywhere else in the colonies, including on the islands of Jamaica and Barbados. In place of the Puritan origins of the American self, Greene posited the Chesapeake origins, because “the central cultural impulse among the colonists was not to identify and find ways to express and celebrate what was distinctively American about themselves and their societies but, insofar as possible, to eliminate these distinctions so that they might – with more credibility – think of themselves and their societies – and be thought of by the people in Britain – as demonstrably British” (1988: 175). To focus on New England was to focus on a sport. Not Cotton Mather’s “Life of Winthrop” (*pace* Bercovitch) but the *True Travels* of Captain John Smith or Robert Beverly’s *History and Present State of Virginia* offered the archetypal formation of American selfhood, for “in this emerging secular and commercial culture,” Greene insisted, “the central orientation of people in the littoral became the achievement of personal independence” (1988: 195). Greene’s colonists did not rationalize their

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behavior through the subtleties and contradictions of Puritan rhetoric but openly stated why they were in the new land. “Important though it has sometimes been,” Greene wrote, the concept of “national election seems never to have been so pervasively and persistently influential on shaping American culture as the notion of America as a place peculiarly favorable for the quest of the good life, defined as the pursuit of individual happiness and material achievement” (205).

Greene’s broadside at the Novanglophiles was only the most notable example of what many historians had long thought: that those like Miller and Bercovitch who trumpeted New England Puritanism’s centrality to the meaning of America were ignorant of social history and so misunderstood the course of the colonies’ development. Moreover, by the 1990s, academic fashion was being set by the “New Americanists,” so named by one of their critics, who did not enlist under the banner of “consensus” or “continuities” but of “dissensus,” a term that Bercovitch himself popularized in his influential “The Problem of Ideology in a Time of Dissensus” (1993: 353–76).

Having been asked to edit the multi-volume *Cambridge History of American Literature*, in this essay Bercovitch essentially offered a position paper to his contributors, asking them to acknowledge that at the end of the twentieth century one had to write about American culture in new ways. Such concepts as “history,” the “literary,” and “American,” about which there had been consensus for almost a century, now were subjects of lively debate as scholars perceived how such terms themselves were ideological formations. Scholars now had to recognize, he argued, that “race and gender are formal principles of art,” that “political norms are inscribed in aesthetic judgment,” and that “aesthetic structures shape the way we understand history.” “Directly and indirectly,” he continued, the controversies that these perceptions engendered “have undermined the old terms of consensus, and thereby heightened a broad ideological awareness among Americanists, while at the same time arming them against one another with competing modes of analysis” (1993: 357). Description of supposed “continuities” was *passé*; the whole field of American Studies was thrown open for new exploration by a cadre of younger scholars whom Bercovitch encouraged and sponsored as contributors to his massive new enterprise.⁴ What distinguished this history, he wrote in the preface to the first volume, “is its variety of adversarial approaches and, more strikingly, the presence throughout of revisionary, nonoppositional ways of relating text and context” (1994–2005, 1: 3).

What marked the study of New England Puritanism in this time of “dissensus”? Bercovitch did not write the section about it for the *Cambridge History of American Literature* but gave the task to Emory Elliott. His Puritans, unlike Bercovitch’s with their impregnable consensus, were nervous and tentative. They were not “Founding Fathers but a community in crisis” virtually from their arrival, and what one found in New England were “rich against poor, men against women, insider against outsider, one generation against another – each faction aspiring to political power through the ritual control of language.” The result of Elliott’s

cogitation, the general editor observed, offered a “double perspective on the period”: both “a guide to the interpretation of American Puritanism” and “an analysis of the interpretive processes through which the Puritans forged their vision of America out of the discordant (and finally uncontrollable) materials” (1994–2005, 1: 7). The “new” Puritanism proved its adherents as conflicted as any in all subsequent periods in American history. Thus, it was not so much influential as typical, in this case, of a nation whose destiny was still woefully incomplete.

But the problem of dissensus also raised other issues. Where, for example, did one fit the many “new” writers who had been recovered and canonized by the New Americanists? One could understand connections between, say, Harriet Beecher Stowe and seventeenth-century New England, but what about between Puritanism and Maria Cummins or Fanny Fern or Harriet Jacobs or Rebecca Harding Davis, chief exponents of what now was termed the “other American Renaissance”? If such connections no longer held, of what use was Puritanism to American Studies? By the 1990s (as Elliott’s section in the *CHAL* indicated), it had become but another site for exploration of the new generation’s chief scholarly (and sometimes ideologically driven) concerns. New England, in other words, now was of interest not so much for any direct influence it had on subsequent American history but for its typicality. Puritanism’s significance lay in the always-acknowledged richness of its sources, which allowed for all sorts of new inquiry into matters having to do with the new shibboleth of race, class, and gender.

Some scholars tried to resist this trend. David D. Hall, for example, the foremost practitioner of *l’histoire du livre* on this side of the Atlantic and as formidable a scholar of Puritanism as any of his generation, focused on popular religious belief in seventeenth-century New England, offering not what in Miller’s day had been termed intellectual history, but cultural history. In *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* (1989), he traced the persistence of certain pre-migration patterns of understanding the world and thus described a “hegemonic system” that “if understood as culture,” was yet “rich in countervailing practices and motifs” (1989: 245). This was a polite way of saying that both Miller and Bercovitch had gotten it wrong, for their understanding of religion was too restrictive, and so they looked for it in the wrong places. Where they saw power that could not be unseated, Hall argued for the notion of a shared culture that did not so much breed division as creative flux, providing adherents varied ways of comprehending how the divine impinged in terrestrial affairs. Looking at primers, chapbooks, and other “steady sellers” rather than at the massive treatises of Hooker or Shepard, he explored the ways in which the laity assembled their spirituality from a variety of sources. His Puritans were rich examples of seventeenth-century men and women for whom faith was fluid, useful in ways earlier scholars had simply missed. Hall’s, then was a history, he believed, “of culture as a whole,” the story of “how structures of meaning emerge, circulate, and are put to use” (245). His work has influenced many others, the important young scholar Matthew P. Brown among them. His

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The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England (2007), a rich evocation of the meaning of texts, extends Hall's notion of the Puritans' verbal universe.

Another such scholar is Sandra Gustafson. In her sections on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England religion in *Eloquence Is Power* (2000), she interrogates her sources to locate a "performance semiotic," that is, an understanding of "the contextual nature and strategic uses of speech and writing as signs relating the individual body to the social body" (xvii). An example of someone who is deeply invested in issues of race, class, and gender, she avoids the charge of ideological partisanship by judicious attention to that enlarged sense of culture that Hall had defined. Herein, for example, she is not so much interested in the words of Puritan divines as of people on the margins – women, African Americans, Native Americans – who similarly understood speech as a technology through which to acquire and maintain power. Nuanced and learned, her analysis demonstrates the best kind of work done by those interested in "dissensus." And, again, her point is not to show continuities but, like Hall, to depict and dissect the complexity of culture in new ways through attention to its many facets. For her, Puritanism is one source (admittedly important) for the technology of speech, and to focus too exclusively on it is to misconstrue what the culture as a whole said, and how.

Or to take another example, consider another scholar of her generation, Philip H. Round. In *By Nature and Custom Cursed* (1999), he unabashedly declares that his book is "not about Puritanism," even though "there *are* Puritans in it." "Rather than viewing Puritan ideology at the center of New England cultural production," his study examines "the social dimensions of New England utterance, investigating how various colonial ideologies were promoted and packaged and how social performance served as the engine for the cultural 'work' these ideologies accomplished in the broader, transatlantic field of English cultural production" (1999: xi). For Round, this transatlantic dimension is significant, as it had become for many scholars who engaged in what was termed the new "Atlantic History," that is, the history of the colonies and metropolises that defined the emergent mercantile revolution. For many, New England alone was no longer the main interest.

Among the first to take Puritanism seriously and subject it to sustained scholarly analysis were people like Murdock and Miller, members of literature departments, who placed it at the headwaters of subsequent American thought. But, for most Americanists, such an attitude has become simply part of a storied past. Consider, for example, the reduced emphasis on New England religious thought in a recent publication of the Modern Language Association, *Teaching the Literatures of Early America* (1999). The title is instructive. No longer do scholars think of early America as having had one literature, in English, nor, by implication, that early American

thought is exemplified in the writings of the New England Puritans. In this volume are essays that treat Native and African American material; and there is a separate chapter on “Early Women’s Texts.” Moreover, “America” in this work includes the French and Spanish colonies, and “colonialism,” “multiculturalism,” and “empire” are words with which to conjure. Only in one chapter, in a section called “British Colonial and Postcolonial Writings” is there talk of “The Literature of Colonial English Puritanism” (Gura 1999: 143–54).

In it, I address the challenge of teaching Puritan texts in ways that engage some of the important questions about early America now being framed in the academy. Among these are: the varied reasons for settling the New World and calling it one’s own; the manifold ways in which Europeans came to view themselves, over time, as “American”; how an “American” self might differ, in its self-referentiality as well as in its understanding of others, from the European; and how concepts of the “other” – dissidents, participants in rival religious systems (such as witchcraft), or Native Americans – framed colonial identity. These and other questions have solely to do with the place of Puritanism within early (what used to be called “colonial”) American culture, not with its legacy in subsequent United States culture. Once a chief constituent to any understanding of the United States of America, Puritanism is no longer central to this project, even if among some scholars it remains fascinating as a complex, engaging body of thought. It does not help, though, as a prominent early Americanist recently noted, that “no one reading manuscripts submitted to the academic presses and journals during the past decade can escape the conviction that theological literacy among early Americanists has declined” (1999: 639). As Harlan lamented, most scholars have lost the ability to study Puritanism with any degree of sympathy.

This melancholy thought returns us to one of William Carlos Williams’s brilliant insights. This country’s “rudeness,” he wrote in *In the American Grain* ([1925] 1956), in large measure “rests upon the unstudied character of our beginnings,” and “if we will not pay heed to our own affairs, we are nothing but an unconscious porkyard and oilhole for those more able, who will fasten themselves upon us.” This, of course, is what Miller and his generation of early Americanists believed, and as well (with Williams) that “aesthetically, morally, we are deformed unless we read” (Williams [1925] 1956: 109). But, savvy reader that he was, Williams, like the most recent Americanists, understood the violence, literal and linguistic, through which the Puritans wrested control of a land they euphemistically called a “wilderness.” Puritanism’s usefulness as the central motif through which to understand America only lasted until, in the late 1960s, scholars awakened to this same insight and came to view Puritanism as only one among a number of technologies – the Catholicism of Williams’s friend Larbaud was another – through which these Europeans fended off the terror of being such strangers in the land. In this sense, it always connected them more to what they had left behind than to what eventually made them “American.”

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Notes

- 1 Here Miller may have had in mind Edward Eggleston's provocative *The Transit of Civilization* (1900), in which he spoke of the settlement of North America in terms of folk movements.
- 2 Today we would say that Miller understood the importance of the "transatlantic." This is often overlooked by those in his wake who used his scholarship to celebrate (and later condemn), American "exceptionalism."
- 3 *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts* in fact forms the second part of what amounts to a trilogy of works, for in it Miller traces the development of Puritan ideas about the Covenant through New England's first generation.
- 4 Frederick C. Crews coined the term "New Americanists" in an essay in the *New York Review of Books* (September 24, 1992).

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Cultural Anthropology and the Routes of American Studies, 1851–1942

Michael A. Elliott

Published in 1851, the same year as Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and four years before Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Lewis Henry Morgan's *League of the Ho-de'-no-sau-nee* stands as one of the first book-length works of anthropology published in the United States that is devoted to a single indigenous people. As a way of introduction, I want to consider what it would mean to take Morgan's volume – usually referred to as *The League of the Iroquois* (1996) – to be, like its better-known contemporaries, one of the origin points of American Cultural Studies. Most obviously, *The League of the Iroquois* is rooted in the observation of difference – the structures of government, belief systems, and material practices that Morgan believes to distinguish the Hodenosaunee from other peoples – and devoted to the careful description of those differences. The complete volume extends to more than 400 pages, with chapters addressing topics such as the dances, games, and language shared by the Hodenosaunee, the League of the Iroquois, a political confederation older than the United States itself. To his credit, Morgan seemed largely uninterested in connecting these discrepancies in lifeways to the research of the so-called American School of Ethnology, scientists of his time whose measurements of skulls yielded an empirical argument for racial hierarchy. Morgan was neither a relativist nor an egalitarian. In a later work, he would describe his belief that cultural groups could be arranged into an evolutionary chain from degrees of “barbarism” to “primitivism” to “civilization.” We might consider that sense of cultural hierarchy, too, to be part of Morgan's legacy to American Cultural Studies.

Equally important, the kind of detailed cultural observation that Morgan sought required cooperation from some Hodenosaunee themselves, particularly the aid of his collaborator, a Seneca man named Ely Parker. Before he met Parker, Morgan – a lawyer by training – had been leading a group called the “Grand Order of

Iroquois,” in which white professional men assumed the identities of the Indians whom they studied. Parker, from the Tonawanda Seneca Reservation of New York, met Morgan on a visit to Albany, and then spent years helping him to gather the information for the *League*. We might regard the book, in fact, as a kind of composite text, jointly authored by not only Morgan and Parker but by a number of different informants – some credited, some not. The partnership, though, could hardly be said to be an equal one. Morgan dedicated the book to Parker and called it “the Fruit of our Joint Researches,” but it was Morgan’s name that appeared on the title page. Meanwhile, the book and the partnership between Morgan and Parker had a peculiar relationship to the political position of the people whom the volume described. On the one hand, *The League of the Iroquois* participates in an anthropological tradition that relegates its subjects to a disappearing past. In this case, the book extols the virtues of the Iroquois confederacy, but does so in the key of elegy: “Their council-fires . . . have long since been extinguished, their empire has terminated, and the shades of evening are now gathering thickly over the scattered and feeble remnants of this once powerful League” (Morgan 1996: 145). Yet Philip Deloria (1998) points out that Parker had come to Albany to conduct political advocacy for the Tonawanda Senecas, who were in danger of losing their reservation, and that he enlisted Morgan and his fellow wannabe Iroquois in that project (84). So, even as the written output of Morgan and Parker placed the Iroquois in the past tense, they were actually working to help tribal communities to preserve a sense of indigenous identity.

The complicated relationships of scholars and their subjects, the politics of observation, the relationship of scholarship to battles for political recognition – these are all present in *The League of the Iroquois*, and they remain with American Cultural Studies to this day. As participants in an interdisciplinary endeavor, we still struggle with what it means to conduct cultural observation, with how we should credit those who make our observations possible, and with how our work ramifies in the context of contemporary society. Like Morgan and Parker, we work from a mix of pleasure and sense of political commitment, of scholarly purpose and ethical obligation. We frequently consider our work to run against the grain of “dominant” social forces – just as Morgan and Parker valued the history and traditional lifeways of the Hodenosaunee because of their separation from the contemporary world of mid-century Albany – yet our scholarship participates in our own historical moment as much as it provides a challenge.

Reading *The League of the Iroquois* as a work of American Cultural Studies, in other words, forces us to consider a vexed history of cultural description and analysis. This history is grounded in a structure of internal observation that both claims national exceptionalism and proceeds from internal difference. American Indians, after all, have been repeatedly deployed as symbols of the particular, indigenous history of the United States, even as their perceived primitivism was intended as a contrast to American modernity. However, *The League of the Iroquois* also reminds us that this structure of observation can yield results capable of upsetting

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its basic premises. Consider this brief excerpt, from Morgan and Parker's discussion of the Hodenosaunee religious beliefs, in which they explain that the Hodenosaunee believe that no white person inhabits their version of heaven, except for one:

Just by the entrance of heaven is a walled enclosure, the ample grounds within which are laid out with avenues and shaded walks. Within is a spacious mansion, constructed in the fashion of a fort. Every object in nature which could please a cultivated taste had been gathered in this blooming Eden, to render it a delightful dwelling-place for the immortal Washington. The faithful Indian, as he enters heaven, passes this enclosure. He sees and recognizes the illustrious inmate, as he walks to and fro in quiet meditation. But no word ever passes his lips. Dressed in his uniform, and in a state of perfect felicity, he is destined to remain through eternity in the solitary enjoyment of the celestial residence prepared for him by the Great Spirit. (Morgan 1996: 179)

Morgan and Parker explain later that the Hodenosaunee have rewarded George Washington for his role in negotiating a fair agreement with them in the aftermath of the revolutionary war. (The Iroquois largely sided with the British.) I want to press the evocative power of this image further. Here, save for this one exception, we have a staunchly separatist afterlife, a vision of heavenly reward reserved exclusively for the Hodenosaunee that has obvious political connotations. The exception, though, is a significant one, a figure who serves as a synecdoche for his nation as well as a representative of an earlier moment in political history. Washington works here, to be sure, as a figure of the United States, but he also reminds us of a pre-national history, a time prior to the creation of the United States in which the Hodenosaunee could claim both temporal precedence and greater political strength. The rhetoric of Indian disappearance that pervades *The League of the Iroquois* demonstrates that, for most Americans, those roles have shifted dramatically: the Hodenosaunee now live in Washington's America, attempting to hold on to their land base and cultural self-determination. Here in this vision, though, it is Washington who is enclosed. He is treated well, but he lives a life of permanent isolation and silence. At once, this vision reminds us that it is no longer possible to separate the political histories of the United States and the League of the Hodenosaunee, offers a glimpse into a fantasy of alternative politics, and replays back to readers of the volume the logic of white-Indian relations in the United States with the terms perfectly, and stunningly, reversed.

Claiming *The League of the Iroquois* as a forerunner of American Cultural Studies requires more than acknowledging how the structure of social observation continues to influence the production of Americanist scholarship. And it requires more than understanding how the documentation of cultural difference has been central to the enterprise of American Studies, often in ways that now seem mired in assumptions of hierarchy and privilege. It also means that we should be prepared for our subjects to return our scholarly gaze in surprising and even discomfiting

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ways. This essay offers a brief sketch of such an intellectual genealogy, a story of American Studies that seeks its roots and routes in the travels of cultural anthropologists, both those who claimed that title as professionals and others who practiced it as amateurs, and their informants. My purpose is not to provide a capsule history of American Anthropology – though I will introduce that history – for my interest is not in the development of Anthropology as a discipline.¹ Instead, my goal is to suggest how the history of cultural observation in the United States, conducted from the time of Morgan to the advent of World War II, presages many of the tensions and problems that continue to animate American Studies today. To modify Van Wyck Brooks's famous tagline, I want to claim Cultural Anthropology – particularly its cognate fields of Ethnography and Folklore – as a usable, if difficult, disciplinary past for American Studies.

Genealogies of American Studies have frequently forgotten this past for a variety of reasons. Its embarrassments are obvious: Morgan's desire to "play Indian" before he studies them reminds us of how the work of Cultural Anthropology has often verged on debasement. The trope of the Vanishing Indian that reappears throughout *The League of the Iroquois* illustrates how Anthropology could participate in the larger project of Manifest Destiny, in which Indians would be removed from their land but available on the page and screen. And the relationship of Morgan to Parker points to how those many indigenous collaborators who made American Anthropology possible rarely achieved a full agency over their cultural knowledge. However, we also disregard Cultural Anthropology as a field of American Studies because it values the particular, the tribal, instead of the broader synthesis of the corporate body politic that would drive the Myth-and-Symbol School of the mid-twentieth century. As a field that still wrestles with the question of how to balance that national synthesis with the specific regional, sub-national, and transnational cultural flows that circulate throughout the United States, we can profit from looking at an intellectual story that approaches the nation in only its final phases.

American Cultural Studies, Genuine and Spurious

In the half-century that followed Morgan's publication of *The League of the Ho-de'-no-sau-nee*, the world of Anthropology in the United States changed dramatically as it moved from an amateur endeavor to a professional field, complete with pillars of institutional support. A crucial moment in this transition occurred in 1879, when the US Congress appropriated money for the creation of a national Bureau of Ethnology, the first professional office in the nation devoted to the documentation of cultural diversity, to be placed under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution. Later renamed the Bureau of *American* Ethnology, the bureau operated until 1902 under the direction of John Wesley Powell, a largely self-trained geologist who had become a national hero after his exploration of the

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Grand Canyon in the late 1860s. He then turned his attention from the lands of the Western United States to their indigenous inhabitants and lobbied for a new kind of government survey, one that would record with accuracy and detail the lives of the Indian tribes of North America. With their interests in traditional lifeways, the Bureau's social scientists occasionally clashed with the other representatives of the government who worked directly with American Indians, even though Powell stated that careful, scientific observation could aid those who wanted to assimilate tribal peoples into the mainstream of American life (Elliott 2002: 98–9). Like Frank Hamilton Cushing, one of his best-known ethnographers, Powell believed in “the need of studying the Indian in order to teach him” (Cushing 1897). But the primary purpose of the Bureau of American Ethnology was neither to obstruct nor to aid the assimilationist program of the so-called Friends of the Indian.

Instead, the form of American Cultural Studies practiced by Powell and his ethnographers was a salvage project, an attempt to preserve forms of culture that they believed to be on the verge of vanishing, crushed by the forces of modernity – whether through physical extermination or cultural assimilation. At the moment of its founding, the Bureau was the leading edge of a salvage initiative that would extend throughout the social sciences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading to the publication of volume after volume of stories, songs, chants, and ceremonies. This work initially complemented the drive to collect objects for museums such as the Smithsonian, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. Daniel G. Brinton – one of the first professors of Anthropology in the United States, and the editor of an eight-volume “Library of Aboriginal American Literature” in the 1880s – explained that the effort “spent in collecting remains in wood and stone, in pottery and tissue and bone” was fine, “But closer to very self, to thought and being, are the connected expressions of men in their own tongues. The monuments of a nation’s literature are more correct mirrors of its mind than any material objects” (1883: 59). This last sentence here suggests something of the power that the salvage ethnography of American Indians has had in the United States from the nineteenth century to this day. When Brinton refers to the value of “a nation’s literature,” he suggests that the verbal expression of tribal peoples will unlock the particular worldview of each. This same phrase, though, also evokes the possibility that these works might be significant for the distinction of the nation of the United States, for the “national literature” that the United States sought to produce. American history is littered with examples of moments in which white Americans claim the Indian as a national symbol even as they are working to remove literal Indians from their borders. In salvage ethnography, that dynamic finds a new formulation: The verbal expressions of Native peoples could be cataloged and collected as scientific artifacts because of their cultural distance from US modernity, while Americans could point to those same artifacts as a sign of the cultural richness of the United States.

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The chief product, after all, of the Bureau of American Ethnography was a series of bound books published by the Government Printing Office: formidable, olive-green volumes of annual reports and bulletins produced until the Bureau's dissolution in the 1930s. The Bureau published Washington Matthews's record of the Navajo Mountain Chant (1887); James Mooney's collections of Cherokee myths and sacred formulas (1891 and 1900), as well as his astonishing compilation of Plains Indian Ghost Dance Songs (1896); Frank Hamilton Cushing's work on both Zuni fetishes and creation stories (1883 and 1896); and a remarkable ethnography of "The Omaha Tribe" jointly authored by Alice C. Fletcher and Francis LaFlesche, an Omaha man who had started as Fletcher's interpreter and informant but became an ethnographer in his own right (Fletcher and LaFlesche 1911). None of these ethnographers came to social science through formal training; each was paid by the government to produce an archive of cultural observation about the indigenous peoples of the United States.

The Bureau publications, moreover, were far from the only works of their kind in the late nineteenth century. The recording and publication of American Indian expression dovetailed with the interest in vernacular speech represented by dialect literature and regional fiction. Some professional ethnographers produced their own versions of their work for general audiences; others found their collections mined by popular writers for republication. Equally important, this version of American Cultural Studies extended beyond the realm of government and museum-sponsored anthropology. Perhaps no institution better represents the configuration of interests driving the collection and publication of vernacular expression in the late-nineteenth-century United States than the American Folk-Lore Society, founded in 1888, with a membership list that included Powell, Mooney, and Cushing, as well as literary figures such as Samuel Clemens, *Uncle Remus* author Joel Chandler Harris, and Francis James Child, the first chaired professor of English at Harvard and the author of a five-volume collection of *English and Scottish Ballads*.

The recording and study of folklore would often split in the years to come between those with literary backgrounds and those from Anthropology, but it is equally important to note how often their interests coincided. In the first issue of the *Journal of American Folklore*, its editor explained that the journal would provide for "the collection of the fast-vanishing remains of Folk-Lore in America," including:

- a. Relics of Old English Folk-Lore (ballads, tales, superstitions, dialect, etc.)
- b. Lore of Negroes in the Southern States of the Union.
- c. Lore of the Indian Tribes of North America (myths, tales, etc.).
- d. Lore of the French Canada, Mexico, etc. (Newell 1888: 3)

The list may seem rudimentary and incomplete, but in its own moment it was also a "revolutionary break," as Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt (1988: 20) puts it, from

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the Folklore Studies of Europe, which expressed interest in the traditions of the European peasantry but ignored those of “primitive” non-whites. In the United States, the American Folk-Lore Society proposed to join precisely those things together. The range of materials published by the journal in its first year included “The Counting-Out Rhymes of Children,” “Louisiana Nursery Tales,” “Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox,” and “English Folk-Tales in America.” Zumwalt explains, however, the particular value of American Indian expression to the development of Folklore Studies in the United States from this early moment. “Just as the presence of the American Indian distinguished the Americas from Europe, so the study of American Indian folklore distinguished American folklore scholarship from European folklore scholarship” (20).

The collection and publication of vernacular expression offered a template for American Cultural Studies because it was at once scientific and artistic, scholarly and popular, pluralistic and nationalistic. It would also gain a crucial intellectual and institutional leader in one of the founding members of the American Folk-Lore Society, a recent immigrant to the United States named Franz Boas. Trained in Germany in the fields of Geography and Physics, Boas came to North America in the 1880s to conduct fieldwork among the Inuit of Baffin Island, and he began to teach Anthropology at Clark University later in the decade. By the turn of the century, Boas held a professorship at Columbia University, where he would train many of the most influential anthropologists of the first half of the twentieth century. More than any other figure, Boas was responsible for shifting Anthropology from the museum to the university, and for making a fieldwork-based dissertation into a professional requirement. While Boas and his students would continue to publish in the government-sponsored publications of the Bureau, the academy would be the new home for their discipline.

Boas famously divided Anthropology into four fields – Cultural Anthropology, Physical Anthropology, Linguistics, and Archaeology – but it was the idea of *culture* with which he and his students were most associated. Significantly, Boas insisted on the absence of any relationship between biological race and the achievement of culture; he advocated a study of culture that sought to understand cultural elements within their own systems; and also repeatedly returned to the study of cultural diffusion, turning away from the framework of cultural evolution that an earlier generation – including Morgan and Powell – had embraced. Boas’s relativism has been frequently exaggerated; it was more of an interpretive lens (stressing the need to understand cultural practices within their context) rather than a moral stance. Nevertheless, he believed that the scientific study of the cultural variety of humanity could have a deeply ameliorative effect. “The general theory of valuation of human activities, as developed by anthropological research,” he wrote in his first book intended for a general interested audience, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911), “teaches us a higher tolerance than the one we now profess” (1911: 208–9).

Boasian Anthropology, meanwhile, continued the work of textual publication in the service of studying culture. In fact, Boas effected a disciplinary shift away from

the study of physical artifacts (and museums, which Boas thought produced challenges in needing to cater to a general public) in favor of the production and study of written texts (Conn 1998: 111). For Boas, Charles L. Briggs and Richard Bauman have observed, “Not only would linguistically rigorous corpora of native-language texts constitute the materials to sustain current research but they would be the chief legacy that anthropologists might provide to future scholars” (1999: 499). The texts that Boas himself produced aspired to a strict linguistic accuracy, usually including the original language with a rough translation into English. In recent decades, Boas’s skills as a linguist have been called into question (Berman 1992 and 1994), but more significant for this discussion is the failure of Boas to offer much in the way of interpretation or discussion of those texts that he published. As Briggs and Bauman explain, “Boas’s failure to provide even minimal *explications de texte* . . . can be understood as part of his efforts to construct the texts as self-contained artifacts and scholarly objects” (1999: 512). Nor did Boas evince much interest in recording how those indigenous informants who supplied the texts might have understood them, let alone in providing an explanation of the collection process itself.

This admittedly brief description of Boas’s own textual practices should evoke something of the contradictions of Boasian Anthropology as a form of Cultural Studies. At its center stood a deep interest in vernacular practices and expression that had not previously received serious attention from the dominant forms of mass culture, yet it also valued a certain kind of primitive authenticity that seems suspect in retrospect. It relied on a network of indigenous intellectuals in order to produce this knowledge, but the relationship between professional social scientist and Native informants was deeply unequal. The entire project was committed to a sincere anti-racism, even though Cultural Anthropology’s reification of difference often contributed, as Walter Benn Michaels (1995) has argued influentially, to the continuation of racial chauvinism under the name of “culture.” In other words, while Boasian Anthropology seemed to serve a pluralistic vision of the United States, it did not offer an egalitarian vision of the cultures contained within its borders. It placed an elite society, capable of understanding the study of culture, as its center, and the objects of its study on its periphery. In a way, we can see here a foreshadowing of the uneven development of American Studies and Ethnic Studies that would occur much later in the twentieth century.

Finally, the initial generation of Boasian Anthropology suffered from an obstacle that will be all too familiar to those who know the history of American Cultural Studies: the challenge of adequately theorizing its central concepts. Boas himself did not produce a comprehensive explanation of his concept of culture until the 1930s (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952: 43, 96–7), but his students would not wait that long. In 1917, Alfred L. Kroeber – who had been Boas’s first PhD student at Columbia – published in the *American Anthropologist* “The Superorganic,” which treats culture as a far more coherent force than any of the work that his former teacher had produced (Kroeber 1952: 22–51). The essay argues that the inherited traits of an individual can be explained by biology – and therefore outside the

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domain of social science – but that the shape of collective life is determined by forces that are “superorganic,” or cultural. By the end of the essay, Kroeber has ascribed to culture an almost metaphysical quality that “transcends” the organic; he describes culture as a “social substance – or unsubstantial fabric, if one prefers that phrase” (1952: 51) that dwarfs the individual in importance.

Kroeber’s language here evokes the literary training that he received as an undergraduate and Master’s student at Columbia before turning to Anthropology (Jacknis 2002: 521), and it is also worth noting that he was one of the first anthropologists in the United States to express sustained interest in Freudian psychoanalysis (Hegeman 1999: 83; Darnell 2001: 76). Like many of his fellow Boasians, he later contributed to a 1922 collection entitled *American Indian Life*, edited by Elsie Clews Parsons, in which anthropologists produced fictional short stories about the tribal peoples they studied. These examples suggest just a few of the ways that even while cultural anthropology was practiced as a social science, it also contributed to a traffic between the social sciences and the humanities crucial to the matrix of American Cultural Studies in the first half of the twentieth century.

The career of Edward Sapir contributed to that traffic even more visibly. Like Kroeber, Sapir completed his training under Boas in the first decade of the twentieth century, and he went on to make major contributions to the field of Anthropology, particularly Linguistics. He was also, as Richard Handler has described (2005: 49–72), deeply invested in the arts. He published verse in the influential *Poetry* magazine and eventually assembled a book-length collection; he wrote literary criticism on topics such as “The Twilight of Rhyme” and “Realism in Prose Fiction.” He also followed Kroeber’s lead in attempting to produce a more theoretically coherent and provocative statement about culture than those of his teacher. “Culture, Genuine and Spurious” first appeared in *The Dial* magazine in 1919 and reached its complete form in 1924. Like Kroeber, Sapir attempted to emphasize the way that culture works as a collective force, joining the tangible, outward forms of behavior and material life with the inward set of beliefs and attitudes. Even more than Kroeber, though, Sapir emphasized how culture creates a “whole life” of a people, becoming “nearly synonymous with the ‘spirit’ or ‘genius’ of a people” (1999: 50).

“Cultures, Genuine and Spurious” is instructive for a history of American Cultural Studies chiefly for two reasons. First, Sapir exhibits ease in speaking about “national culture” that we do not see in the earlier generation of anthropological writing. “The specific culture of a nationality is that group of elements in its civilization which most emphatically exhibits the mold. In practice it is sometimes convenient to identify the national culture with its genius” (1999: 51). Sapir goes on to characterize the national culture of France (which has “qualities of clarity, lucid systemization, balance, care in choice of means, and good taste” (51)) and of Russia (which he believes privileges an “elemental humanity” (1999: 52)). Not only are such explanations brief and accessible to a lay reader, they represent to Sapir the way that Culture Studies must join together social scientific knowledge

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with humanistic interpretation. The “ethnologist and culture-historian,” he states, can identify how “the elements of civilization” form a unified culture, but its “adequate interpretation” is “often left to men of letters” (1999: 53).

The second reason why Sapir’s essay proves prescient comes from its title, “Cultures, Genuine and Spurious.” As this language suggests, Sapir bluntly states that some cultures are “harmonious, balanced, self-satisfactory” (1999: 54), while others are not. While Sapir insists that genuine cultures can occur “in any type or stage of civilization” (1999: 53), it is impossible to miss his organic, anti-modern language. A genuine culture, he writes, “must be looked upon as a sturdy plant growth”; it “refuses to consider the individual as a mere cog” (1999: 55). For a negative example, he singles out the telephone girl, whose mechanized life of efficiency “answers to no spiritual needs of her own” and is therefore “an appalling sacrifice of civilization” (1999: 55). When he turns to the usual subjects of anthropological discourse, he does so with an air of lamentation. “What is sad about the passing of the Indian,” he says, is not the physical suffering of indigenous peoples, but “the fading away of genuine cultures” (1999: 58).

As the essay proceeds, however, it becomes increasingly occupied with the United States, which Sapir believes has yet to achieve the kind of communal culture that will enable individuals to achieve fulfillment. American life, he says, is too fragmented, too utilitarian. “Here lies the grimmest joke of our American civilization . . . Part of the time we are dray horses; the rest of the time we are listless consumers of goods which have received no least impress of our personality” (1999: 60). Curiously, Sapir goes on to suggest that the drive for a national culture itself may be at fault, for a nation the size of the United States is too large for it to achieve anything beyond a wan “canned culture” (1999: 70). The solution will come in localism, a “series of linked autonomous cultures” within the United States that will “live each in its own cultural strength” (1999: 71).

In its turn from the theorization of culture to American cultural criticism, Sapir’s essay presages a generation of writing that would be produced both by direct affiliates of Boasian Anthropology and by others who imbibed its vocabulary. This version of American Culture Studies would share the anti-racist stance of Boas, the belief in the power of the communal that Kroeber ascribed to the superorganic, and Sapir’s skepticism of spurious modernity in favor of valorizing the local “folk.” Moreover, it would continue to rely upon and engage in the textualization of culture that was so crucial to the project of salvage anthropology. In the decades that followed the publication of Sapir’s essay, American observers of culture were everywhere, taking notes both at home and abroad.

Coming of Age in American Cultural Studies

In fact, the year after Sapir published the full version of “Culture, Genuine and Spurious,” a 24-year-old Margaret Mead set out for American Samoa to conduct

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fieldwork – on the advice of Boas – focused on the question of puberty (Stocking 1992: 31). Mead spent five months living on the island of Ta'u, where she attempted to insinuate herself as fully as possible into the rhythms of Samoan village life, particularly, as she later described her experience, into the life of the “girls of the community” (Mead 2001: 9). *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization* was published three years later, in 1928, by William Morrow, and it included a foreword from Boas. The book gained almost instant popularity, even notoriety, because of its treatment of sexuality (Lutkehaus 2008: 91–4). Mead portrayed a society with few sexual taboos, “no neurotic pictures” (2001: 105), little value for monogamous romance (2001: 73), and “no period of crisis or stress” associated with adolescence (2001: 109). Mead herself later expressed surprise that *Coming of Age in Samoa* would be received as a book about “sex freedom” when “out of 297 pages there are exactly sixty eight which deal with sex” (quoted in Stocking 1992: 318) – for her, it was primarily a study of youth and adolescence – but she could have anticipated the public reaction. After all, the dust jacket portrayed the outlines of a bare-breasted woman running hand-in-hand with her lover beneath the palm trees (Lutkehaus 2008: 89–90).

Whatever *Coming of Age in Samoa* was, it was also about the United States. As Micaela di Leonardo puts it, “Mead’s was the first full-dress ‘exotic’ ethnography in the now-hoary tradition of the edification and social reform of Westerners through looking into the mirror of the primitive” (1998: 72). Much of the discussion of the United States comes in a long chapter on “Our Educational Problems in the Light of Samoan Contrasts,” which she added at the request of her publisher (Lutkehaus 2008: 86). Though Mead was initially reluctant, di Leonardo is correct that this element of self-directed critique (“*Our Educational Problems*”) became a staple of cultural anthropology published for a wide audience. Regardless of the locus of the scholarship, the study of culture was also producing a kind of cultural criticism. This combination is what gave American Cultural Studies much of its appeal in this era. Reviewing *Coming of Age* in the *American Mercury*, H. L. Mencken wrote: “We know far more about the daily life of Pueblo Indians than we know about the life of Mississippi Baptists. Whenever, by some accident, light is let into the subject, there is a gasping surprise, even a horror” (1928: 380).

As Mencken’s comment suggests, it was possible to enlist Mead’s work in a variety of polemical projects, including an anti-modernist primitivism. *Coming of Age* described “simple, homogenous primitive civilization, a civilization which changes so slowly that to each generation it appears static” – and one possessed of a temperament that “discounts strong feeling” (Mead 2001: 142). The stability, conflict-free life of the Samoans, Mead writes, makes painfully clear the price “that we pay for our heterogeneous, rapidly changing civilization”: high crime rates, turbulent adolescents, “an ever-increasing number of neuroses,” and even the lack of a “coherent” aesthetic tradition (169). Both di Leonardo (1998: 172)

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and George Stocking (1992: 318) have pointed out that Mead's own anti-modernism has been overstated, that her true goal in these final chapters was to inspire more careful deliberation about how to educate Western children for the bewildering array of choices that they face. "The children must be taught how to think, not what to think," Mead writes (2001: 169). Here, she gives us a glimpse of the anthropologist as a reformer – a "classic Progressive social engineer," di Leonardo calls her (1998: 172) – who has traded the usual social laboratory of the urban neighborhood for the more romantic South Seas.

Coming of Age in Samoa concludes with Mead's chapter on "Education for Choice," and the question of choice also figures in the only other volume of Boasian Anthropology to approach Mead's in popularity: Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*. Published in 1934, *Patterns of Culture* would serve as the single-volume introduction to the Boasian concept of culture for not only a wide audience at the moment it was published, but also for generations of undergraduates in the decades following World War II. Like Sapir and Mead – with whom Benedict had close and complicated personal relationships – Benedict was grounded in social science but maintained an ongoing interest in the arts; she published poetry under a pseudonym and counted Walter Pater among her early intellectual influences (Handler 2005: 100–1, 125–6). We can hear this background in her discussion of culture as an "integrated" thing, "a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action" (1934: 46) crafted through a process of selection from those culture traits that are available. "This integration of cultures is not in the least mystical," she continues. "It is the same process by which a style in art comes into being and persists" (1934: 47).

Benedict also compared the integration of a culture to the configuration of a personality, and reached to Friedrich Nietzsche's "The Birth of Tragedy" for a pair of terms – the "Dionysian" and the "Apollonian" (1934: 78–9) – to describe those patterns she found in the cultural groups whom she surveyed. A trio of ethnographies – of the Zunis from the southwestern United States, the Dobus of eastern New Guinea, and the Kwakiutls of the northwest coast of North America – comprise the bulk of the book. Significantly, as Susan Hegeman observes, these ethnographies "make an equally ambivalent case for either cultural relativism or intercultural tolerance" (1999: 97). According to Benedict, the Dobus put a "premium on ill-will and treachery" (1934: 138); the Kwakiutls engage in an "unabashed megalomania" (1994: 190) that revolves around the manipulation of wealth; and the Zunis, by far the most sympathetic group of the three, take their valorization of the moderate and distrust of individualism to an extreme degree.

Benedict's ethnography of Zuni Pueblo is of particular significance because it demonstrates how American Cultural Studies functions in multiple ways in *Patterns of Culture*. Though Benedict herself might not have conceived of it this way, Zuni Pueblo was its own site of American culture; indeed, it was (and is) not only one of the oldest cultures within the United States, but one of the most frequently and consistently studied cultures precisely because of that history. *Patterns of Culture*

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also includes several explicit comparisons between the “less complicated” objects of social scientific ethnography and the dominant, mass culture of the United States; Benedict compares, for instance, the social rivalry among the Kwakiutls to the conspicuous consumption described in *Middletown*, the popular sociological study of Muncie, Indiana, published by Robert and Helen Lynd in 1929 (Benedict 1934: 267; Lynd and Lynd 1929). What may be more significant, however, are the *implicit* comparisons of the cultures that Benedict describes with the United States. This tacit project becomes obvious when, in the final chapter of the book, Benedict turns to the question of what happens to the individual who deviates from a cultural pattern. She seeks to show that what is “abnormal” in one culture is valued in the next, and her examples, notably, include the practice of homosexuality (1934: 262–5). But for her finale she turns to an example from American history – the Puritans of New England (1934: 276–7). In a book whose chief example of cultural stability comes at the cost of individuality, Benedict’s discussion of the Puritan divines throws into relief her deep concern with the ability of society to tolerate deviance. “We may train ourselves to pass judgment upon the dominant traits of our own civilization,” she writes in an earlier chapter (1934: 249), and Benedict clearly believes that one office of American Cultural Studies will be to cultivate precisely that ability. If she trains her eye predominantly on the “others” of American modernity, she also looks forward to a moment when it will be possible to perceive the “patterns” of the United States with equal discernment.

The writing of both Mead and Benedict played a significant role in what Warren Susman called “the general and even popular ‘discovery’ of the concept of culture” in the 1930s (1984: 153). “It is not too extreme to purpose that it was during the Thirties that the idea of culture was domesticated, with important consequences,” he continues. “Americans then began thinking in terms of patterns of behavior and belief, values and life-styles, symbols and meanings” (1984: 154). More recently, Hegeman (1999) has explained how the deployment of the culture concept throughout the 1930s dovetailed with the aesthetics of modernism in a variety of ways. Most significantly, the Boasian culture concept turned from the temporal secession of evolution to a spatialized vision of difference (Hegeman 1999: 32–7). Cultural pluralism existed as set of differentiated spaces on a map, and “these different, autonomous cultural sites would then form a kind of a loose federalism, creating a homeland for every cultural – and personality – type” (1999: 94). This vision of culture was, as Hegeman explains, both utopian and nostalgic, capable of shoring up a variety of anti-modern and regionalist projects, including those with overt political agendas ranging from progressive to the conservative. Moreover, the popularization of culture produced a dazzling variety of documentary writing. George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer have summarized this development succinctly: “American cultural criticism in the 1930s became ethnographic with a vengeance” (1986: 125).

The configuration of popular ethnography could take many forms. Stuart Chase’s best-selling *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas* was published in 1931, and built

directly upon social scientific research: University of Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield's study of culture traits in the town of Tepoztlán (1930) and the Lynds' *Middletown*. In hindsight, it is possible to claim Chase's book as an early, if problematic, forerunner of hemispheric American Studies: "Tepoztlán," Chase writes, "is far more American than Middletown, when all is said and done, but it is alien to everything we regard as typically 'American'" (Chase 1931: 15). He was one of the most significant popular writers about economic matters of his time – prominent enough to serve as an informal advisor to several members of the Roosevelt administration during the New Deal (Hodson and Carfora 2004; Lanier 1970: 149–72). Chase was particularly interested in the prevalence of waste and the role of technology in modern American life, and his account of life in Tepoztlán was a chance for him to characterize the life of rural Mexico as its obverse. He calls the town's residents "machineless men" in several chapter titles and provides an extensive description of their material life, economy, and lifeways.

Chase's prose stays at the level of the thin description of travelogue; the reader has little chance to understand how the residents of Tepoztlán might understand their own culture. However, the difference between his glowing sympathy for the simple self-sufficiency that he finds in Tepoztlán and Mead's account of Samoan life is one of degree, not of kind. What does distinguish Chase's *Mexico* from Mead's *Coming of Age* or Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* is that his comparison of Tepoztlán and Middletown is a central leitmotif, a refrain to which he returns constantly, rather than peripheral or implied. He measures the "comely, unified" Indian village against the "screaming eyesores" of the "poorer districts of the American town" (Chase 1931: 155), claims that Mexicans "have more fun than Middletown" (Chase 1931: 205), and emphasizes the degree to which Tepoztlán enjoys economic independence from the business cycle of the global economy, which he describes with corporeal metaphor. "In this body, Middletown is but a single cell, while Tepoztlán is aloof and unincorporated, an organic, breathing entity" (Chase 1931: 216).

Chase's perception of Tepoztlán as "organic" and "breathing" connects his borrowing from the literature of social science to the traditions of American regionalism that began in the nineteenth century. Among the other functions that it performed, the documentation of culture in the early twentieth century provided a field upon which modernization could be measured, evaluated, and criticized. *Mexico: A Study of the Two Americas* actually concludes with Chase providing sections of "advice" to both Tepoztlán and Middletown. To the former, he suggests using the knowledge of modernity (about agriculture and medicine) while resisting incorporation into its networks of transportation and economic exchange; to the latter, he advises achieving a greater degree of regional self-sufficiency, slowing the pace of life, and even engaging in handicrafts. "I have no confidence whatever in the theory that cultures based on hand work and machine work are mutually exclusive," he writes (Chase 1931: 327).

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In the end, Chase's book is about how the lifeways of Tepoztlán can be made to serve the modernity of Middletown, or, perhaps more accurately, about how modernity can be imagined as a process of uneven development across the hemisphere, a message that resonated with a public about to embark on a decade of New Deal projects aimed at technological modernization. One of the most visible documentary projects of the decade that followed, in fact, was the New Deal program of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP), a program of the Works Progress Administration that employed writers across the nation from 1935 to 1939. The key administrators of the FWP were influenced by the practices of cultural documentation and theories of culture put forward by Boasian Anthropology – in some cases, literally consulting with Boas and his former students (Hirsch 2003: 5, 38). They were simultaneously influenced by more humanistic traditions of Folklore Studies that had continued since the late nineteenth century through state and local associations. In one sense, the FWP continued the tradition of both salvage anthropology and humanistic preservation by documenting ethnic and folk cultures that were presumed to be disappearing: *The Armenians in Massachusetts* (1937) or *The Italians of New York* (1938), to name just two publications that took this stance (Hirsch 2003: 135). Equally important, it carried out this project in the name of an explicit nationalism, in the service of producing a coherent, modern "America" (Hegeman 1999: 127–8). This combination of cultural pluralism and romantic nationalism is exemplified in the best-known products of the FWP, the extensive series of guidebooks to states and cities produced under its aegis. These guides celebrate and embrace local diversity, but they do so by employing the modernizing rhetoric and practice of tourism, which the federal government embraced in the name of economic rejuvenation and national unification. "Have You Discovered America?" the Federal Writers asked – a question that joined economic patriotism to a long history of national incorporation (Hirsch 2003: 48).

In the 1930s, encounters between modernity and its cultural others in the United States would take a variety of textual forms. The same year that Chase's book on Tepoztlán and Middletown reached the shelves, a white poet named John Neihardt spent three weeks on the Pine Ridge Reservation sitting with an Oglala Lakota holy man, Black Elk, to hear his life story. The result would be published the following year under the title of *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux as Told Through John G. Neihardt*. Neihardt had come to Pine Ridge the previous year in the hope of finding someone who could tell him about the Ghost Dance Movement of the late 1880s, which he planned to make the subject of a narrative poem. *Black Elk Speaks* contains such an account, but it also provides a remarkable record of life during the nineteenth-century Indian Wars and the spiritual visions that Black Elk received over the course of his lifetime. As Michael Staub has observed (1994: 60), the book contains both a linear, tragic narrative of the fall of Lakota tradition under the pressures of US colonization – "the nation's hoop is broken and scattered," reads one crucial passage (Neihardt 2004: 207) – and a circular narrative of cultural revitalization. Because

it begins and ends in the present, with Black Elk telling his story to Neihardt, the text conveys the possibility that Black Elk's own life story can be a kind of ritual that will provide healing. Notably, the final image is of Black Elk returning to the peak where he received his initial vision, and successfully crying to the divine Great Spirit for rain (2004: 210). One can read in this moment either pathos or promise – or both.

Though it received favorable reviews, *Black Elk Speaks* was not a commercial success initially. It was not until the University of Nebraska Press issued a paperback edition in 1961 that generations of students and activists began to read the text. Alice Kehoe (1989: 53, 76, 90) has described the role the volume played in the American Indian Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and Vine Deloria, Jr, contributed a foreword to a new edition in 1979. Since that time, though, *Black Elk Speaks* has gradually fallen out of favor in Native American Studies because of questions about the degree to which Neihardt manipulated and added to Black Elk's speech for poetic and narrative effect, and in doing so also distorted Black Elk's religious beliefs. The debate about the authenticity of the text, the true nature of Black Elk's religious teachings, and the question of cultural appropriation are outside the bounds of this essay (for an introduction, see Holler 2000). Although *Black Elk Speaks* clearly plays a crucial role in the development of Native American Studies in the late twentieth century, I seek to reinsert it into a genealogy of American Cultural Studies for multiple reasons. First, it belongs in a history of American Studies scholarship that is collaborative, even if those collaborations have been poorly acknowledged or understood. Second, the publication of the book in the 1930s suggests that forms of Indigenous Studies, or even Ethnic Studies, are not peripheral to American Cultural Studies, but present in its core history. Third, the book offers another example of how American Cultural Studies crossed humanistic and social scientific boundaries; in *Black Elk Speaks*, Neihardt acts as equal parts poet and anthropologist, a combination that has both given the text its power and generated considerable controversy.

Moreover, *Black Elk Speaks* revolves around the recovery and construction of *voice*. From Neihardt's volume to James Agee and Walker Evans's experimental *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), the "1930s concern with recording the speaking voices is virtually unrivalled in American cultural history" (Staub 1994: 2). The FWP played a significant role in this form of cultural documentation through oral history projects that yielded massive amounts of material – some of which was published during the period itself, such as the 35 life histories of Southerners collected in *These Are Our Lives*, published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1939, but much of which was not published until decades later. In 1936–8, the FWP conducted and collected more than 2,300 interviews with former slaves, which were printed in a 17-volume typescript collection in 1941 for the Library of Congress (Yetman 1967). A few of the interviews were used in the FWP publication *The Negro in Virginia* (Virginia Writers' Program 1940) and a larger selection appeared in *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery* (Botkin

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1945). The full collection, however, has been available to most readers only in microfilm until the Library of Congress was able to digitize the collection for open access.²

The sheer size of the ex-slave narrative collection demonstrates that, whatever the limitations of the interviewers or their work, the attention paid to social and racial diversity in the 1930s took on a different tenor. Sterling Brown, an African American poet and professor with a long-standing interest in folklore, became the Negro Affairs Editor of the FWP, and its national Folklore Editor, Benjamin A. Botkin, evidenced a deep desire to make folklore into a kind of grass-roots history. “The folklore movement must come from below upward rather than of above downward,” Botkin wrote. “Otherwise it may be dismissed as a patronizing gesture, a nostalgic wish, an elegiac complaint, a sporadic and abortive revival – on the part of paternalistic aristocrats going slumming, dilettantish provincials going native, defeated sectionalists going back to the soil, and anybody and everybody who cares to go collecting” (quoted in Mangione 1972: 270). Botkin’s vision represented a larger mood in Folklore scholarship, one that had a particular impact for writers of color like Brown. The 1930s became a moment when a kind of “native ethnographic practice,” to use Maria Eugenia Cotera’s phrase, became more recognizable (2008: 37). As Cotera notes, this category frequently included writers such as Brown, who crossed generic lines to work in Folklore, Anthropology, Oral History, Poetry, and Fiction. Cotera’s *Native Speakers* focuses in particular on a trio of women who worked at the margins of social science during this decade to produce a remarkable body of work: Jovita González was a Tejana folklorist who rose to prominence as a folklorist of Mexican America, becoming president of the Texas Folklore Society, but the two novels that she composed in the 1930s remained unpublished at the time of her death. Ella Deloria, born on the Yankton Sioux Reservation, worked extensively with Boas and Benedict, who recognized her as a leading expert on the linguistic dialects and culture of the Sioux (the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota). After more than a decade of working with the Columbia anthropologists, Deloria decided to write *three* books of her own – an ethnographic monograph, an ethnographic novel, and a work on Dakota history and culture for general readers – in the early 1940s. Only the last was published in her lifetime.

Finally, more than any other figure, Zora Neale Hurston – Cotera’s third example of a female auto-ethnographer – stands squarely at the intersection of the practices of American Cultural Studies that I have described in this essay. Hurston was already emerging as a figure in the Harlem Renaissance when she enrolled in Barnard College in 1925, where she eventually took Anthropology classes with Benedict, Boas, and others. Melville Herskovits famously employed Hurston to measure the heads of African Americans in Harlem – she “used to stop anyone whose head looked interesting, and measure it,” Langston Hughes (1993: 239) wrote – part of the Boasian project of accumulating enough empirical evidence to overturn theories of the physical inferiority of non-white races. But Hurston’s

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true interest was in folklore. *Mules and Men* (1935), which contains Hurston's ethnographic account of African American life in rural Florida, begins with the sentence, "I was glad when somebody told me, 'You may go and collect Negro folklore,'" then goes on to describe how she previously could not see the "chemise" of her culture because it fit her too tightly. "It was only when I was off in college, away from my native surroundings that I could see myself like somebody else and stand off and look at my garment. Then I had to have the spyglass of Anthropology to look through at that" (1995b: 9).

Hurston wielded the "spyglass of Anthropology" both in her works of ethnography – *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse* (1938) – and in novels such as *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934) and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Not only does her fiction include the kind of cultural information that social science prized, but it revolves around her careful attention to vernacular speech. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, in particular, positions the reader as a listener to a remarkable performance of rural, African American speech, including the voices of individual characters and the collective judgment of communities (Elliott 2002: 184–5). But *Mules and Men* may offer the best example of the way that Hurston was able to take the "spyglass" of Cultural Studies and make it her own. Rather than employing the standard form of publishing folktales as discrete units, Hurston forges a narrative of her own ethnographic experience, a story about a naive, overconfident folklorist who returns to her native Polk County, Florida, to collect "some old stories and tales" before, as she says, "everybody forgets all of 'em" (1995b: 13–14).

Instead of the scientific objectivity of her teachers, in other words, Hurston fashions a story of anthropological adventure. She passes herself off as a fugitive bootlegger after worrying that her "\$12.74 dress from Macy's" will produce envy (1995b: 69); she barely escapes a knife fight in a jook joint; and, in the section on New Orleans hoodoo, boils a black cat alive in order to become an initiate. This is more than ethnography-as-entertainment, though it is that. The combination of Hurston's self-ironizing of her own labors as a culture worker and the careful contextual description that she provides for vernacular speech makes this text not only a document *about* culture, but one that illuminates the *process of collecting culture*. The world of Polk County, in particular, is a raucous, competitive, even dangerous place, and Hurston situates the songs, stories, and tales that she finds there in that context. Hurston's project is deeply local, for she aims to capture the particular cadences of a bounded region, yet it is premised on the possibility of translation to wider audiences. It is a sympathetic account, yet Hurston also makes clear that she requires distance to see through her "spy-glass," and that she will depart from the cultural scenes that she studies. It aspires to social scientific demands for the documentation of tangible evidence in the form of linguistic utterance, yet it is alive to the humanistic interest in creativity and narrative.

Hurston's writing was also a model of American Cultural Studies that carried risks. While many readers have found Hurston to be attuned to the power structures

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that keep them materially impoverished, others have followed Richard Wright's assessment that her writing is populated by figures who inhabit "that safe and narrow orbit in which America likes to see the Negro live," as he stated in a review of *Their Eyes*. "She exploits that phase of Negro life which is 'quaint,' the phase which evokes a piteous smile on the lips of the 'superior' race" (Gates and Appiah 1993: 16–17). It is not my intention to rehearse the Wright–Hurston debate, which has been carefully dissected elsewhere (Maxwell 1999: 153–78). Rather, I mention it here in order to point out that the question of cultural pluralism to political equality has been a vexing one for the trajectory of American Cultural Studies that I have been tracing, but it has been a present question nevertheless. It is not clear exactly how Lewis Henry Morgan's *League of the Ho-de'-no-sau-nee* could enable the Iroquois nations to preserve their land base, what Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* would mean for the place of the Samoan islands in the US Empire, or how Hurston's *Mules and Men* might affect the civil rights struggles taking shape in her time. These are the kinds of questions, however, that American Cultural Studies generated from the late nineteenth century to the eve of World War II – and that it has continued to generate again for at least the last quarter-century.

Unfortunately, these were not the questions that most practitioners of American Studies wanted to pose during World War II itself, and perhaps even during the Cold War that followed. In 1942, Margaret Mead published *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America*, her effort to contribute to the war effort by providing an anthropological assessment of the United States – a reckoning of "its assets and its liabilities, for war, for peace after wars, for building an order in which war and peace shall become . . . outmoded" (Mead 1942: 15). However, in contrast to her earlier anthropology of the South Seas, or to the rough edges of the 1930s folklore, the America that Mead paints in *And Keep Your Powder Dry* seems dull. She discusses immigration, but in broad platitudes: "We Are All Third Generation," reads one chapter title. She addresses youth, but with a kind of pop psychology that seems beneath her. (The adolescent's discovery of the inadequacies of his or her parents is "the greatest spiritual dilemma of growing up in this culture" (1942: 133)) She reduces the American mind to a love of "progress" (1942: 133), "fair play" (1942: 144), and "moral purpose" (1942: 217). And the question of racial and ethnic diversity or discrimination barely figures at all. The national boosterism of wartime seems to have overcome the particularism, the nuance, and even the vernacular speech that had characterized the study of culture in the United States for nearly a century.³

What transpired in the immediate wake of World War II was that American Cultural Studies failed to continue in a vibrant form as the cultural studies of America. It would eventually return, but not centrally located in cultural Anthropology. Instead, the intellectual descendants of the genealogy that I have been tracing are folklorists such as Américo Paredes, the founders of Ethnic Studies in the 1960s and 1970s, and the early anthropologists of the literatures of African

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Americans, American Indians, and Asian Americans. The history of American Studies often casts a division between an early era, in which the cohesion of the mid-century Myth-and-Symbol School prevailed, and a more recent one, when the challenges of incorporating multi-ethnic and multi-racial approaches to the study of culture became dominant. What I have tried to show in this essay is that, in fact, there is a history of American Cultural Studies that is multi-racial, transnational, and even multi-lingual. It is not a past without problems, but it is a past whose usefulness has not been exhausted.

Notes

- 1 I should acknowledge, though, that my essay relies heavily on what I have learned from disciplinary histories of anthropology in the United States. While a complete bibliography is not possible here, crucial volumes include those by Darnell (1998 and 2001), Stocking (1968 and 1992), and Kuper (1999). In addition, I have been influenced by recent scholarship on the relationship of literature to anthropology: see Manganaro (1990); Krupat (1992); Hegeman (1999); and Evans (2005).
- 2 That collection is currently available at: <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml>>.
- 3 For a much more positive evaluation of *And Keep Your Powder Dry*, see Handler (2005: 141–53).

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The Laboring of American Culture

Michael Denning

The modern study of American culture – the American Studies movement, as it was called in its early years – was itself the product of a major upheaval in American society and culture. The founders of American Studies, particularly the great scholar and activist F. O. Matthiessen, author of *American Renaissance*, were part of a generation of young people whose lives were transformed by the social upheavals of the 1930s and 1940s, and who in turn transformed American culture and life. However, most accounts of American history have concluded that the young radicals of the Depression and war had little lasting impact on US culture. Defeated, demoralized, and blacklisted, the old left, as they came to be known, was swept into the dustbin of history as the American century marched off to the suburbs of Levittown and the jungles of Vietnam.

The legacy of the 1930s has long been contested terrain, and I want to begin by reflecting on two different 1930s – that of the 1960s and that of the turn of the millennium. In 1964, a young songwriter aligned with a “new left,” Bob Dylan, invoked a “hungry thirties” in which he “wished” he’d “lived”; but its “union halls” and “Woody’s guitar” galvanizing an active labor movement were now merely the “forces of yesteryear.”¹ For Dylan’s generation, the 1930s were already ancient history, the sign of a road not taken; he and other artists and writers of the 1960s resurrected the ruins of the Depression as magical avatars of their own work. Dylan’s Woody Guthrie, Peter Bogdanovich’s Orson Welles, the revival of Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep* and James Agee and Walker Evans’s *Let Us Now Praise*

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Famous Men, the re-emergence of Tillie Olsen and Meridel Le Sueur: in many ways, “our” thirties were invented in the 1960s and its icons, particularly those of the Okie Exodus – Guthrie, Dorothea Lange’s “Migrant Mother,” Henry Fonda’s Tom Joad – remain powerful.

However, decades later, the hungry thirties return in a different way. Just as when the generation of the Depression looked back at the history they had inherited and told stories of the decline and fall of the Lincoln republic – stories of how the republic of rail-splitters and small producers which had defeated slavery was betrayed by the corruptions and robber barons of the gilded age – so we at the end of the American century tell stories of “the rise and fall of the New Deal order.” The social, political, and cultural settlements that emerged out of the crises of the Depression and World War II – the Cold War, the welfare-warfare state, the Democratic Party coalition built by FDR, the cultural apparatus of classic Hollywood, network broadcasting, and mass higher education – dominated the rest of the century. This was the establishment against which both the new left and the new right of 1968 mobilized.

Thus, for me, the forces of yesteryear that Dylan invoked – the struggles, strikes, and songs of the age of the CIO – are not simply legends of a lost time. Indeed, as Stuart Hall (1996) reminds us, the forces that are defeated in any particular historical settlement – as the old left was – do not simply disappear from the terrain of struggle. Moreover, cultures don’t change with decades or presidential administrations. The generation who came of age during the Depression – figures such as Tillie Olsen and Jacob Lawrence – lived through the blacklist and continued to work; in many cases they found a new audience in the last decades of the century. How can a cultural historian capture this ambiguous legacy of failure and success, defeat and victory?

In this essay, I want to reflect on the ways I have tried to come to grips with those forces of yesteryear, the rise and fall of the New Deal order. I will begin by suggesting that the culture of the age of the CIO left a permanent imprint on American culture, what I will call a “laboring of American culture,” using the forgotten photomagazine *Friday* as an example; I will then note some of the differences between my arguments and earlier accounts of the culture and politics of the 1930s; and I will conclude by reflecting on the connections between this argument and the revival of the labor movement over the past decade.

What does it mean to speak of the laboring of American culture? Like any good historical concept, “laboring” is a metaphor condensing several more prosaic thoughts. First, the laboring of American culture refers to what a more technical vocabulary would call the proletarianization of the world of culture. Largely as the result of the tremendous expansion of what is usually called “mass culture” – both the industries of art and entertainment and secondary and higher education – a generation of young people from working-class, plebeian families became the producers of and the audiences for cultural commodities.

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Second, it refers to the industrialization of culture, as the arts and entertainment became large industries with significant labor forces – the film industry, the broadcasting industry, the recording industry, and the education industry.

Third, by laboring, I point to the rise of a particular political ideology in American culture, better known as social democracy or laborism; this was not a revolutionary socialism, but neither was it simply a resurgence of a traditional liberalism or populism.

Fourth, it refers to a laboring of American rhetoric, to the pervasive use of the terms labor and its synonyms in the language of the period. “Work,” “toil,” “labor,” “labor party,” “labor movement,” and, briefly, even “proletarian” were keywords of this culture.

Fifth, and not least, laboring implies a new birth, a rebirth or renaissance. Just as the social passions of abolition, utopian socialism, and women’s rights – what Michael Rogin (1983) rightly called the American 1848 – found expression in what is generally called the “American Renaissance” of the 1850s, so the laboring of American culture in the age of the CIO found expression in a second American renaissance. For Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass, Fuller, Melville, Stowe, and Whitman, read Dos Passos, Olsen, Welles, Holiday, Ellington, Wright, and C. L. R. James. In both cases, these towering figures are emblems of a much wider flowering of artistic and intellectual energies; renaissance remains the inexact but unavoidable term that cultural history uses to mark these moments which continue to resonate (and provoke historical controversy) long after they are ended.

What caused this laboring of American culture in the twentieth century? Two things: the rise of a powerful social movement, what I call the Popular Front social movement, and the rise of a vast cultural apparatus of entertainment industries and government bureaus. The Popular Front was an insurgent social movement forged around anti-fascism, anti-lynching, and the militant industrial unionism of the CIO. Its base lay in the new working classes of Fordist capitalism, the CIO working class, a generation who came of age in the Depression, a generation made up of the children of immigrants from the periphery of the world system. The regions their parents had come from encompassed, as labor historian David Montgomery has mapped it, “Quebec and Canada’s Maritime Provinces, much of Scandinavia, European Russia (or, more precisely, the domain that Poland had embraced before the eighteenth-century partitions), the Kingdom of Hungary, Croatia-Slovenia, Greece, Italy, Sicily, Andalusian Spain, the defeated Confederate States and Great Plains of America, central and northern Mexico, the hinterlands of Canton, and later the southern islands of Japan.” “This territory,” Montgomery writes, “shipped agricultural produce, minerals and forest products to the industrial core,” but “it also exported people” (1987: 701). By 1930, two thirds of those living in the great cities of the United States were either foreign-born or the children of foreign-born; and that number does not include the African American migrants from the sharecropping South and their children who created the Bronzeveilles and Harlems of the North.

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It was the children of these migrants who formed the mass industrial unions of the CIO: garment workers in the revived International Ladies' Garment Workers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, as well as the smaller needle trades unions; the mineworkers led by John L. Lewis; the Pacific Coast longshoremen and warehouse workers in Harry Bridges's ILWU; and the metal workers of the steel, not rust, belt in the new unions of steel workers, auto workers, and electrical workers. The political forms of this social movement were varied: not only the Communist Party of William Z. Foster and Earl Browder and the left-wing of FDR's new Democratic Party, but also a host of state labor parties: New York's American Labor Party, Washington's Commonwealth Federation, Minnesota's Farmer-Labor Party, and Upton Sinclair's EPIC (End Poverty in California) campaign. Finally, the Popular Front social movement took a variety of cultural forms, including labor schools, ethnic lodges of the multicultural International Workers Order, proletarian literary magazines, independent jazz and folk record labels and cabarets, artists' unions, and workers' theaters, what they and I call the cultural front.

Like many American social movements, the Popular Front social movement was stronger in particular cities and regions than nationally. Its most characteristic struggles were the urban general strikes of 1934 (in San Francisco, Toledo, and Minneapolis) and the community-supported sit-down fever of 1937. In cities like Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Minneapolis, as well as in the metalworking towns of the mid-West and the tobacco towns of the Piedmont, powerful Popular Front political coalitions were led by figures such as Harry Bridges, Vito Marcantonio, Floyd Olson, and Adam Clayton Powell.

Also, like many American social movements, the Popular Front looked overseas, building alliances through the politics of international solidarity. If this led to the bitter battles within the movement over the nature and directions of the Soviet Union, it also created a new anti-fascist and anti-imperialist imagination of the globe, as Americans supported the struggles for the Spanish Republic and for Indian and African independence: this new vision was painted in the grand icons of the Popular Front, Picasso's *Guernica*, Orozco's Dartmouth mural, Rivera's *River Rouge*, and Siqueiros's *Tropical America*. Finally, like many American social movements, the Popular Front was built around the struggle for civil liberties, and organized campaigns against labor repression and against lynching. One of the earliest triggers of the social movement of the 1930s had been the case of two Italian American anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti; though the campaign failed to save them, the same energies went into subsequent campaigns in defense of the Scottsboro Nine and the Sleepy Lagoon defendants. The struggle for national legislation against lynching – which failed in the short run, with no anti-lynching legislation ever making it through Congress – left one of the most enduring of all Popular Front artworks – Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" and the mobilization against lynching became the basis for the emergence of a black liberation movement that was to reshape the United States.

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It was this social movement that attracted artists and intellectuals to the left, forming a cultural front. Moreover, the influence of this social movement on American culture generally was amplified by the enormous expansion of the cultural apparatus – by which I mean the industries of art and entertainment, Hollywood, the radio and television networks, Henry Luce’s empire of *Time* and *Life*, the recording industry – and the cultural institutions of the New Deal state, not just the WPA arts projects but the permanent art projects of postwar America, the mass universities subsidized by federal R&D funds and the GI Bill. The radical cultural front that emerged in these new industries and institutions was made up of three forces, what I will call the *moderns*, the *émigrés* and the *plebeians*. The radical moderns – novelists such as John Dos Passos and Josephine Herbst, critics such as Kenneth Burke and Carey McWilliams, composers such as Duke Ellington and Aaron Copland, film-makers such as Charlie Chaplin, and fashion designers such as Elizabeth Hawes – were part of the extraordinary flowering of the arts in the 1920s; most were well-educated and came from well-established families. For them, the turn to the left was a product of the crisis of 1929, and was often associated with their involvement in the celebrated Sacco-Vanzetti or Scottsboro cases.

The second force in the cultural front was formed by the *émigrés*, the artists and intellectuals who fled from fascism. They were often the products of the European avant-gardes, and writers such as Berthold Brecht and Christina Stead, intellectuals such as Theodor Adorno and C. L. R. James, film-makers such as Fritz Lang, and composers such as Hanns Eisler and Béla Bartók brought new aesthetics and new theories to American schools and studios. I would include here figures who were not literal exiles like the revolutionary Mexican muralists, because the laboring of American culture was also a remarkable internationalization of American culture.

The third force in the cultural front consisted of the plebeians, a generation of artists and intellectuals from working-class families – writers like Richard Wright and Tillie Olsen, Carlos Bulosan and Pietro di Donato, singers like Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra, bandleaders like Artie Shaw and Count Basie, painters like Jacob Lawrence and Ralph Fasanella, or actors like John Garfield and Canada Lee. They were the children of public libraries and public schools; the first generation of working-class kids to receive secondary education. For them, the expansion of the culture industries and the invention of the WPA projects meant that they could move out of their parents’ world of manual labor into that uncertain terrain of the white-collar proletariat, apparently middle-class, but still working for wages and with little job security. They were the hungry young artists who formed the John Reed clubs, the workers’ theaters, the red dance troupes; when they wrote and painted and sang and thought, it was, as Mike Gold put it, the tenement thinking.

For me, one emblem of this laboring of American culture, this intersection between the Popular Front social movement and the new cultural forms and

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institutions of mid-century, is a now-forgotten photomagazine, a weekly called *Friday*. Staffed by left-wing *New Yorker* writers like Ruth McKenney and Richard O. Boyer, *Friday* began in March 1940 as an anti-fascist, pro-labor version of *Life*. “*Friday* believes in trade unions and believes in them hard,” it announced in its first issue (March 15, 1940), and it put CIO leaders such as John L. Lewis on the cover. *Friday* represented the Popular Front politics and laborist popular culture of the CIO through the medium of the mass magazine, and captured the common sense of its audience, the second-generation blue-collar and white-collar ethnic workers. It featured both investigative photojournalism, like the articles on the murder of a 25-year-old union leader, Laura Law, with steady coverage of baseball, jazz, and Hollywood. Its first issue defended Jimmy Cagney, Joan Crawford, Irving Berlin, and Bette Davis against the attack by right-wing Congressman Martin Dies.

Over the next two years, *Friday* covered the waterfront. Not only did it cover the docks, comparing the New York and West Coast shape-ups and getting Theodore Dreiser to interview waterfront leader Harry Bridges, but it followed the struggles of transport workers, Woolworth counter waitresses, and the successful battle in the spring of 1941 to unionize Ford. The Ford narrative offers a microcosm of the magazine’s style. In January 1941, *Friday* ran an exposé of Henry Ford’s anti-Semitism, which continued the magazine’s regular coverage of anti-Semitism. A month later, there was an article on Ford’s “fascism,” covering Harry Bennett’s notorious Service Department of thugs, spies, and secret police; this was followed by an exposé of Ford’s exploitation of agricultural workers on “Ford’s Tobacco Row.” Meanwhile, there was a large spread on the UAW’s Ford Organizing Committee, and color photographs of the Ford strike appeared on the magazine’s cover. The success of the organizing campaign was celebrated with an article on “Ford with a Union Label,” featuring an auto-workers’ jazz band and a Dearborn tournament of union baseball teams.

Jazz bands and baseball teams were fitting emblems, since *Friday*’s cultural front was dominated by jazz, baseball, popular amusements, ethnic traditions, and the movies. At a time when the big swing bands were rarely integrated and when middle-class magazines featured the white bands, *Friday*’s “All American Jazz Band” was an emblem of plebeian taste featuring the stars of the Basie band – Lester Young, Walter Page, Jo Jones, Buck Clayton – as well as Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Johnny Hodges, Charlie Spivak, Eddie Condon, and Jack Teagarden. A year later, when *Friday* interviewed Benny Goodman about his new band, Goodman captured the Popular Front sense of jazz: “Jazz isn’t changing; it’s just being recognized as fine music at last. It was perfected by all of the ‘foreigners’ who make up America, particularly the Negroes.” *Friday*’s baseball coverage included not only a forecast for the 1941 season but accounts of the lives of “baseball’s migratory workers” – the minor league farm system – and a feature on the Negro League stars Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson who were excluded from Jim Crow baseball.

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There were also regular features on popular amusements like the pinball craze and Coney Island, and continuing coverage of ethnic and racial traditions, with articles on Irish American labor history, Jews celebrating Passover, Amateur Night at Harlem's Apollo, and the Chinese opera at New York's Canton Theater. An article attacking the anti-alien Bills being considered by Congress was headlined with President Roosevelt's "We are all immigrants." *Friday* also featured leading African American artists, including the painter Horace Pippin, the dancer Katherine Dunham, and the novelist Richard Wright: Wright's *Native Son* was given out free with trial subscriptions. Paul Robeson contributed an article, "In What Direction are We Going?"

And Hollywood film was, of course, everywhere in *Friday*. Readers followed the story of Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (which included a letter from Welles and a feature on Dorothy Comingore, who played Susan Alexander), and new films like the John Garfield vehicle, *Saturday's Children*, and the Paramount comedy about a Detroit auto plant, *Reaching for the Sun*, were summarized in two-page sequences of stills. When the Disney cartoonists went on strike, they told their story in *Friday* with a comic strip entitled "Who's Afraid of Big Bad Walt?"

"Jean Arthur Joins the Union and Signs Up the Devil," the headline read over *Friday's* feature on the Norman Krasna production *The Devil and Miss Jones*. "Miss Jones is a plucky clerk in a department store. Her boyfriend is a union organizer," *Friday's* reviewer wrote in playful and ironic account. "There are enough stones in their pathway to throw a tank but Mary Jones gets Joe O'Brien when the union conquers the obstinate store management." *Friday's* review offers a glimpse of the way working-class Americans made sense of films like *The Devil and Miss Jones*. "The Devil is J. P. Merrick, the Richest Man in the World, who starts out to spy on his disgruntled employees and ends up as Santa Claus to the union leading a demonstration against himself. When J. P., the reformed employer, gives the union ten times what it asks, you will have to pinch yourself because such events are hard to find in the newspapers. Real life perversely refuses to conform with Hollywood's occasional attempts to picture it." *Friday's* readers did not expect social realism or even political coherence from Hollywood; but the combination of Jean Arthur's screwball romance and the comic inversion that introduced the department store tycoon to the daily work of the store made the film part of their lives.

Friday's brief life is an emblem of the laboring of American culture generally. It lasted through 1940 and 1941 and died with the outbreak of the war, a victim of its anti-war, anti-interventionist stance. Indeed, since it, unlike Luce's *Life*, has been almost completely forgotten, one might conclude that *Life* not *Friday* more accurately "represented" the culture of the time. But this is misleading, I think. First, the 1940 success of *Friday* and the Popular Front New York tabloid *PM* brought an alarmed reaction from the right. "It is a smooth-coat journal, does an excellent two-color job, and is full of expensive art layouts," Benjamin Stolberg (1941: 92) wrote of *Friday* in the *Saturday Evening Post*, before "exposing" it as the contribution of "millionaire playboys" like the young editor and publisher

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of *Friday*, Daniel Gillmor, to “American Communism.” Despite his reductive view of the Popular Front as a “transmission belt” of the Communist Party, Stolberg did understand that the existence of popular photomagazines such as *Friday* and tabloids such as *PM* marked a new popularity for Popular Front political culture, beyond both the movement culture of the CIO and the radical arts world.

Second, the demise of *Friday* was due to the economics of the mass illustrated magazine: they depended on advertising not circulation for their revenues. Thus, *Life* and *Look* did turn to the middle classes for their readers. Not only were advertisers unwilling to support a mass magazine that supported labor – that had been demonstrated in the failure of *Ken* a year earlier – but they did not see the working-class audience of *Friday* as a significant market. To advertisers, *Friday* may have had the surface of a “smooth-coat journal” but it had the demographics of a pulp, the working-class fiction magazines that carried no consumer advertising, surviving by cheap paper, penny-a-word hacks and no “expensive art layouts.” Indeed, most of the advertisements *Friday* carried were for the pulps: *Argosy* and *Detective Fiction Weekly* sought readers in the pages of *Friday*.

So *Friday*’s lack of commercial success should not be taken as a judgment on its cultural success. In 1942, a *Fortune* poll found that 25 percent of Americans favored socialism, and another 35 percent had an open mind about it. For a brief moment, *Friday* represented the laborist popular culture of the young ethnic workers who built the CIO, danced to the sounds of Basie and Shaw, followed the exploits of Joe DiMaggio and Josh Gibson, listened to Paul Robeson’s “Ballad for Americans,” and watched Jean Arthur find love and the union in a screwball comedy. The moment of *Friday* passed with the outset of the war, but the culture it captured did not. The common sense of the Popular Front had taken root among American working people, and it took a cultural civil war, the anti-Communist crusade, to eradicate it.

Perhaps the major difference between my argument about the Popular Front’s laboring of American culture and earlier accounts of the legacy of the 1930s is this sense that the cultural continuities of the Popular Front social movement outweigh its political divisions. Critics have argued that I pay too little attention to the internal political battles between Communists, Trotskyists, and social democrats. One reviewer has called this the “consensus” view of the 1930s left (Rogin 1997); other reviewers have been less kind, repeatedly insisting that I have missed the main story, the unending quarrel over “Stalinism” and the Soviet Union. I have two answers to these critics.

First, too often we allow the real day-to-day debates, controversies, and hostilities within a social movement to obscure its larger unities and influence. I was reminded of this by looking again at several histories of the Chartist movement, the extraordinary movement of English workers in the 1840s that so electrified the young German Friedrich Engels. “From the time when Chartism first began to be written about,” the historian Gareth Stedman Jones (1983: 97) notes, “attention was focused on the divided nature of movement. The first

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generation of Chartist historians, embittered ex-Chartists [such as Gammage, Lovett, and Cooper], concentrated disproportionately upon rifts in organization and the angry and divisive battles between leading personalities.” As a result, he suggests, historians have missed the extent of unity and popular support the Chartists mobilized. Dorothy Thompson (1984: 2) also notes “the search for controversies around which to build . . . courses or college entrance exams had led to . . . the emphasis on . . . divisive issues” to explain the “failure” of the Chartists. This focus on division and failure, she argues, leads us to miss the power of the movement to mobilize thousands of working people around democratic demands that would be taken up by labor movements long after the their “failure.” I think a similar concentration on the divisions and quarrels of the old left has led us to miss the power and meaning of the social movement. This struck me in a humorous comment made about my book by one reviewer: after discovering that Dr Spock’s postwar classic, *Baby and Child Care*, had its origins in his columns for the Popular Front tabloid *PM*, and that Dr Seuss had been a *PM* cartoonist, he concluded that perhaps we are all red diaper babies (Shatz 1997: 25). In some ways this is true; after the failure of dreams and the betrayal of hopes, a Popular Front labor sensibility did leave a permanent imprint on American life.

The second reason for my focus on cultural continuities rather than political differences lies in my turn from the “political” level to the “economic” level in thinking about culture. In the course of writing the book, I became persuaded that the influence of political parties, including the Communist Party, on artists and writers, was less than that of economic organizations – particularly industrial unions. This was the age of the CIO, not the age of the Communist Party, or even the age of the New Deal. The radical leader of the longshoremen’s union, Harry Bridges, proved to have more significance for people as dissimilar as the folksinger Woody Guthrie, the Harvard literary critic F. O. Matthiessen, and the film-maker Orson Welles, than did Earl Browder, the leader of the Communist Party. The classic debates over the forms of political art – what is a proletarian novel? – proved less lasting and important than the debates over the economic status of cultural workers which echo from the League of Professionals’ *Culture and Crisis* pamphlet of 1932 to C. Wright Mills’s reflections on the cultural apparatus in the 1950s. The career of Elizabeth Hawes – the modernist fashion designer and critic turned UAW organizer – is, I think, a more powerful emblem of the cultural front than the oft-told tale of literary critic Granville Hicks’s break with the party after the Nazi-Soviet pact.

If one accepts this shift in emphasis from the political divisions between Communists and Trotskyists to the cultural continuities of the social movement, one is still left with the question of how to connect social movements and cultural productions. Can these cultural productions be seen as *direct* representations of and by workers, the labor historian Elizabeth Faue asks (1998: 313)? How “representative” is Woody Guthrie? Can the musical *Pins and Needles*, staged by garment workers, really be seen as their self-representation? Another labor

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historian, Peter Rachleff, notes that I occasionally take my eye off the “central dynamic . . . : the relationship between social movements and cultural expressions” and am “content to demonstrate a lineage between [some] productions and earlier cultural expressions which had been linked to a social movement.” “Why wasn’t there,” he asks, “more *direct* connection between the labor upheaval of the 1930s and the cultural front?” (Rachleff 1998: 332–3).

In response, I will plead the necessity of “indirection” in cultural history. Cultural history is a strange blend of social history’s interest in anonymous ordinary people, political history’s interest in representative and powerful figures, and art or literary history’s interest in selective traditions of valuable and enduring artifacts. Cultural influence, power, and representativeness have many measures; rather than focus on one – best-seller status, working-class origin, artistic value, institutionalization, endurance – I try to explore the uneven and often paradoxical forms taken, even suggesting, as I have, that the little-known photomagazine *Friday* might be more “representative” than *Life*, and that proletarian novels *are* a part of working-class culture even if few workers ever read them. I doubt that there is any “direct representation of workers” against which we can measure cultural productions. Representation is always indirect, always one thing standing for another. Were the CIO unions “direct” representations of workers? Were the union newspapers? No, but they were representatives, stand-ins, part of continual battle over the relations of representation. I don’t find it surprising that the “self-representations” of young workers – whether di Donato’s proletarian novel, White’s cabaret blues, Guthrie’s migrant songs, or Bulosan’s migrant narrative – rarely found large or immediate working-class audiences. Each struggled to combine old and new forms, and each was framed by popular cultural industries and institutions. Their lack of “popular” success does not make them less a part of a struggle for working-class self-representation. Similarly, the radical young women garment workers of *Pins and Needles* may not have written the songs of Harold Rome that they sang on stage night after night, but they adapted, accented, and appropriated them as their own, as “self-representations.” To listen to the recordings made by Millie Weitz and Ruth Rubenstein is, I think, to hear the beginnings of the contradictory but real labor feminism of the 1940s that Elizabeth Hawes exemplifies.

Similarly, though I am fascinated by those moments when social movements seemed to generate apparently “immediate” and “direct” cultural expressions and representations, they are rare and often accidental. The time of cultural history is not the same as the time of political or labor movement history. Social movements announce themselves in manifestos; songs, plays, films, novels, and memoirs follow at some distance. The earliest “direct” representations of a social movement usually appear in already established forms by authorized figures: the visibility in the 1930s of Dos Passos’s *U.S.A.*, *Waiting for Lefty*, *The Cradle Will Rock*, Welles’s *Citizen Kane*, and the novel and film of *The Grapes of Wrath* stand as good examples. The very celebrity of these cultural events made them a powerful part of the day-to-day political history of the period and they cannot be ignored.

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However, if we focus only on the celebrated cultural events we miss the underground currents of cultural history. Many of the cultural works sparked by a social movement come to fruition long after the movement has passed; often the most powerful reflections on episodes of social insurrection are composed in moments of defeat. A cultural historian cannot simply focus on the moment of “direct” agitational connections between a social movement and cultural expressions. It may be true, as Peter Rachleff (1998: 333) says, that I “avert [my] gaze from the mid-1930s, the moment when wholesale social change was most possible in America,” but for cultural history that gaze leaves us looking forever at *Waiting for Lefty*, asking why he never turned up. For me, the question is no longer why Lefty didn’t come, but why he came in the forms he did: the CIO working class may not have made a revolution but it did remake American culture. The issue raised by the *cultural* front is less its political failure in the mid-1930s than its cultural success, the ways it continued to live *after* the defeat of the social movement. That is why my gaze returns to the indirect connections of Olsen’s *Yonnonidio*, a novel “From the Thirties,” published in the 1970s, and set “in the early 1920s.”

But how do we judge this cultural success? Does the cultural success erase the political meaning of the movement? Peter Rachleff has suggested that the Hollywood appropriation of cultural front iconography – as in *The Godfather* – leads in “disturbing directions.” Should this laboring of American culture be seen as an “incorporation” of working-class cultures, which “neutralized their socially threatening qualities and perhaps even turned them into vehicles for social stability” (Rachleff 1998: 333)? In a way, yes: cultural or symbolic success is little compensation for political defeat, particularly since symbols can be stolen or “coopted” – a universal fear of American radicals of all stripes. The story I tell is largely a story of the literal incorporation – that is, commercialization – of culture. And the careers of the blacklisted and the exiled, of figures like Elizabeth Hawes, Josh White, and Carlos Bulosan, were hardly success stories.

However, as Raymond Williams reminded us, the struggle over defining the “selective tradition” is a fundamental struggle; symbolic success *is* a kind of success. To become part of a society’s cultural inheritance is to shape the possibilities for the future. From one side of the dialectic, this may be the story of the incorporation of the CIO working class, the oft-told tale of the crossover or “sellout” of proletarian artists to Hollywood, the universities, and the corporations. But from the other side of the dialectic, it was a laboring of America’s corporate culture, a less-told tale of a lingering plebian imprint on the American century, a political unconscious in postmodern culture. The vocabulary of “incorporation” and “elite hegemony” implies that defeat was total, that the “popular and commercial success of *The Godfather*” in 1972 simply reflected the hegemony of the bourgeoisie and the neutralization of the Popular Front ghetto pastoral (Rachleff 1998: 333). However, the political power of Coppola’s films of the 1970s, from *The Godfather* epics to *Apocalypse Now*, derived from the way

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they combined the residual energies of the cultural front – its ghetto pastorals, its gangster stories, its legends of Sinatra, and the iconic figure of Brando himself – with the narratives of the New Left social movements: the story of the Cuban Revolution, Michael Herr’s Vietnam writing.

The influence of the cultural front’s laboring of American culture is not a static quantity that can be measured by looking at the history of the 1930s and 1940s alone; it depends on its afterlife, on the ways that its inheritance is preserved, transmitted, and taken up by future social movements. The cultural work of Orson Welles, of Carlos Bulosan, of Elizabeth Hawes, even of *Waiting for Lefty* may have just begun.

None of these changes came easily. One rarely knows the book one is writing. Most of the interpretations I criticize are ones I have held at one time or another: that the central issue of the American left was the Soviet Union, that Popular Front culture was sentimental populism, that the virtues of a radical intellectual culture were upheld only by *Partisan Review*, that Mike Gold and Granville Hicks were the major “Marxist literary critics,” poor American substitutes for Benjamin and Lukács, that proletarian literature was like the Holy Roman Empire, neither proletarian nor literature, that Popular Front music consisted largely of topical ballads by the Almanac Singers, that the Communist Party and its Trotskyist antagonists *were* the American left in the 1930s. Right up to the last few months I was working on the book, I felt that the chapter on the Disney cartoonists’ strike was not really part of the book – it wasn’t radical culture in the same way as the proletarian literature debate or the Mercury Theater’s productions.

However, the Disney cartoonists’ strike became the hinge on which the entire book turned. The chapter on the Disney strike had been written by Holly Allen and me in the spring of 1992, the spring of the first major recognition drive by Yale’s graduate teacher union, GESO. (My other writing that spring was an article on the right of graduate teachers to form unions.) The parallels between Disney Studios and Yale University were a constant source of amusement to both of us. I gradually realized that one of the foremost legacies of the cultural front was its culture industry unionism. Moreover, the daily links between the graduate student union and the other two Yale locals – Local 35, the dining and maintenance union, and Local 34, the clerical and technical union, which was itself the result of a long and historic strike in 1984 – made visible to me the cultural space which linked artists and intellectuals with the labor movement in the Popular Front.

One might see this argument simply as the return of what C. Wright Mills dismissed in the early 1960s as the “labor metaphysic,” the sense that “‘the working class’ of the advanced capitalist societies” was “*the* historic agency” of social change. (Mills, 1963: 256–7). But I think this is mistaken. First, I would argue that the “labor metaphysic” of the Popular Front was deeper and richer than Mills allowed; it was not simply the relatively abstract and theoretical “belief” in the historical role of the industrial working class. Rather, it was a laboring of culture itself: the assertion of the dignity and beauty of working-class arts and entertainments;

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the alliance between unions of industrial workers and unions of artists; the defense of the arts in the face of commercial exploitation; and the sense that the dialectic between work and art, labor and beauty, is fundamental to human culture. In this sense, I think, the labor metaphysic is a crucial part of any socialist or Marxist tradition.

Moreover, the ferment in the labor movement over the last decade – symbolized by the struggles in the new union cities of Los Angeles and Las Vegas – has led to a renewed sense of the importance of the labor movement to social change. “Slacker” acquired a new meaning on college campuses as Student Labor Action Committees (SLACs) generated a wave of anti-sweatshop campaigns, Union Summer organizers and “labor teach-ins.” One of the new “little magazines” of the 1990s, *The Baffler*, called on its writers to rediscover the “facts of working life,” and published stories and essays on labor struggles. It is hard to recall the last time a major US novelist was someone who had also written a non-fiction account of a strike, as Barbara Kingsolver did in her *Holding the Line*. Or a time when an English professor collaborated with a photographer to tell the story of workers in a North Carolina furniture factory, as in Cathy Davidson and Bill Bamberger’s *Closing*. The formation of Scholars, Artists, and Writers for Social Justice out of the score of labor teach-ins across the country echoes 1932’s “Culture and the Crisis” pamphlet which was one of the early manifestos of the cultural front. Workers and their unions once again needed young artists like Guthrie, Le Sueur, and Dylan for “a song or two.”

But this new “laborism” should not be seen, as it often is, as an overdue reaction to so-called “identity politics” of the new left, a return to class and labor after some “mistaken” detour through race and gender. For Mills, Betty Friedan and the new left were not “wrong”; they did witness the remaking of the working classes. Radicals of the old and new lefts saw what they perceived as – and called – the embourgeoisement of the working class: the moving of UE, ILG, and UAW families to the new suburbs, the rise of mass higher education and apparently non-working-class white-collar work for their children, along with the infiltration of plebeian styles and accents into the “middle class” mass media of television and colleges. Moreover, Popular Front and new left radicals had a difficult time recognizing the masses of migrants from the South as a new working class – they were the poor people of Michael Harrington’s *The Other America*, the civil rights martyrs of Birmingham and Oxford, but they were the margins, not the heart of the affluent society.

This is because class images last longer than classes in capitalism. While a capitalist economy continually reshapes workplaces and the working population, destroying “old” industries and workforces while drawing new workers from around the globe and moving plants to new regions, we remain caught in the class maps we inherited from family, school, and movies. People thought the American working class was Irish long after it was no longer true: that is why Jack Conroy and James Farrell were the only writers immediately recognized in the 1930s as

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“proletarian writers.” The Popular Front’s image of “what workers look like” led a generation of postwar Americans to see the transformation and decline of the CIO working class, a specific historical class formation, as the disappearance of class itself and the passing of the “labor question.”

The rediscovery of class at the end of the century was not a rediscovery of the CIO working class, a Rip Van Winkle-like awakening to 1930s notions of the primacy of “class”; it was rather the recognition of a new working class in the midst of “identity politics.” The world of post-Fordism with its de-industrialized, apartheid cities, dominated by universities and hospitals, is inhabited by a two-tier working class: on the one hand, unionized white-collar and professional workers, better educated than the general population and more likely to see their work as a career rather than a job, the product of the invisible labor movement of the 1960s and 1970s – the tremendous wave of organization of white-collar, service- and public-sector employees, often women; and, on the other hand, a predominantly black, Latino and Asian American working class laboring in non-union sweatshops that provide the basic care and feeding of the nation, from chicken-processing plants to restaurant kitchens, the result of the remaking of the working class by the postwar migration from the South and the post-1965 migration from Asia and Latin America.

If a new cultural front is to be built, it depends not only on the self-organization of the downsized and subcontracted culture industry workers, but on the solidarity across “tiers” of writers and artists, teachers and professionals, with the part-timers, the casual workers, the immigrants in sweatshop restaurants and garment factories across the nation. That solidarity is not simply a matter of novelists walking picket lines and scholars and artists joining boycotts. For, if a new cultural front is to be built, it cannot recycle the old images of labor, the stock figures of Archie Bunker or Homer Simpson. Writers, musicians, and artists have long been responsible for the stories and pictures by which we see the world; it is they who can redraw the maps of class and work and workers that we all carry around unconsciously, and allow us to see new forms of struggle and solidarity in places we never thought to look.

Note

- 1 Complete liner notes to Dylan’s album, *The Times They Are A’Changin’*, are available at: www.bobdylan.com/#/songs/times-they-are-changin.

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Is Class an *American* Study?

Paul Lauter

For Emory

In 2004 a group of scholars, many of us affiliated with the American Studies Association, met in Chicago to constitute ourselves as an organizing committee for a Working-Class Studies Association. Our meeting emerged from a series of biennial conferences held by the Center for Working-Class Studies at Youngstown State University. These had brought together academics and activists, specialists in labor history and in labor organizing, working poets and working-class critics to analyze, discuss, and celebrate working-class experience, primarily in the United States. To be sure, there was an element of rebelliousness in these meetings, since it has been an article of faith in America that class divisions do not really exist, or, if they do, can easily be ignored. So the Youngstown conferences involved a certain provocation, equivalent in its way to the chant at contemporaneous gay pride marches: “we’re here, we’re queer, get used to us.” From these conferences have emerged a number of things: first, a Ford Foundation development grant, and a volume of *New Working-Class Studies* (Linkon 2005), edited by the primary Youngstown organizers, Sherry Linkon and John Russo. Then, a continuing series of yearly conferences, now held in a variety of venues, Minneapolis, Stony Brook, Pittsburgh, and the emergence of new centers for working-class studies in Chicago, Stony Brook, and elsewhere. And, as the Chicago meeting had hoped, an active Working-Class Studies Association, complete with a constitution, newsletter, officers, prizes, and all the modest paraphernalia of such professional groupings.

One might reasonably ask why, given the politically progressive character of American Studies in general, and the left-liberal definition of the American Studies Association in particular, it seemed necessary to constitute a separate academic formation devoted to Working-class Studies. After all, Working-class Studies has now been formally listed as one subject focus of the annual ASA convention. For a number of years a working-class caucus organized programs for the convention. And certainly class, in various ways, has informed the work of a number of

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significant American Studies scholars. But, in fact, class has not been a major component in *American Quarterly* or in the annual ASA meetings. If one reviews the programs of ASA national conventions since 1996, one finds that panels devoted to class, labor, or the like constituted no more than a quarter to a third as many as those concerned with race, and a slightly higher ratio to panels that examined gender, women's studies, or feminism. Generally, panels that dealt with African American issues were slightly more than double the number that focused on class; similarly panels on Asian American and Latino/a issues were significantly more frequent – except for the years in which the ASA Working-Class Caucus was active – than those that dealt with class.

Similarly, class is not a steady presence in *American Quarterly*. In their article on the subject, Larry J. Griffin and Maria Tempenis “focus on the supposition that theory and research on race, gender, and ethnicity have replaced class analysis in American studies’ premier journal” (Griffin). Their somewhat ambiguous conclusion is this:

Class has not disappeared from the most prestigious and visible journal in American studies.

This is not to say, though, that the catchphrase “class, race, and gender,” supposedly at the core of the transformed, post-1960s American studies, is really implemented in scholarly practice often. Relatively little of the *Quarterly*'s pages have ever been used to explore social class (the most conservative estimate of this is very low indeed), and articles exploring one facet or another of gender and race, or framed by either or (increasingly) both, have, at least since the late 1960s, greatly outnumbered those overtly motivated by class. The real question is not whether class has been displaced by multiculturalism (generally, it has not), but rather why, for the last fifty years, it has received so little attention in *AQ*. (2002: 90)

This is also not to say that Americanists are uninterested in class; it is to say that the interest in class as a lived experience or as an analytic category is not native to American intellectuals. It needs to be fostered, and that has been the first task of the Youngstown Center for Working-Class Studies and its offshoots.

More fundamental, however, are the terms under which class enters into the academic conversation in America; I wish here to explore that set of issues and then consider what an interest in class might suggest about what American Studies practitioners could do with respect to class in the classroom. The name of the new group is the Working-Class Studies Association, not the Association for the Study of Class. That is not a trivial distinction. The model for the name, and the focus, in fact, is one familiar to us from other identity-based formations. “Black (or, later, African American) Studies” came onto the scene in the 1960s, *not* Race Studies. Likewise, it was “Women’s Studies” that began to make inroads into the academy in the late 1960s and early 1970s, *not* Gender Studies. The names, and in some respects the foci, of such programs have evolved in recent years: Women’s Studies has often become “Gender Studies” or, even more elaborately,

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“Women, Gender, and Sexuality.” And “Black Studies” has sometimes modulated into “Africana” or “African Diaspora” Studies or even Critical Race Studies, and has spun off Whiteness Studies. But the driving engine was, and in many ways remains, the situation, the lived experience, of those historically repressed or marginalized: blacks, Latino/as, Native Americans, Asian Americans, women. And so now working class.

I do not want to disparage this development, only to point out that it is different from what might emerge from a study of class per se. After all, we are all “classed.” For, just as “race” is not an attribute only of so-called “minorities,” and just as “gender” is not a construction pertinent only to women or to homosexuals, so class experience and outlook is not a factor only in working-class life. Indeed, one could argue that the bourgeoisie are more explicitly class conscious than most others, especially because a central function of the education and culture industries – to which I will return shortly – is to persuade the rest of us to identify our own interests and desires with those of the rich and powerful. Indeed, David Harvey’s recent *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005) suggests that the status of the word “class” descended even as upper-class power began to reassert hegemony in the late 1970s and through the 1980s.¹

I have used this awkward formulation, “classed,” to avoid another misleading one, that is, that we “have” class. A formula like “having” class or race or gender is shaped – like many notions about identity in capitalist America – on the pattern of commodities, things one possesses, like dark skin, or breasts, or Mexican ancestors. Of course, these attributes, unlike commodities, are hard to be rid of; but, like commodities, they play significant roles for most Americans in identifying themselves or others. Thus, dark skin identifies “African American,” breasts identify female, Mexican ancestors identify Chicano or Chicana. Imitating this pattern, class comes to be seen as primarily a matter of things one possesses: a ranch in Arizona or a shack in LA, a Mercedes Benz or a bus token, a Gucci gown or K-Mart jeans. Such objects may help to describe matters of wealth and perhaps status. But class involves a more complicated set of *relationships*, relationships expressed not just in possessions or even in more personal attributes – like patterns of speech and dress – but mainly in ways of feeling, thinking, and understanding. To say it another way, class involves not just what you “have” or even what you “are,” but what Raymond Williams calls “a structure of feeling,” how you look at the world, what you see there, how you experience what you perceive – and how all of that differs from what other groups of people look at, see, and experience. (In fact, were this model of class used to view race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, we would come to better understand those terms as relational as well.)

Class also has a complex relationship to other markers of identity, such as gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. For example, many immigrants to the United States discover in America a significant dislocation between their original class training, their education, credentials, associations, and their job status in this

country. The linguist who works as a taxi driver or the nurse who works as a shop clerk may be caught between “old world” and “new world” determinants of class, disparities which can produce anger and despair as well as forms of self-assertion. For the kid brought up where I was 60 years ago, in Washington Heights, Manhattan, can the threads of being Dominican and being working class be sorted out? Yet it is useful to do so, for that will help shape with whom you make common cause, and the basis of that solidarity.

Similarly, class is heavily inflected by gender as well as by race and nationality. Carolyn Steedman offers an explanation in her wonderful book *Landscapes for a Good Woman* of why women do not fit comfortably into the traditional narrative of “wage-labour and capital,” the story of the “exploiter and exploited, capital and proletariat” (Steedman 1987: 14). “Women are,” she writes, in certain senses, “without class, because the cut and fall of a skirt and good leather shoes can take you across the river and to the other side: the fairy-tales tell you that goose-girls may marry kings” (15–16).

Similarly, external markers taken by commentators such as Paul Fussell to represent class standing may well differ across different racial and ethnic groups. In the book *Class*, his list of items constituting a “living room scale” (Fussell 1984: 230–3), like Venetian blinds, certain kinds of pictures on the wall, bookcases full or empty of books, may tell us more about ethnic origins than about real class standing, as Willa Cather’s story “Old Mrs. Harris” illustrates. There, the Rosens have every accoutrement constituting at least Fussell’s “upper-middle” – all of which is largely irrelevant in the “snappy little Western democracy” in which they live. Moreover, rather amusingly, items which Fussell sees as contributing a negative to his scale, like a fishbowl or aquarium, have taken on somewhat different valences over time, thus suggesting a certain instability in such supposed markers of class – or perhaps the irony of Fussell’s prose.²

Given the slipperiness of such material criteria, one can understand the continuing appeal of basic Marxist categories of class: essentially one’s relationship to the means of production and distribution. Were you an owner, a manager, a worker, someone who sold your labor for a wage or your product for a price? Were you one of those “faceless” beings in the army of the unemployed or, like many academics today, the underemployed or exploited? Were you a creator of machines and their codes, a buyer or user of them, one entrusted with their care and feeding? Or were you one who “produced” nothing but paper, and profits from its multiple transfers, as bankers of the recent dispensation seemed primarily to do? Were you a painter in New York City’s municipal workforce, salaried at \$25 an hour, or a workfare recipient, doing the same job but getting only welfare checks amounting at best to \$12,000 or \$15,000 a year? Or were you among those who in various ways profit from how the City is “saving” so much money by undermining its unions and shifting its labor to a casual (as it is called), temporary, and permanently exploited class? Class categories and conflicts are clear enough in stories such as Lloyd Zimpel’s *Foundry Foreman*, *Foundrymen*: the foreman, Procop,

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exists in that conflicted space between the owner and the workers, and the drama of his life is how he can maintain that unsteady perch given the boss's demands and the workers' injuries and defensive stalling. But as the definitions of what constitutes "production" – as well as what is produced – and "distribution" have changed radically over the past 150 years, such demarcations of class have become increasingly complicated, even unstable. To be sure, the study of class will necessarily immerse us and our students in a much richer understanding of work, not to speak of unemployment, hierarchy, and other aspects of industrial and postindustrial labor. On the other hand, "work" in the senses I have been using it is itself not terribly interesting to some students of American Studies. Five or six years ago I taught in a summer seminar for young Russian scholars and graduate students at Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy's estate. There, most of his important works were written; there, in his study, one finds references to the American writers, such as Thoreau, who influenced him. And there it snowed in June, a fortunate event since it kept the mosquitoes at bay. I had assigned my students a series of stories and poems dealing with work, including Zimpel's story, and I found them to be strangely resistant to the subject. Irritated less by the mosquitoes than by their indifference to what would be, as I pointed out, a central part of their lives, I confronted them about what was going on. After much shuffling, one participant finally said, "well, work – that's just too Soviet for us." I should perhaps have understood that as a sign not just of post-Soviet Russia, but of the views of many American intellectuals as well.

Still, a living sense of class is obviously constituted by more than one's job. It involves what my students grasp at through a phrase I have banned from their writing: "lifestyle." I think they mean the full repertoire of social and family relations, manners of expression, forms of talking and dressing, psychological and cultural phenomena, including artistic productions, foodways and folkways that constitute everyday life. But, generally, they are really referring to what people consume. And it is, of course, consumption that presents the greatest obstacles to understanding class. It has been the genius of consumer capitalism to encourage us to define ourselves by what we buy and possess. Because of the homogenization of American culture, particularly youth culture (e.g., in music, clothes, even food), the more subtle but powerful and meaningful aspects of class are masked. To own the latest pair of athletic shoes is to be *in* the shoes for however fleeting a moment of LeBron James or some other sports or movie idol who models them – or even the prep school son of the man who is said to "manufacture" them. Much of our experience in the United States, including that of college, teaches us to define ourselves by what we consume. Vartan Gregorian, when he was president of Brown University, once pointed out how much of a bargain a residential college was: it offered participants reasonable rooms, a great deal of healthy food, 24-hour security, non-stop entertainment, unmatched sports facilities, even some educational opportunities – all for far less than even non-unionized Marriott could afford to charge. And so we have been bringing up a generation

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of educational consumers to whose demands many colleges, like supermarkets, feel constrained to respond. But that is another story. Here I only want to underline how the imperatives toward consumption in every area of life tend to overwhelm other shapers of class consciousness.

Harvey is striking in his account of how the bankruptcy forced on New York City was used to deflect attention from issues of class conflict to those of consumption and life style:

Corporate welfare substituted for people welfare. The city's elite institutions were mobilized to sell the image of the city as a cultural centre and tourist destination (inventing the famous logo "I Love New York"). The ruling elites moved, often fractiously, to support the opening up of the cultural field to all manner of diverse cosmopolitan currents. The narcissistic exploration of self, sexuality, and identity became the leitmotif of bourgeois urban culture.

Artistic freedom and artistic license, promoted by the city's powerful cultural institutions, led, in effect, to the neoliberalization of culture. "Delirious New York" (to use Rem Koolhaas's memorable phrase) erased the collective memory of democratic New York. The city's elites acceded, though not without a struggle, to the demand for lifestyle diversification (including those attached to sexual preference and gender) and increasing consumer niche choices (in areas such as cultural production). New York became the epicentre of postmodern intellectual and cultural production. . . . Working-class and immigrant New York was thrust back into the shadows. (Harvey 2005: 47)

Ideas of class, and especially of class conflict, thus came to be posed against ideas of freedom to participate in the marketplace of commodities.

But is our life in the marketplace to be seen as producing simply forms of false consciousness? Steedman argues that class consciousness must be understood "not only as a structure of feeling that arises from the relationship of people to other people within particular modes of production" but also as what she describes as a "proper envy of those who possess what one has been denied." She proposes that "by allowing this envy entry into political understanding, the proper struggles of people in a state of dispossession to gain their inheritance might be seen not as sordid and mindless greed for the things of the market place, but attempts to alter a world that has produced in them states of unfulfilled desire" (1987: 123). This is surely a powerful argument, especially in light of the potent role desire for commodities played, for better and for worse, in destroying the communist world and in sustaining the processes by which the very rich, under George W. Bush, looted the American economy. Yet, while it is explanatory, I think it is finally too simple.

For the underlying metaphor of the marketplace as a unitary site seems to me fundamentally misleading. It is usually said that we come into the marketplace differently enabled by financial standing, culture, and cleverness; that's the common way of regarding consumer transactions. Seen in this perspective, what

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differentiates people, as consumers, is only the weight of their pocketbooks and the shrewdness of their intellects. But there is no single marketplace in which all people compete for goods. Rather, there are many marketplaces, to which we have very differential access. In fact, the very meaning of “the marketplace” is always already inflected by strong class determinants. In America, we assume that anyone can, if he or she so wishes, shop in Neiman Marcus, just as anyone can choose to sleep under the bridge, as Anatole France put it. Elsewhere, the lines are more forcefully drawn. Can those who work in the tanneries of Marrakesh enter its fancy leather-goods stores? Are the hard-currency shops open to most citizens of Cuba? The convenience of the omnipresent bank machines depends entirely upon having enough money in an account from which to draw – and also pay the fees. The Sunday tourist market near the Sacre Coeur Basilica in Paris presents an altogether different world from the working-class, immigrant market near the suburban Basilica of St Denis. I intend these as metaphors to help illuminate what the relative fluidity of consumer venues in the United States and elsewhere obscures: namely, that the very meanings of “the” marketplace vary widely by virtue of class. And particularly in the sense that access to marketplaces came, at least for middle-class and some better-off working-class people, to substitute for access to political power.

That can be seen most forcefully, perhaps, in connection with education. Americans pride themselves on the idea that virtually everyone can go to college. But under what circumstances and to which colleges? I remember writing some years ago that while Trinity and Hartford Tech were both colleges, and located less than a mile from one another, they bore about as much resemblance as Westport, in Fairfield County, and Port Au Prince, in Haiti. In fact, while we continue to speak of “the university,” the higher education system has systematically and increasingly been differentiated by roles, constituencies, facilities, available funds, and the like. And the present financial crisis is sharpening the differences. Given the chance to come to Trinity, would you go to Hartford Tech? Or, for that matter, to Central Connecticut State University? That is not meant as a put-down of Central or Hartford Tech. But it is to say that the marketplaces for which Trinity or its peers are gateways are meaningfully different from the marketplaces to which Central and Hartford Tech open out. It is called “role differentiation” in current policy papers; an older name for it is “tracking”; a still older phrase, more accurate perhaps, is class stratification. It takes a person of deep political commitment to push against the imperatives we have learned, of seeking the pleasures of culture and commodities rather than the struggles of class solidarity.

Of course, American ideology holds that education offers the primary means to get ahead in the society. And there is significant truth in that claim. I can vouch for it in my own life. Here I am, a Jewish boy from the Bronx and Washington Heights, at a once-Episcopal college holding down a fancy chair named after the inventor of municipal bonds. One might say that, like the lawyer in Melville’s

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“Bartleby,” I do a “snug business among rich men’s bonds and mortgages and title-deeds.” But, as usual, one needs to historicize that process: I came of age at a time in which it was public policy to integrate the sons (and maybe the daughters) of doubtfully zealous white ethnic and generally working-class minorities – Jews, Italians, Poles – in the post World War II domestic settlement. We had lovely opportunities to attend college and grad school, get solid tenured jobs, buy decent homes in newly created suburbs, pile up remarkable sums in pension plans. Does that litany, which I could extend considerably, model today’s world? Of course not. In fact, increasingly sharp class stratification is the order of the day in academe, a fact to which I will return in a moment.

At a still deeper level, the American educational system as a whole teaches all of us the fundamentally bourgeois values of individualism and competition. In *Culture Against Man*, a book of 1963, Jules Henry reported his anthropologist’s appraisal of elementary-school training. He enters a classroom and the teacher asks “which of you nice little boys and girls would like to hang up Mr. H’s coat?” Of course, all of the children eagerly begin waving their hands, whereupon the teacher must call on one to do the required task. That she could have done in the first place. But, as Henry points out, a critical lesson is being reinforced in the episode, which can be seen by imagining what would happen if a child did *not* respond to the teacher’s request: he or she would be seen as uncooperative, deviant even. By framing her question instead of calling on one student initially, the teacher is imposing a lesson in conformity and competition, a lesson the students absorb with what Henry terms the “noise” of the classroom. I came to appreciate how central that lesson was when, a few years after Henry’s book came out, I taught a class at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, in “Revolutionary Literature.” As befit such a course, at the end of the term I offered students the option of writing an individual final exam or participating in a group final. After all, I pointed out, Raymond Williams’s contrast between bourgeois, individualistic culture and cooperative, working-class culture was central to the course. Most of the conventionally adept students opted out of the group process, and those who remained in it had a difficult time holding all the members to any productive discipline. Thus they learned from practice a critical lesson in the problems of actually doing collective work. What I learned some months later was the danger of tampering with one of the educational system’s basic imperatives: the lesson of individualism. For I found myself fired, ostensibly for giving a collective grade. To be sure, the dean who claimed that as his reason was more than a bit disingenuous – he was not happy that I was involved in the street politics of the day. I tell this story because it helps illustrate how deeply rooted in the educational systems of this country is its class ideology.

History apart, the class structure of the university system apart, and the ideology of the hidden curriculum apart, the American academy has in any case hardly been a source of clarity about class issues. It has generally offered an attenuated approach to the study of class, largely restricting it to Economics departments

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primarily devoted to making businesses tick. Political economy, wherein one looks at the class-inflected intersections of political structures and economic power, remains rather an orphan in most universities. In fact, at Trinity, not a single course description in Economics so much as mentions the word “class,” not “The Political Economy of Western Civilization,” “Urban Economics” “Macro Economic Policies for Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa” “Structural Reform in Latin America,” or “China’s Transition to a Market System,” though women and even race are occasionally referred to. To be fair, the word “class” does creep into the titles of two Sociology courses. While virtually every university will offer a variety of courses devoted to race and racism, to gender and sexuality, as well as to the social movements that have worked for change in such areas of life, in few indeed would one find a course called, for example, “Class in America.” Yes, social scientists and historians, mainly those influenced by Marxism, have often provided opportunities to study class issues by tucking the subject into courses on inequality, immigration, ethnicity, and the like. But where one studies writers such as Raymond Williams or Carolyn Steedman has always been a problem in the US.

Even an innovative project, like the one that produced the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, has been limited by presiding divisions of knowledge. English departments prefer to focus on significant individual authors, as a study of any catalogue will reveal, and so the *Heath* is primarily organized on the basis of authors. And while we have widened substantially the idea of who constitutes a significant author, and have added a few of what we call “sheaves” of decidedly less-famous writers, the author-paradigm necessarily remains dominant. That creates significant hardships for working-class writers, who often produce rather little in lives taken up with the demands of jobs, communities, labor struggles, and what Tillie Olsen called “Silences.” I would, for example, very much like to include in the *Heath* the Lloyd Zimpel piece I mentioned before, but until very recently I literally knew of nothing else by him and could not justify his inclusion on the basis just of a pair of stories. In short, with some few shining exceptions, the academy remains part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Or let me say it more accurately: colleges and universities are part of the cultural apparatus by means of which Americans are taught the *unimportance* of class in our lives.

Another major element of that cultural apparatus has been the media. We are all familiar with the ways in which, traditionally, working-class people were portrayed in movies and on TV: comedy was the primary mode, the laughter directed at Archie or Ralph Cramden. The rather few movies that have dealt directly with working-class life seem to naturalize a contradiction between working-class origins and real smarts: you don’t expect *that* from *them*. More fundamentally, the primary class dynamic of Hollywood has been to deflect the viewer’s gaze upward from the daily struggles of ordinary life to a world of glamor and beauty. But it is obviously too simple to argue that escapism is altogether the mode of

the media when it comes to class. There is, first of all, the question of audience: blockbuster movies such as *Titanic* appeal across class lines, which may help explain some of the movie's inclusion of characters from various class strata. But Larry Hanley argued a decade ago on a Center for Working-Class Studies discussion list that "if you're interested in working-class cinema" – by which he meant movies preferred by working-class viewers – "Hollywood's subgenres are where the action is" (CWCS-L, 26 March, 1998). "My video store in the Bronx," he continued, "is a lot less interested in overstocking *My Best Friend's Wedding* than in having multiple copies of, for instance, *Mimic* [the newest remake of Lang's *Metropolis*]." Hanley is thus raising an intriguing question: whether the working class in America represents a sufficient niche market for those who manufacture cultural products to attend to its preferences. It would not, of course, be the first time that capitalism recognized class as a basis for consumption as well as consciousness before its opposition did. Hanley and John Alberti also raised the question of whether TV is not more facile in appealing to a working-class audience, perhaps because it is somewhat less cost-driven than Hollywood. That such issues remain more matters for speculation than ethnographic data illustrates part of the problem I am addressing: on the one hand, the marketing imperatives of consumer capitalism lead it to analyze any ways in which a general population can be broken down into consuming units; on the other hand, the broader ideological demands of capitalism lead to a reluctance to identify most people as anything but "middle-class." But surely, from the perspective of those of us who do cultural studies, it is important to try figuring out whether particular media and, within them, distinctive genres are differently aligned by the class of consumers.

Much of the Working-class Studies list's discussion at the time focused on how certain movies constructed working-class characters and people's reactions to such characterizations. A number of contributors focused on a theme that, for academics of working-class origins, is peculiarly poignant – that is, the extent to which the road upward toward the pleasures of "middle-class" life is also necessarily a road away from the working-class people and culture one continues to value. I found notably moving a long post by Barbara Jensen, in which she talked of her own difficulty in leaving behind her friends and family.³ And she moved on to theorize such processes in a particularly interesting way. She wrote:

I found that the portrayal of working class people as less individualistic matches my experience (and my own insides). I don't see that as a negative stereotype, I see it as a kind of loyalty and respect for one's people. I have had to "break away" (a good movie about class) at times to find my own path but I still value the glue of community mindedness. (CWCS-L, 25 March, 1998)

Jensen here expresses the fundamental distinction between bourgeois and working-class culture that Raymond Williams drew in *Culture and Society*. The central feature of bourgeois ideology, Williams argues, can be figured as a ladder:

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people advance one by one, as individuals up that defined path. By contrast, Williams says, the characteristic forms of working-class life are cooperative, whether these are called unions or collectives or socialist projects, and they can be figured as a raft, which, carrying all aboard, rises as the waters rise. Williams's own language is, still, I think, useful to hear:

The crucial distinguishing element in English life since the Industrial Revolution is not language, not dress, not leisure – for these indeed will tend to uniformity. The crucial distinction is between alternative ideas of the nature of social relationships.

“Bourgeois” is a significant term because it marks that version of social relationship which we usually call individualism: that is to say, an idea of society as a neutral area within which each individual is free to pursue his own development and his own advantage as a natural right. . . . [T]he individualist idea can be sharply contrasted with the idea that we properly associate with the working class: an idea which, whether it is called communism, socialism or cooperation, regards society neither as neutral nor as protective, but as the positive means for all kinds of development, including individual development. Development and advantage are not individually but commonly interpreted. The provision of the means of life will, alike in production and distribution, be collective and mutual. Improvement is sought, not in the opportunity to escape from one's class, or to make a career, but in the general and controlled advance of all. The human fund is regarded as in all respects common, and freedom of access to it a right constituted by one's humanity; yet such access, in whatever kind, is common or it is nothing. Not the individual, but the whole society, will move. (Williams 1983: 325, 326)

Like most such binaries, this one – bourgeois/working-class – somewhat essentializes class categories and thus stabilizes ideas of class precisely at a moment in which class structures are being reconstituted on a global basis. But class, like race and gender, is always being recast in changing circumstances. Over the last decade, an international “middle class” – as we like to call it in the United States – has been under construction through the medium of electronic technologies, cheap air fares, the establishment of English as the language of common exchange, and the diffusion of a set of orthodox tastes for travel (encouraged by colleges) and in commodities, from fabrics to food. An international dominant – I am uncomfortable with “ruling” – class has been in place for over a quarter-century, its tools of control over the flow of information and dollars, and over national and international financial institutions like the IMF and the Federal Reserve having been sufficiently well developed to profit from local economic changes – until some combination of greed, the insufficiency of the algorithms, and the consequent bursting of paper bubbles led to the current crash that has disturbed but not displaced this class's control over the political economy, especially in the West. At the same time, the stratifications of an internationalized working class have increasingly been coming into view; these different strata are defined in part by their varied relations (or non-relations) to the new technologies, for these

technologies are equivalent in their way to the older means of production and distribution. Most of all, however, these stratifications have to do with immigration (see Lauter), documentation (or its lack), citizenship, and the presence or evaporation of jobs. My point here, however, is not to describe this structure in detail, though that, I think, is a significant project for American Studies. My object here is to contribute to that project by suggesting the virtues and limitations of Williams's formulation.

On the one hand, Williams's concept offers what is essential to understand: that individualism and the market ideology it underwrites are *not* the only sources of value and judgment, not even in the US of A. That is especially important in a nation where collectivity has been in low repute at least since 1623, when the Pilgrims gave up what William Bradford somewhat sneeringly referred to as the "Common Course and Condition" and moved to individual, private plots of land. Williams's formulation is even more essential at a time in which the real existing communist alternatives to consumer capitalism have in their collapse dragged down virtually all ideas about social cooperation, much less socialism. It is especially appealing as we look around us and see how individualism mutated into the high narcissism of banking, into public policy with actions like repealing the Glass-Steagall Act, and into the deepest crash since 1929. The last presidential election suggests that many of us feel deeply the need for meaningful sources of affiliation that do *not*, like the United Colors of Benetton, turn into fronts for yet another corridor of the marketplace. In this moment of financial crisis, we cannot afford a retrospective, fixed understanding of class. Simply to place collectivity over against individualism is to insure rejection, just as ignoring the real pleasures of commodity culture offers only a recipe for defeat. Individuality and consumption are by no means enemies, any more than they are gods. The problem, I think, is to rescue the culture, the alternative ways of seeing, feeling, and thinking that Williams codes as "working-class" from under both the collapsed cement walls of communism and the plastic shards of capitalist bubbles.

That, it seems to me, is a main challenge for American Studies. I want now to suggest how in the work most readers of this book do – teaching and study – we might address class both as a category of analysis and as a set of experiences. I would pose three goals: first, to place the study of class back into curricula. Second, to denaturalize the forms of pedagogy that internalize bourgeois cultural norms. And, third, to build alternative educational structures that embody forms of collective, mutually supportive work. All of these, I want to conclude, constitute not simply academic exercises but are, rather, significant parts of a wider liberatory politics that, I continue to believe, is characteristic of American Studies and is essential to reverse the extraordinary dominance that the upper class has constructed since the 1970s.

First, changing the subject matter of courses is much the easiest problem at least to conceptualize – it is what in literary study has come to be called the question of the canon. Just as one would be hard-pressed to analyze gender relations

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concentrating on men, or race concentrating on whites (though I acknowledge that either could be done), so it is vital in the study of class to look deeply and systematically at the experiences, forms of expression, and institutions of working-class people. There are whole schools devoted to the study of business enterprise – or, rather, how to make such enterprises work or at least keep from crashing. Professorships exist to promote the values of the “free enterprise” system – we have one where I work. But the methodical teaching about the forms of working-class history and organization in America, primarily labor organizations, is in its childhood, marginalized if not altogether absent from the curricula of most History, Political Science, Literature or Cultural Studies departments. The website of the Center for Working-Class Studies provides the syllabi for 14 courses, primarily in interdisciplinary Working-class Studies and Literature. The website also offers a variety of teaching strategies and resources, including a useful chart outlining various definitions of class and their implications. Virtually all of these courses, as well as many new texts that can be used in them, have emerged in the last decade, basically since Sherry Linkon, John Russo, and others began to organize the Youngstown State University conferences. That fact suggests one answer to the question I raised in the beginning about the need for such independent organizing: change does not fall from the sky, but comes about only through conscious planning and work. A response to the ways in which upper-class power has dominated educational and cultural institutions can only come about through conscious work for change.

While thinking about class as an identity category is, as I have been suggesting, misleading, the strategies of earlier work by identity-based programs can be useful. Native American academics and activists have used analyses of the laws through which federal power controlled Indian people to formulate alternatives to such domination. Classroom study of distinctive governing legal concepts, such as those embodied in the Indian Removal Act, the Dawes Severalty Act, and more recent legislation governing tribal status, provides a very concrete approach to such issues and, at the same time, engages students in complex issues of government, law, and policy, in addition to values and rhetoric. A similar approach by Asian American scholars engages legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Senate decision to annex the Philippines, and Executive Order 9066 that led to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. In all these, social relations of power have been embedded in court decisions, executive orders, and legislative enactments. So is it with respect to working-class people: relations of power can effectively be examined by studying rules governing matters such as seventeenth-century ties between apprentices, journeymen, and masters, the lines drawn between indentured servants and slaves, laws about the legality of workers forming combinations in their own interests or utilizing boycotts, or the permutations of labor legislation from nineteenth-century legislation limiting hours and child labor, to the Wagner Act, to Taft-Hartley, to the present struggle over the Employee Free Choice Act. Some years ago, George Lipsitz developed a very

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interesting course focused on the 1930s, in which he examined Jack Conroy's novel *The Disinherited*, historical studies by Elizabeth Cohen and Vicki Ruiz, and the 1935 Wagner Act. Lipsitz's model allowed his students to understand from the two historical texts "that class consciousness does not arise solely from the inner life of the worker or from injustices at the point of production." Cohen and Ruiz, Lipsitz writes:

show how the Great Depression damaged previous identifications with ethnicity as the primary locale of individual and collective identity, how political mobilization enabled workers to experience new identities, and how cultural practices helped define the content of class consciousness. Most important, they identify class not only as a structural relationship with the means of production, but also as an individual and collective form of self-definition forged through practice on many fronts. (1997: 16)

Such courses, exploring the ways in which working people are represented, both culturally and politically, seem to me central to the project of developing an American Studies approach to class. Michael Denning taught such courses at Yale for a number of years (did that help account for some of the labor militance of students in American Studies there?); they are reflected in his important book, *The Cultural Front*, in which he examines what he calls the "laboring" of American culture during the 1930s and 1940s.

It has become considerably easier over the last 10 years to develop courses in English departments devoted to the literature and culture of the American working class. A variety of anthologies collect both working-class writing and varied texts addressing broader issues of class. Janet Zandy has been indefatigable in editing and writing such invaluable volumes, most recently *American Working-Class Literature: An Anthology* (2006).⁴ Ann Fitzgerald and I put together a useful collection called *Literature, Class and Culture* (Fitzgerald 2000). I do not want to pretend that these will be easy courses either to design or to get accepted. First, are we speaking of books and movies about working-class life, by working-class artists, or consumed by working-class audiences – or all three? Or are we designing classes that focus on class more generally, just as other courses concentrate on race or gender and their intersections? And a variety of theoretical issues also need consideration: I have explored some of the ways in which poems about industrial labor, for example, differ from other kinds of verse in terms of voice, unique patterns of imagery, and distinctive narratives (Lauter, "Under Construction," 2005). With Janet Zandy, Larry Smith has developed a brief but useful statement about "what makes a text working-class."⁵

Beyond such practical and theoretical questions are those having to do with the audience: students. It is not so much that today's students are suspicious of what they see as ideological categories such as "working class," or even "class," or reluctant to enroll in courses which seem tangential, at best, to career goals. But courses on working-class history, culture, and experience also engage the

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tensions working-class students experience as they are pulled both toward their class origins, about which many have mixed feelings, and toward the upward ladder implicitly promised in their acceptance letters to college. Jacqueline Ellis, the author of *Silent Witnesses* (1998), wrote to me a few years ago that:

students at the community college where I teach part time are resistant to the term class and especially the label “working-class”, some – especially those who work hardest at getting to school and raising children and working full-time and who one might consider to be most wc – find it down right insulting. I have some sympathy with their perspective. . . .

As a working-class person, I feel emotionally, politically, ideologically and culturally tied to my class identity. At the same time, I am often quite deeply ambivalent about feeling that way, since the community I grew up in was an archetypical working-class Thatcherite city, where I had to learn to mediate my political opinions as well as my educational ambitions. This lack of support from my wc community combined with the class elitism of academia leaves me with a difficult dilemma where I would like to celebrate and enjoy my personal achievement (like writing a book) without having to care about what it means in terms of being working class or bourgeois.

The relatively slow development of courses in Working-class Studies may reflect not only the hegemony of bourgeois norms in American colleges and universities, but the contradictory status, particularly of working-class students and teachers, within such institutions.

Second, as to pedagogies, I have already suggested in the anecdote about my “Revolutionary Literature” course one alternative to the scene of individual competition dominant in school, that is, forms of group work. Electronic technologies offer an increased variety of possibilities for enabling students either to work together or to systematically reference and incorporate each other’s work in their own. But we need to be aware that such technologies are a terrain whereon class struggle is now being carried out, as surely as the loom and spindle were 200 years ago. What needs teaching is obviously not the technologies themselves, for many students remain well in advance of their instructors in that regard. Rather, what has to be looked at are the issues of power and control now being fought through – as, for example, between collegiate managers and teachers over issues of Internet intellectual property. And how the differential forms of deploying electronic technologies in colleges are also mechanisms for situating users within the emerging structures of class, nationally and internationally. For example, what is the impact of linking via videoconferencing or the Internet a class at Williams College to one in Finland? Does that really change content, approach, or pedagogy? Or does it primarily build the culture of an international “middle class,” more or less on the model of that within America? Similarly, is the kind of use of technology increasingly characteristic of training institutions like Phoenix University also a way of acculturating the upper tier of a technologically sophisticated but

economically limited working class? In other words, the useful pedagogies that electronic technologies offer cannot be divorced from the political issues generally submerged in discussions of how to do it; what is being done, to whom, and by what must become a part of such discussions.

Of course, the best pedagogies for class politics are those provided by movements for social change. We used to have on the back of *Radical Teacher* magazine a quote from Mao Tse-tung. It ran “If you want knowledge, you must take part in the practice of changing reality. If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change it by eating it yourself . . . If you want to know the theory and methods of revolution, you must take part in revolution.” I’ve liked that quotation rather more than the long definition we currently use of a “radical teacher.” Of course, Mao is distinctly out of favor, but his observation still rings true to me. And while there are no dynamic social movements today, as there were when we began *Radical Teacher* some 35 years ago, there are large numbers of significant projects ready to supply students with the experience of eating that pear. These range from opportunities to hone journalistic skills by following eviction teams, to internships with organizations rebuilding New Orleans, to the efforts made during recent election campaigns to register people unused to voting. What is critical is the imaginative use of such opportunities *within* the structure of college classes. It is true, of course, that off-campus opportunities are too often transformed into exploitative internships, which have become increasingly necessary to break into career paths. But that reality can, too, become the subject of analysis and discussion. The key to a liberatory pedagogy is mobilizing knowledge that students already possess without, at the same time, altogether surrendering to the authority of experience. Experience is a good teacher, but it is not the only teacher; eating the pear yourself is not the end of learning, only its beginning. Precisely because the modern university system was set up and continues to function as a mechanism for acculturating students to bourgeois norms, we need to be suspicious of all pedagogical forms, asking of them – however innocent seeming – what is their class content? What is the class content of paper assignments, the individual grade, as well, on the other side of the desk, the requirements for promotion and tenure? I am not arguing that we scrap such things – though that *was* the argument of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. I am suggesting that we must become more fully aware of the class content such forms carry with them.

That will, finally, take a considerable rethinking of the dominant structures of today’s university. But that rethinking is no longer a matter of choice. Class has never been external to the educational system. Apart from the ideological issues I have already raised, one needs to consider the fact that in the past Harvard students were used to undermine the Boston police strike, just as Berkeley students were used to scab during the general strike of 1934. The picture became cloudier in the post-World War II period, during which colleges turned into significant means for upward mobility for people like me, and then during the 1960s, when universities became staging grounds for attacks on racism and the

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war policies of the wider society. Then it seemed that intellectuals had the luxury of choice about which side we were on, and while some of us began, in the 1970s, to speak of the proletarianization of the university teaching force and the exploitation of adjunct faculty,⁶ we really had very little understanding of the system that would emerge. How far we have come was dramatized for me some years ago when an acquaintance asked me whether, when I left academe to work for the Quakers during the sixties, I had given up a “tenure track” position. I was stumped for a moment, until I recognized that then, more than 40 years ago, all full-time and many part-time jobs led to tenure; there was no such conception as a non-tenure-track job, and when that invention was introduced at Stony Brook in the early 1970s, we protested mightily – and, I must say, unsuccessfully. Today, tenure, while not dead, is on a respirator in some institutions, proletarianization is not a leftist phrase but a reality of work within universities, and class struggle is not an external phenomenon to be studied within the security of the classroom but a daily reality in the lives of people on both sides of the desk. I have become an anachronism: a tenured professor whose job is steady and secure as long as he wants it, who can act as a small-scale entrepreneur, who holds a pension almost sufficient to retire on, and who mainly teaches students whose full-time occupation, is school.

Ironically, rapid changes in technology and transformations in the roles of colleges and universities have forced upon all institutions a profound rethinking of traditional academic structures and practices. The installation of the kind of sharply differentiated class structure I have been describing is one result of such changes. It is certainly no blessing. But the reproduction of the class structure of the wider society within the academy at least has the virtue of making class conflict more immediately available for study, as well as for struggle. The formation of organizations of TAs and of adjuncts is obviously a direct result of the restructuring of universities to look like, act like, and work like corporations – if it walks like a duck, and talks like a duck . . . Class might once have seemed like a remote abstraction in the tweedy comforts of Harvard’s Dunster House – perhaps it will remain so there. But most places, it is not simply an object of study, but a central reality of work, of consciousness, and of social relations, as much in English departments as in UPS. A few years ago when I proposed the idea of “class struggle” in the university, a few commentators giggled. It seems to me now more than ever an imperative for a systematic American Studies approach to the subject of this essay.

Notes

- 1 Indeed, an extensive review of the book by Brian Holmes uses the title “The Scandal of the Word ‘Class.’” Available at: <<http://www.16beavergroup.org/mtarchive/archives/001657.php>>. June 10, 2005.

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- 2 For a recent appreciation of his irony, see Sandra Tsing Loh, "Class Dismissed," *The Atlantic* (March 2009). Available at: <<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200903/class-system>>.
- 3 Jensen has elaborated on such comments in, for example, "Becoming Versus Belonging" (1997; 2004). Available at: <http://www.classmatters.org/2004_04/becoming_vs_belonging.php>.
- 4 Nicholas Coles and Janet Zandy, eds (New York: Oxford, 2006). A rich set of links to individual volumes and anthologies, as well as of critical analyses, is located on the website of the Center for Working-Class Studies in Youngstown: <<http://cwcs.yzu.edu/resources/links#Working-Class%20Films-lit>>. For films, see Larry Smith's bibliography on the Bottom Dog Press web page: <<http://smithdocs.net/CHRONFIL.htm>>. He also has a bibliography of literary texts at: <<http://smithdocs.net/WorkingClassLit.html>>.
- 5 See: <<http://smithdocs.net/workingtext.html>>.
- 6 See, for example, my article, first published in 1978, "The Scandalous Misuse of Faculty – Adjuncts," in *Canons and Contexts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 198–209.

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Religious Studies

Jay Mechling

Most Americans carry with them a daily reminder of the role of religion in the grand mythologies of the United States. The reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States, the familiar eye-topped pyramid encircled by the Latin phrases *Annuit Coeptis* and *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, graces the back of every dollar bill. The Great Seal (both sides) is rich with symbolism, but the “eye” of God on top of the pyramid (a symbol drawn from the Freemasons) and the claim *Annuit Coeptis*, translated as “Providence has favored our undertakings,” signal the special, covenantal relationship the founders believed they had with God. The founding of the United States of America was seen as a “new order for the ages,” an experiment in self-government that depended on blessings from God for success. The motto “In God We Trust” first appeared on US coins in 1864 as a federal declaration that God was on the side of the Union in that war, and in 1956 (this time in a Cold War climate) the Congress adopted the phrase as the official motto of the US. That these declarations of a special relation to God appear on US currency for all to see speaks to the central role of religion in the US and to the American sense that theirs was and is a special, “exceptional” project in human history.

Of course, the grand mythology of the founding of the European colonies in the parts of North America that were to become the United States tends to emphasize the search for religious freedom rather than the search for economic success. That the religious, political, and economic motives entwined even then, though, remains an important theme in American Religious Studies. Oddly, the presence of both religious history and business history in American Studies scholarship and teaching has an uneven record, even though one could claim reasonably that we cannot understand the cultures of the colonial and postcolonial United States without understanding the relationships between religion, politics, and business as cultural systems.

This chapter examines the study of religion by scholars in American Studies and in the several disciplines that contribute to our understanding of religion in

the lives of Americans. There would be several possible ways to organize this survey of American Religious Studies. Organizing the scholarship by discipline – including the ways historians, theologians, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, folklorists, legal scholars, political scientists, and critics of visual culture have studied religion – would violate the central truth that American Studies is an interdisciplinary field with practitioners who are willing to draw upon any source of ideas and evidence to make the best sense of religion as a cultural system.

Certainly, organizing the survey by major religions would miss the point that one of the most interesting things about American religious practices is how they connect with other cultural systems, including each other. While there are a few religions “invented” in America – notably Native American religions, the LDS Church (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Mormons), Christian Science, and Scientology – most religions practiced in the US were brought to this soil from elsewhere. But the interesting part of the story is “the Americanization” of religions in the new ecology of American cultures. Roman Catholic and Jewish practices, for example, come to mimic Protestant “taste” if not Protestant ideas (Cuddihy 1978). Moreover, as religions encountered each other in the colonies and then in the US, they borrowed from each other, creating distinctive syncretic religions. Santería, the Cuban religion blending Roman Catholicism and African religion, is a vibrant example of syncretism, but scholars have also seen less dramatic versions of the ways in which African American religious practices were influenced by white churches and, in turn, changed the white churches, for example. For these and other reasons, thinking about American religions by denomination misses the dynamic reality of things, and it is telling that Religious Studies programs themselves are moving away from organizing their curriculum by major religions and, instead, are offering courses such as “women in religion,” “pilgrimage,” “religion in film,” and other themes cutting across religions and requiring a comparative approach to the various ways human religions provide people with order and meaning in their lives.

Still another way to organize this survey (and one that I have used in my own design of courses) would be to move from the individual’s experience to ever more social and collective experiences, from the private practice of religion to the increasingly public practices of congregations, and to the very public expressions in the mass media. And this movement from the very private to the very public experiences with religion requires different methods and approaches, from the autobiographical to the ethnographic, from reading verbal texts to interpreting visual ones.

In keeping with the goal of this volume to write the first comprehensive history of American Studies thought and practice, this chapter follows a chronological path, mainly organized through decades. I introduce “themes” (e.g., the enduring conflict over the proper relationship between Church and state) as they become prominent in the scholarship of American Religious Studies. The chronological approach makes best sense if the reader keeps in mind that the emergence of a theme or interest in the scholarship of a period reflects that period, such that a

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scholarly work can be both what historians would call a primary and a secondary text, read both for the information and ideas it presents and as a representative text of a particular moment in American cultural history. Is Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (1944) a secondary text about the history of an idea in American religion or a primary text about the Manichean battle between the forces of good and evil in World War II? Is his *The Irony of American History* (1952) a synthetic interpretation of American history or does it reflect a particular set of concerns and cultural contradictions in the early 1950s? The answer to both questions, of course, is that those two books are both primary and secondary sources, and I attempt in this chapter to hold that double consciousness about the scholarly work I fit into my own historical narrative, itself a product of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

With this long (but necessary) preamble finished, I face one more equally necessary task before beginning the chronological survey of American Religious Studies. I owe the reader some sort of definition of "religion," the topic of this chapter, or, if a single definition seems inadequate, I owe the reader some set of ideas that help define the scope and content of the topic. We need to know what counts as "religion" or "religious experience," and that, it turns out, is not as simple as it might seem.

Religion and Religious Studies

Scholars contributing to American Religious Studies have used a variety of definitions of religion in their writing. "Substantive" definitions of religion tend to stress the elements that people normally associate with the term, elements such as ideas about supernatural reality, about the meanings of life, about an afterlife, "theodicy" (ideas about the meaning of suffering and evil), "teleology" (ideas about design and purpose, sometimes including "eschatology," ideas about the end of time), moral codes about how people should treat one another, rituals, and so on. "Functional" definitions of religion depend less on explicit doctrines and the existence, for example, of bodies of practitioners who worship in a given place and time. Instead, a functional definition of religion looks at the ways any given belief system or system of cultural practices meets certain social and psychological needs of people. The functional definition of religion permits the scholar to see religious functions in events and rituals that might not meet the criteria for a substantive definition of religion. The idea of the Civil Religion (discussed below), for example, would see Memorial Day ceremonies as religious rituals; and a functional definition of religion might see a Grateful Dead concert or a rave party as performing some of the social and psychological functions of religion.

Symbolic anthropologist Clifford Geertz has offered a definition of religion that works well for both substantive and functional understandings. He defines religion as:

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of facticity that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz 1973b: 90)

Geertz then proceeds to elaborate on the elements of the definition he has listed. Geertz sees symbols and their arrangement in systems (of discourse, for example) as both “models of” and “models for” reality. Religion, like all cultural systems, serves to bring order to the chaos of experiences. Religion especially speaks to certain sorts of profoundly disordering experiences – such as the suffering or death of an “innocent” child or adult, or the existence of “evil” and evil acts in the world. Individuals face disordering events in their own lives, and whole societies experience disordering events, such as the human-caused events of September 11, 2001, and the natural catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Many people rely upon religion to provide answers and comfort in the face of disorder, and such events might cause a “crisis of faith” in individuals and in whole societies. Most famously, the story of Job in the biblical tradition of Jews and Christians speaks to issues of faith and doubt in the face of loss.

Geertz’s definition also views religion as more than ideas. People “practice” and “perform” religious beliefs through rituals, from private rituals like prayer or wearing religious symbols to large, collective rituals, such as gatherings for worship, pilgrimages to sacred places, and a range of rituals marking life-course transitions – birth, adulthood, marriage, and death. Note, too, that these ideas about practices and performances also apply to systems not usually thought of as religious. Some landscapes, such as Yosemite National Park in California, are understood and narrated by rangers and visitors as “sacred space” – hence the place names like Cathedral Rock and Cathedral Grove in the park. In fact, scholars of tourism see the religious pilgrimage as the perfect performance model for understanding tourism (Sears 1989).

These examples of religious practices and performances suggest a distinction important to folklorists. Religion has no reality except as performed by a concrete group of people, usually a group small enough to meet face-to-face (the case of Internet-based religions complicates this, as we shall see later). When folklorists talk about “folk religion,” they do not mean exotic religions practiced by marginal folk. From the folklorist’s perspective, all religions have folk practices. The folklorist is interested in the “informal” organization of the folk group of religious practitioners, rather than the “formal” organization of the congregation or its larger organization structures. Bales’s (2005) ethnographic study of the meanings of First Communion in two Roman Catholic parishes in North Carolina – one predominantly an African American parish and the other predominantly a Latino parish – dramatizes the point that people do not experience “the Roman Catholic Church,” but they experience Roman Catholicism as defined and practiced by a concrete group, the folk group, of Roman Catholic worshipers in their community.

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Similarly, Colleen McDannell's (1998) interview-based study of the meanings of the temple garments, the religious undergarments worn by many Mormons, shows how the formal meanings defined by the Church are far less important to the individuals than are the personal meanings (expressed through stories) they associate with wearing the garment. This distinction between formal and informal ideas and practices is very important and usually requires, we should note, ethnographic fieldwork or its historical equivalents (mainly through the examination of historical evidence ranging from letters and journals to vernacular photography). The distinction also points to the necessity of comparison of the variations of practices in a particular religion and in the comparison across religions.

In addition to the understandings of anthropology and folklore of religion as a cultural system, the sociology of knowledge provides an additional set of ideas and terms for defining religion. The idea of "the social construction of reality" was central in the emerging social sciences of the late nineteenth century, but the most influential sociologist of knowledge in American Religious Studies has been Peter L. Berger. *The Social Construction of Reality* (with Thomas Luckmann, 1967) has been a highly influential "treatise in the sociology of knowledge" (as its subtitle puts it) for American Studies scholars who pay attention to social scientific theory and criticism. Berger's own earliest work was on the sociology of religion, and he comes back to that topic with great regularity. His book, *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), is still taught in Religious Studies courses. Like Geertz, Berger stresses the ordering functions of religion and shows special interest in how people use religion to repair challenges to the order, how religion succeeds or fails in solving a "legitimation crisis" in "the sacred canopy" of meanings provided by religion. To Berger, as to Geertz, the amazing thing about human culture is that it manages to hang together in the face of experiences of chaos, suffering, death, and evil. The interesting twist Berger brings to his sociology of religion is that he is also a practicing Christian and writes books in that voice (e.g., Berger 1969).

Despite my quoting Geertz's definition of religion, I end this section without a clear definition and with the expectation that the reader will understand that the messiness of religion as a cultural system, the ways it mingles at the borders with other cultural belief systems (science and art, for example), and the ways it masks itself as secular ideas, is precisely what makes it so interesting and important to understand. There are many topics in American Studies we could do without and still have a pretty good understanding of American culture; religion is not one of them.

Before the 1930s

Theology and religious history dominated American writing from the earliest presence of Europeans on the North American continent. The very title of Cotton Mather's great work, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), declares that the history

of New England is the history of God's presence, plan, and works there. Colleges in the colonies and then in the US through the first half of the nineteenth century put theology and religious history at the heart of the curriculum, but in the decades following the Civil War the social sciences and the German model of the university and graduate study (to say nothing of the impact of the Morrill Act of 1862, creating funding for land-grant, public universities) tended to make the study of Religion just one of an array of university subjects, which included the new disciplines of Sociology, Psychology, and Anthropology. Social Darwinism in the 1880s and 1890s tended to ground human history more in biology than in theology, and the "scientific" anthropology of Franz Boas and his students and the "scientific" psychology of William James and his students worked to reduce religion to one of many cultural systems one might find in a society. The cultural relativism championed by Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology in this period delivered the news that American religions and religious experiences were just a few among the wide universe of cultures, and that one religion was not "better" or "truer" than another, just different. At the same time, German biblical criticism assaulted traditional faith in the inerrancy of the Bible and was seen as such a threat that a series of Bible conferences in the 1870s–1890s, and then the publication of a series of volumes called *The Fundamentals* (the origin of the term "fundamentalism" in American religious discourse) in 1910, aimed to counter the Modernist move to contextualize all knowledge and to relativize "truth."

It was in these decades of an emerging "culture war" between religion and science (captured well in Harold Frederic's 1896 novel, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*) that we find the beginnings of American Religious Studies. William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902) demonstrates the social scientific attempt to understand religion in human lives. It was also at the century's turn that the Native Americans could be romanticized, seen most clearly in the use of Native American religion in Ernest Thompson Seton's youth movement, Seton's Indians (1902), and then as he influenced the Boy Scouts of America (founded 1910) in the use of Indian lore. So an interest in "religion" in this period was also an interest in "spirituality," related but not identical concepts.

The 1930s and 1940s

Any history of American Studies thought and practices must begin with Gene Wise's "Special Section" of the bibliography issue of the *American Quarterly* in 1979. With the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the *AQ* as a not-quite-arbitrary excuse for creating a "retrospective" on the American Studies movement, Wise wrote for that issue a substantial essay, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement" (Wise 1979a), and assembled a "Calendar," a tentative timeline (Wise 1979b) listing important

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events, publications, founding dates of American Studies programs, and even some relevant cultural events (on the “movement” language to describe American Studies, see Mechling 1996). Perry Miller, among others, is all over this early history of the movement, and Miller’s scholarship and role in founding the American Civilization Program at Harvard in 1936 suggests how much American Studies in the 1930s was New England Studies and how much New England Studies was American Religious Studies. Miller and others were establishing American intellectual and cultural history at a time when the study of American history, arts, and literature/letters (many of the early programs bore this HAL acronym) was not considered legitimate in the university.

Of the first American Studies programs, the Yale graduate program (founded in 1933 as a HAL Program) had a strong presence of American religious history, especially after Sidney Ahlstrom joined the faculty in 1954. Meanwhile, at the University of Pennsylvania, where the graduate program in American Civilization was founded in 1937, and in universities founded in what were called “the Middle Colonies,” scholars were writing the religious history of the US beyond Puritan thought.

While scholars like Miller were studying the New England Mind through the writings of Puritans, social scientists in the 1930s were paying some attention to the role of religion in American lives. Sociologists Robert and Helen Merrill Lynd’s intensive community studies of Muncie, Indiana – reported in *Middletown* in 1929 and *Middletown in Transition* in 1937 – devoted substantial attention to religion, and a team of sociologists returned to Muncie decades later to note the changes in the religious lives of the residents (Caplow et al. 1983). Zora Neale Hurston, trained in anthropology at Columbia University by Franz Boas, used her fieldwork in Florida and in the Caribbean to publish some of the earliest scholarship on African religion in the New World. In 1931 she published an article on “Hoodoo in America” in the *Journal of American Folklore*, and in 1935 she published *Mules and Men*, an account of her fieldwork in Florida (she was raised in Eatonville, the first all-black town incorporated in the US) and in New Orleans.

Postwar: The Late 1940s and 1950s

American exceptionalism, the view that the United States has a unique history and mission in human experience, received a boost from the victory in World War II. If American Studies was born in Depression era doubt about the strength of “the American way of life” and its democratic institutions, American Studies in the late 1940s experienced a boom and confidence that the United States had a true civilization superior to those of Europe and Asia. Certainly, John Kouwenhoven’s *Made in America: The Arts in Modern Civilization* (1948) argued this version of American exceptionalism. National character studies, which began in the 1930s and became popular as social scientists and historians joined the war

effort to help the government understand the enemy and the cultures of occupied countries, boomed in the postwar years. Margaret Mead's *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America* (1942) makes little reference to religion, and this is the pattern in subsequent national character studies. All of these studies tapped History, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, and Anthropology to speculate on a distinctive American national character (sometimes called a "modal personality" or a "basic" or "core personality"), but none made the connection between the distinctive American sense of "mission" in the world with the original, religious meanings of that word. It took later scholars like Tony Smith (1994) to point out the mainly Protestant Christian origins, for example, of the democratic internationalism of Woodrow Wilson and his heirs. The title of Eisenhower's 1948 war memoir, *Crusade in Europe*, conveyed the strong sense of religious mission the United States had in fighting that war.

The postwar attempts to define a distinctive American character and to show the consensus that rose from American experience were in some ways responses to the Holocaust and its troubling questions about human nature, evil, and intolerance. American scholars and other public intellectuals in the 1950s were helping Americans see their culture as different from the hate-driven worlds of the Nazis and the Japanese imperialists, and a key element in that difference was religion and what was seen as a long American tradition of religious tolerance. The peaceful, ecumenical spirit behind the founding of the United Nations in 1945 was mirrored by religious ecumenical organizations such as the National Council of Churches of Christ (founded in 1950) and community organizations meant to bring together religious leaders from all groups to work on problems in the community. Will Herberg's book, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (1955), stood for the more general view that the people of the United States had fashioned out of immigrant and other experiences a working religious landscape marked by tolerance and cooperation.

The postwar years and a concern to avoid any other world wars also led to a growing scholarship on religious traditions of pacifism in the United States. In 1955, the American Friends Service Committee, with a history of pacifist public service since World War I, issued a book, *Speak Truth to Power*, showing how the postwar social sciences were providing support for the religious argument that conflicts between individuals and whole societies could be resolved peacefully (Mechling and Mechling 1992). Although conscientious objection was controversial in World War II (see the documentary film *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It*, 2002, produced by J. Ehrlich and R. Tejada-Flores), the horrible outcomes of the war energized religious pacifists in the 1950s.

A few figures – Bayard Rustin and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr, most notable among them – bridged the peace movement and civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, both movements heavily dependent on religious leaders and organizations for leadership and support, as the histories of those movements report. The rise of a religious right in the United States in the last quarter of the twentieth

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century has made some people forget the vigorous tradition of the religious left throughout the twentieth century, as churches and religious leaders called for social justice, economic justice, peace, and equality.

The 1950s was a paradoxical decade in American history. From the viewpoint of the period, the decade seemed prosperous and happy. The *Pax Americana* era of postwar peace and the middle-class (mainly white) prosperity created a general sense that Americans shared a creed. American Religious Studies in the late 1940s and early 1950s worked from what later would come to be called “the consensus school of American history.” The idea of national character as a shared, basic personality required a notion that the socialization of Americans across all social locations (age, gender, social class, ethnicity, region, etc.) built a consensus about the meanings of American history and experience. There was a “givenness” to American experience, as Boorstin (1953) put it. The American intellectual histories written during these postwar years could not avoid religious ideas. When Miller published *The New England Mind* in 1953, he was in some ways documenting the continuities between seventeenth-century religious thought and the American Mind of the postwar years. Starkey’s *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Enquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (1949), not unlike Arthur Miller’s 1953 play, *The Crucible*, needs to be read against the Cold War tensions between American tolerance and American political and cultural paranoia. Religion in New England continued to fascinate American Religious Studies, as Miller followed up *The New England Mind* with *Errand into Wilderness* (1956), joined by Edwin Gaustad’s *The Great Awakening in New England* (1957) and Edmund Morgan’s *The Puritan Dilemma* (1958). Although the fabled Myth-Symbol-Image School of American Studies only tangentially dealt with American religious experiences, R. W. B. Lewis’s *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the 19th Century* (1955) dealt with a master narrative of the American Civil Religion, a religious narrative of innocence, fall, and redemption, one identified by Kenneth Burke as “the representative anecdote” (Reukert 1963) found in Western texts, both sacred and secular.

The most important religious expression of that consensus was the American Civil Religion, that same Civil Religion displayed on the Great Seal of the United States. Sociologist Robert Bellah published in 1965 a landmark essay, “The American Civil Religion.” The essay is not about the more tumultuous 1960s (see below), but describes what Bellah and others may have worried would be lost. Bellah acknowledges that the idea of a “civil religion” (sometimes called “public religion”) is not new. De Tocqueville described much earlier what Bellah had in mind – namely, that in the US there is a public philosophy that combines generalized Protestant Christianity with English Liberal democratic political theory and other political ideas from the Enlightenment. Although Bellah points to earlier rhetorical acts – Lincoln’s Second Inaugural in 1865 is a prime example – that articulate the American Civil Religion, he has more recent history in mind, as embodied in the Kennedy inaugural rhetoric in 1961. The 1950s was a golden

age of the American Civil Religion in many ways, not least because the concept easily accommodated the nationalist and exceptionalist ideas of the Cold War. Practicing one's religion became a patriotic act in Cold War America.

The seeming calm and consensus of the 1950s disguised, of course, the tensions, contradictions, and conflicts of postwar America. It took historians and other American Studies scholars some time to come around to writing about the 1950s, in part because the 1960s was so formative in the intellectual lives of the Baby Boom generation (born 1946–64). But, as Gitlin says in his important book, *The Sixties* (1987), “the seeds of the Sixties were sown in the Fifties.” Ellwood wrote his fine book on religion in the sixties (Ellwood 1994) before he looked back to the fifties, where he found religion at the center of cultural conflicts over war, peace, race, the Cold War, an emerging counterculture, sexuality, and more (Ellwood 1997, 2000).

The 1960s

The “consensus school of American history” that dominated the intellectual landscape of the late 1940s and the 1950s began to come apart in the 1960s, giving way to a “conflict model” that saw American history not as a series of agreed-upon values and beliefs but, instead, as the story of struggles between groups identifying themselves not necessarily as “Americans” but by gender, race and ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, region, and other human particularities. Social movements in the 1950s–1960s contributed to this sense of struggle between interests. The civil rights movement, the women's movement, the movement to end the Vietnam War, the rise of such subjects in the university as Ethnic Studies, Folklore Studies, Popular Culture Studies, and studies of sexualities responding to the gay rights movement all dashed the hope of American Studies scholars to make broad generalizations about “American culture.”

In American Religious Studies, scholars described and analyzed the diversity of American religious experiences while shying away from broad, synthetic interpretations. Some scholars continued writing narrow histories of sects, such as Quakers or Mormons, but generally American Studies scholars turned away from religion as a strong force in American culture and favored the study of gender, social class, and race or ethnicity as the strong lenses through which individuals experienced American history and institutions. It may be that the counter-cultural inclinations of the students and young scholars in the 1960s led many to reject religion as a strong cultural force; this first wave of Baby Boomers revolted against their parents' generation, which also meant revolting against the middle-class religious regime of the 1950s. Many sixties radicals saw religion and business as oppressive systems of belief and institutional power, and the presence of Marxist and Marxian ideas in American Studies in the 1960s doubtless had something to do with a decidedly negative attitude about religion.

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Scholarship on the civil rights movement and other struggles for social, political, and economic justice in the 1960s noticed the religious foundations of this moral cause, and the cultural responses to the Vietnam War increased the visibility of religious leaders as leaders in opposition to the war. Conscientious objection to war became a hot topic once again, as religious leaders like the Berrigan brothers (both Catholic priests) and William Sloan Coffin, Jr. (chaplain at Yale University) advocated peaceful civil disobedience to resist the Vietnam War. Still, as visible as the religious warrant for peace and justice was in the American public culture of the 1960s, the scholarship on this connection was slow in coming.

The 1970s

It is easy to dismiss the 1970s as a decade when “nothing happened” (Carroll 1990), but in many ways the decade was a golden age of American Religious Studies. In the same 1979 bibliography issue of the *American Quarterly* that featured the collections of essays and lists for Gene Wise’s 30-year retrospective on the American Studies movement, Edwin Gaustad and two colleagues surveyed “Religion in America,” and that survey makes clear how many American Religious Studies research projects began or came to fruition in the 1970s. Ahlstrom’s comprehensive *Religious History of the American People* was published in 1973, but the decade also saw the launching of the multi-volume *Chicago History of American Religion* series, edited by Martin E. Marty, the work of Robert Bellah and his students and colleagues at the University of California, Berkeley, the launching of Arthur Piepkorn’s series on American religions under the rubric *Profiles in Belief*, and, at the decade’s end, the publication of a comprehensive study by Albanese (1981). Bellah cemented his reputation as the most important scholar of American Civil Religion with 1975’s *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* and *Varieties of Civil Religion* (Bellah and Hammond 1982). Bellah’s 1970s–1980s thinking about Civil Religion and the role of religion in providing resources for American individuals and communities, as they struggled with the tensions between individualism and a sense of duty to “the common good,” led to the collective *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah et al. 1985) project and to individual volumes spinning off from that project, including Stephen Tipton’s *Getting Saved From the Sixties: Moral Meaning in Conversion and Cultural Change* (1982).

The social movements of the 1960s influenced the new directions of American Religious Studies in the 1970s. While Ahlstrom, Marty, Bellah (Bellah 1970), and others were looking at the broad ranges of American religious experience, other scholars and teachers continued to look at the human particulars of gender, ethnicity or race, and (eventually) sexual orientation to see how religious experience differs for people in different social locations. Gaustad’s 1979 survey lists some of the new scholarship on women and ethnic groups, for example. Interest in Native American religions and in African American religions (Genovese’s *Roll, Jordan,*

Roll was published in 1974) was growing, and the winter, 1978, issue of the *American Quarterly* was a special topics issue on “Women and Religion,” edited by Janet Wilson James (James, ed. 1978).

The 1960s turn to Eastern philosophy and religion as an alternative to Western philosophy and the Christian tradition – seen as the source of the imperialism, exceptionalism, violence, and intolerance young people witnessed in the 1950s and 1960s – captured public and scholarly attention. The turn to Eastern religion was not the only religious experimentation noted by scholars of American Religious Studies in the 1970s. “New religions” covered a broad range of faiths and practices, including Scientology and revivals of witchcraft, spiritualism, and faith healing (Zaretsky and Leone, eds. 1974; Bellah and Glock 1976; Ellwood 1979). In a study of the ways the print news media covered religion from the 1950s to the early 1990s, McCloud (2004) shows how the religious mainstream increasingly marginalized “fringe” religions (Pentecostalism, the Nation of Islam, California cults, and so on) as a move to contrast rational and emotional religions.

In fact, as Williams (1980) demonstrates, the 1970s showed signs of long-brewing changes as traditional practices of religion confronted Modernity, yielding “popular” practices of religion quite apart from the formal, official practices. This insight pointed to new areas of study beginning in the 1970s – a revived interest by folklorists in the informal cultures of religious groups (e.g., Messenger 1972; Yoder 1974).

As Gaustad and his colleagues had noted briefly in 1979, the decade also saw a gathering storm of debate over the proper relationship between the Church and the state. The controversial US Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade* (1973), in which the Court held that laws banning abortion violated the privacy rights embodied in the Fourteenth Amendment’s Due Process Clause, became the rallying cause for the religious right and has affected US politics up to the present. Richard Nixon courted famed evangelist Billy Graham even before his ascendancy to the presidency in 1968, and throughout the 1970s what came to be known as the religious right enjoyed increasing influence in American electoral politics. The political advocacy organization The Christian Voice was founded in 1978, and Jerry Fallwell’s Moral Majority in 1980. Thus, by Ronald Reagan’s election to the presidency in 1980, a victory made possible in large part by a cresting power of the religious right, Church/state debates and legal challenges were staples of the “culture wars.” The scholars in American Religious Studies recognized the importance of this development and by the 1980s began writing histories and cultural criticism of the religious right.

The 1980s

The religious culture wars had begun back at the end of the nineteenth century, as noted above, with skirmishes ranging from the Scopes Trial in 1925 to the 2005

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Dover, Pennsylvania, case pitting evolution against Intelligent Design in the science classroom, with various skirmishes over displays of the Ten Commandments on public property. But the rise of religiously conservative political movements in the 1970s set the stage for fierce engagement in the 1980s. Hunter's 1991 book, *Culture Wars*, usefully maps the worldviews of both sides and looks at those realms – family (including sexuality), schools, popular culture, law, and politics – where the wars were fought. Hunter and other scholars find religion at the center of these wars. Hunter uses the term “Orthodox” to describe those who believed in a transcendent authority as the source of absolute truth and moral authority. The other side, the “Progressives,” see truth as contextual and moral authority as contingent and conditional. These different worldviews seem to incline people to take opposing positions on public policy issues regarding public displays of religious symbols, school prayer, abortion, popular culture, and other sites of the culture wars.

The rise of the evangelical religious right attracted the attention of scholars in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, as it became clear that the changing shape of Christianity, especially Protestant Christianity, in the US was likely to influence the larger culture into the next century (Marty 1984, 1986). Before he wrote his culture wars books (Hunter 1991, 1994), Hunter (1987) wrote an important book explaining the history and recent rise of Evangelicalism and its relationship to “orthodoxy” in other religions, including Judaism and Islam. Wuthnow's 1988 book, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, charted these changes since World War II, and five years later he published a book anticipating the new contours of American Christianity in the twenty-first century (Wuthnow 1993). By the late 1990s, Wuthnow was turning his considerable scholarly skills to understanding the larger phenomenon of spiritual transformation in the US (Wuthnow 1998). The Baby Boomers' return to religion was of interest to Wuthnow and others. The scholarly interest in fundamentalism, evangelicalism, and the religious right remains strong (Balmer 1989; Kosmin and Lachman 1993; Cox 1995; Kintz 1997; Marsden 2001).

Ethnography

Until the 1980s, most American Religious Studies scholars used print evidence or, occasionally, material culture and visual evidence to write their histories or textual analysis. Social scientists continued to use survey data to make generalizations about American religion, but American Studies scholars generally paid little attention to the quantitative methods and approaches. Some American Studies scholars were looking to the qualitative social sciences, however, and the important method they discovered there was ethnography. The American Civilization department at the University of Pennsylvania put great emphasis upon ethnography as a method and upon anthropology as a source of theorizing about

American culture, but most other American Studies programs and scholars did not turn to these ideas and methods. Geertz was having an influence on some American Studies scholars, who looked to the “symbolic anthropology” Geertz outlined in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973a) and to his several instances of ethnographic reporting and interpretation (his “Deep Play” essay in *Interpretation* is perhaps the best known of these).

Participant observation fieldwork and ethnography had a long history as a method in Anthropology, but by the 1980s it became apparent to some scholars in American Religious Studies (and to some in American Studies altogether) that we needed to understand the role of religion in people’s lives as they actually experience it through daily practices alone and in groups. The sociology of knowledge approach (the social construction of reality) to everyday life suggested that ideas do not have real consequences until and unless they are “performed” through social interaction. This was Geertz’s (1973b) idea about religion, after all, and at about the same time folklorists were building a “performance theory” of folklore (Paredes and Bauman 1972). What this meant to those in American Religious Studies was that American religion needed to be studied in context, that religious ideas were only part of the story, that people socially constructed in their everyday interactions what it means to be Jewish or Mormon or Roman Catholic. A predominantly Irish or Latino parish, for example, would construct a Catholic experience that might differ from that found in a predominantly African American or Italian parish. Only ethnographic fieldwork would be able to find these differences. Similarly, only ethnographic approaches would begin to discover how other human particularities – notably age, gender, social class, region, and sexual orientation – mediate religious experiences.

The first notable ethnography in American Religious Studies (after Hurston’s 1935 *Mules and Men*) was by anthropologists Hostetler and Huntington (1967), whose ethnography of American Hutterites on the Great Plains was part of a series of world ethnographic monographs. Folklorists provided more ethnographic studies of American religious communities and practices than did anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s, the period when anthropologists were just beginning to realize that they could apply their concepts and approaches to American communities (Hymes, ed. 1974; Varennes, ed. 1986). Folklorists had been doing that work and publishing monographs and articles in the *Journal of American Folklore* and other venues for years. A milestone of the anthropology of American religion was Myerhoff’s *Number Our Days* (1978), an ethnography of a Jewish Senior Center in Venice Beach, California. (She also made an ethnographic film of that group.) Myerhoff brought her symbolic anthropologist’s eyes and ears to this scene, taking special advantage of the recent developments in theories of ritual and pilgrimage that other anthropologists like Victor Turner and Mary Douglas were building. Folklorist Elaine Lawless combined the new interests in women’s religious experiences with the ethnographic approach to produce three major ethnographic monographs based on her fieldwork with Pentecostal women preachers

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(1988a, 1988b) and with female clergy from several Protestant denominations (1993). The uses of ethnography accelerated in the 1990s (Davie 1995; Becker and Eisland, eds. 1997; D. E. Miller 1997) and by the new millennium became a common methodology (Ault 2004; Frankenberg 2004; Bales 2005).

The 1990s

The 1980s provided such a rich array of cultural phenomena that American Religious Studies scholars in the 1990s had no end of topics to explore. The economic prosperity of the 1980s resulted in a series of studies meant to understand the nature of American religious beliefs and practices in relation to our understanding of the United States as a business civilization. As noted above, the religious and economic motives for the European founding of colonies in North America were tangled from the start. Weber's ([1905] 1930) observations on "the elective affinity" between Protestantism and Capitalism became a theme in scholarship throughout the century. Novak's *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1982) had made the neoconservative case for the affinity between democracy, free markets, and the free exercise of religion in the United States. By the 1990s Wuthnow was calling on scholars to pay more attention to the moral dimensions of work and commodity capitalism (Wuthnow 1996). Wuthnow's subtle analysis pinpointed several dilemmas in American culture, a central one being the contradictions and tensions between materialism and spirituality.

Of course, one solution to that tension was for religious communities to embrace the market. Novak and others provided the ideological warrant for seeing how democratic society, religion, and the free market reinforced one another; all that was necessary was to turn religion into a commodity (Moore 1994; Hendershot 2004; Einstein 2007), and by the new millennium evangelicals and others were finding the pleasures of religious-themed popular culture, from music and graphic novels to Creationism theme parks (Radosh 2008). Some groups developed a theology around the notion that God wants us to be rich, and this idea had great success in African American communities (Harrison 2005).

By the 1990s, the new scholarship known as "ecocriticism" was linking progressive environmental consciousness with religion and spirituality. There is a long tradition of nature religions (Albanese 1990; Taylor and Kaplan, eds. 2005; Gatta 2004) in the United States, and the environmentalists appropriated the religious notion of stewardship to persuade some on the religious right that saving the earth from environmental destruction was a religious duty. By 2005 (Wallis 2005) it was possible for evangelical Christians from the left and center to embrace environmental protection. The University of Chicago created a "Religion and Environment Initiative" in 2008.

American Studies had been an early, friendly home to the study of gender, race (ethnicity), social class, and queer sexualities. On many university campuses in

the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, American Studies departments were the first to offer courses in these areas, and an examination of the pages of the *American Quarterly* and of the meetings of the American Studies Association confirm this assessment. The growth of separate departments, journals, and academic associations in gender studies and ethnic studies briefly drew some of this energy from American Studies, but by the 1980s American Studies once again was known as a friendly home for the study of social and cultural diversity in the US, and by the 1990s one could not imagine an American Studies inquiry that did not ask what differences gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, age, region, and other human particularities make in our generalizing about American cultures and experiences. In American Religious Studies, scholars charted long-neglected and marginalized religious groups and experiences.

One particularly rich area of research, for example, was African American religion. The study of religion under slavery, including the uses of religion both as a means of the control of slaves and as a resource for resisting power, provided some classic American Studies works of the 1960s and 1970s (Raboteau 1980; Fulop and Raboteau 1999), but from the outset it was clear to scholars that the close contact between African religions and Christianity in the New World was creating examples of syncretic religions. Historians (e.g., Sobel 1987) saw that the religious influences flowed both ways, and by the 1990s scholars were detailing the social and cultural history of African religions in the New World (Murphy 1994; T. H. Smith 1994). The presence of large numbers of Cuban Americans sparked scholarly interest in Santería, the syncretic religion fusing elements of Western African religion and Roman Catholicism (Flores-Peña and Evanchuk 1994; Mason 2002). One of the most famous First Amendment “free exercise of religion” cases centered on Santería practices of animal sacrifice (O’Brien 2004).

Histories of the civil rights movement and its leadership necessarily include the religious sources of the movement’s ideas and tactics, and the best of those histories (e.g., J. Williams 1987; Branch 1989, 1998, 2006) use the civil rights movement to tell a larger interpretive history of American culture. Some scholars (e.g., Howard-Pitney 1990) put a tighter focus on particulars of African American religious practices that formed the ideological basis for racial, social, and economic justice in the United States.

Documentary Film and Video

The ethnographic initiatives of the 1980s and 1990s were not just in print; some of these ethnographers (e.g., Myerhoff, Ault) produced documentary films and videos based on their ethnographic sites, and some documentary film-makers discovered religion as a rich topic. *The Salesman* (1968, dir. A. Maysles and D. Maysles) is a classic in the genre, a low-keyed documentary following four Bible salesmen as they make their door-to-door rounds. Some of these films focus on

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particular groups, such as fundamentalist and evangelical ministries with youth (e.g., *Hell House* 2001; *Jesus Camp* 2006), gays (e.g., *Trembling Before G-d* 2001; *For the Bible Tells Me So* 2007; *Fish Can't Fly* 2005), congregations in crisis (e.g., *The Congregation* 2004), and the world of religious broadcasting (*The Eyes of Tammy Faye* 2000). Some look at the rise of the religious right (e.g., *With God on Our Side* 2004). The attack on September 11, 2001, inspired at least two documentary films (*Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero* 2002; *Divided We Fall* 2008), and the relationship between the religious right and politics is a topic still pursued at this writing (e.g., *With God on Our Side* 2004; *Friends of God: A Road Trip with Alexandra Pelosi* 2007; *The Trials of Ted Haggard* 2009).

American Religious Studies in the New Millennium

For some people around the world, the impending millennium itself was a religious event (Gould 1997). Beyond that, the new millennium brought a sense of new beginnings, and scholars in American Religious Studies saw changes that intrigued them. The changes in the religious landscape of the United States in the first decade of the new millennium have been amazingly rapid and transformational, even for those American Studies scholars used to seeing cultural change. Some trends begun in the 1980s and 1990s continued, but a portrait of the religious beliefs and practices of the millennial generation (born 1982–2000) is only now emerging. The phrase “the Millennial Generation” owes much to the book *Millennials Rising* (2000) by Howe and Strauss. These historians recommend that we look at American history as a series of generations, each with its own profile. The Baby Boomers (born 1946–64) and the 13th Generation, sometimes called Generation X (born 1964–82), appear in the histories and monographs of the 1960s–1990s, though only occasionally analyzed in terms of generation or birth cohort. Beaudoin (1998) looks at Generation X and finds in their popular culture what he would call religious ideas particular to that generation, ideas such as the privileging of personal experience, the spiritual value of suffering, and the ambiguity of faith. Wuthnow (2007) examined closely the religious lives of “young adults” (ages 21–45, the GenX-ers) and saw them as somewhat adrift, lacking the institutional connections (including marriage, delayed in this generation).

The Millennials have a strong sense of themselves as not GenXers. Generally, say Howe and Strauss, they are cooperative, accept authority, trust their parents, and believe in progress. They have led highly protected and highly scheduled lives (there are social class differences here, of course). They are far more relaxed than their parents with people of different ethnicities and sexualities. They have grown up in an era of great prosperity (until 2008), and they are highly trained consumers. On the religious front, they are comfortable with differences, and their experiences of school (high school and college) have included far more religious elements (prayer

groups, WWJD – “What Would Jesus Do?” – wristbands, and religious organizations on campus) than the Gen Xers or Boomers.

Beyond the general portrait of the Millennials fleshed out by Howe and Strauss, we also have a remarkable longitudinal “National Study of Youth and Religion.” Begun at the University of North Carolina’s Center for the Study of Religion, directed by sociologist Christian Smith and now directed by him at the Center for the Study of Religion at the University of Notre Dame, the study began with a large phone survey and then did intensive interviews with a sample from those respondents. The book *Soul Searching* (C. Smith with Denton 2005) summarizes the findings as of 2004 (the study is ongoing). The major finding was that young people (ages 12–18), while claiming to be religious in numbers roughly the same as the larger population, know little about the details of the ideas of their own religion. Instead, the authors found expressions of what they call a Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD), a new “Civil Religion” that leads young people to see religion primarily as a guide when making moral decisions, as a means to feel good about oneself, and as having a relationship with a God not actively engaged in daily affairs unless called upon through prayer. Like Howe and Strauss before them, the authors of *Soul Searching* found young people far more tolerant than their elders of social, cultural, and sexual diversity. Significantly, these young people generally do not believe that a person has to be religious to be a good person; for them, there are many paths to that goal.

Far from taking the findings of the National Study of Youth and Religion as bad news, youth leaders (especially in evangelical churches) saw a challenge to better reach out to young people. American Religious Studies scholars have begun to study these youth ministries, sometimes as part of larger ethnographic studies of the new, evangelical megachurches in the 1990s and new century. Turner’s (2008) study of the Campus Crusade for Christ (founded in 1951), for example, shows the importance of this and other “parachurch” organizations, which have had great success in creating evangelical Christian subcultures on American university campuses (including, most controversially, at the United States Air Force Academy – see Weinstein and Seay 2006).

The Millennials’ greater ease with queer sexualities sets up a collision between generational and doctrinal views on sexual orientation. Hartman’s (1996) study of the toll of these conflicts on individual congregations and denominations still captures the issues. Mainline religions in the US have grappled with the issue of blessing same-sex marriages, and the election of openly gay Episcopal priest Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire caused a schism in world Anglicanism still unresolved as of this writing. Religion played a large role in the 2008 state ballot proposition battles in California and Florida over gay marriage, and there is no reason to believe that this site in the culture wars will be pacified anytime soon. Scholars have been drawn to this issue, in part because of the political salience but also because of increased interest in American Studies scholarship in sexuality studies (Siker 2006).

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The unexpected absence of Jesus in the Christian Millennials' responses to the Youth and Religion project reveals the paradoxical role of Jesus in American religions. The "Americanization" of Jesus began back in the nineteenth century (perhaps earlier), but certainly the emergence of "muscular Christianity" in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century helped turn the American Jesus into the perfect symbol of manhood ready for the triumph of capitalism. Bruce Barton's best-selling book, *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925), recast Jesus as the consummate business entrepreneur who understood how to organize and lead men and how to market new ideas. Two books in the new millennium – Prothero's *American Jesus* (2003) and Fox's *Jesus in America* (2004) – take a broad historical sweep as they examine the ways Americans have portrayed Jesus in words and images, making him a character in an array of cultural narratives, both verbal and visual. While they are not meant to be comparative studies, they do suggest that the Americanization of Jesus reveals some distinctive features of American culture, and these studies could be the basis for comparative work across nations.

Popular Culture

Like American youth before them, the Millennials consume mass-mediated, popular culture in vast quantities. While the study of popular (mass-mediated, commercial) culture arose in the late 1960s and 1970s in American Studies, the appearance of an American Cultural Studies in the 1980s and 1990s reinforced the importance of understanding the deployment of ideology and power in the complex act of consuming popular culture, where consumers have some agency in how they will understand the messages contained in the cultural verbal and visual texts. If, as some American Studies scholars argue, the best place to look for the "mythologies" of American culture is in its popular culture, then we would expect to find some religious narrative formulae and symbols in American popular culture.

The use of popular print media for disseminating religious ideas and moods began with the nineteenth-century publishing houses, but the religious uses of broadcast media began with radio (Hangen 2001), the medium used so effectively by Charles Fuller, Aimee Semple McPherson, and others up to the present. The 1950s saw a new broadcast medium, television, enter the homes of Americans, and media critics and historians have paid considerable attention to this powerful wedding of religion and a medium (e.g., Bruce 1990; Rosenthal 2007).

American Religious Studies scholars have also found theatrical films and popular fiction to be rich texts for understanding American religious experience, though a weakness of these studies (and those of radio and television, for that matter) is that they tend to rely on textual analysis without any audience response analysis to capture the ways audiences accept or resist the messages in media texts. Mazur (2000) provides a good survey of the religious themes in a

range of popular culture genres, and Miles's (1996) look at religion in the movies also relies on thematic analysis.

Although religious fiction – especially Christian fiction – is one of the fastest-growing fields of popular literature in the US, scholars have not shown much interest in bringing to that genre the textual and audience response analysis they have applied to genres like science fiction and historical romance. An exception is the scholarship on the *Left Behind* series of apocalyptic novels by LaHaye and Jenkins, based on a literal reading of the end times as described in the biblical Book of Revelation. American Religious Studies scholars have recognized that these best-selling novels (over 40 million copies sold by 2008) are a window into the millennialism described by Boyer (1992). Most scholars analyze the texts of the novels (Forbes and Kilde, eds. 2004; Shuck 2004; Gribben 2009), while one attempts an audience response analysis by talking to readers of the novels (Frykholm 2004).

In the Millennial Generation, nearly every genre of popular culture consumed by young people in the US has a Christian segment to the market. Many religious youth leaders see Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) as a primary vehicle for recruiting and holding onto young people. CCM appears in every genre of popular music, from country to hard rock to rap. The American Studies scholar remembers the ways sacred music, such as hymns, are part of the musical genres coming together with African American blues to create the foundations of rock 'n' roll, and even within African American traditions the sacred music of hymns and the secular music of blues speak to one another on common topics of woe, of sin and redemption (Keil 1966). The history of the hymn "Amazing Grace" itself tells a story of syncretism in American religion (see the Library of Congress history of the hymn online). No wonder, then, that Evangelical Christians and others would turn to music to woo people into the fold. Howard and Streck (1999) use interviews and other evidence to chart this world, seeing strains in the world as participants negotiate the dilemma faced by Evangelicals and other orthodox religious people – how do we live in the world without becoming part of the world? Orthodox religions generally condemn American popular culture, including music, but then transform popular music into a form of worship (generally "praise").

In fact, this dilemma drives a great deal of the love/hate relationship Evangelicals and others have with contemporary popular culture. Bivins (2008) builds his analysis of "the religion of fear" in the US around four instances where the conservative Evangelicals have used a popular culture genre to launch their critique of American culture – the cartoon pamphlets of Jack Chick, CCM, the "Hell House" Christian alternative to haunted houses on Halloween (seen by many as a Satanic holiday, anyway), and the postmillennial narrative embodied in the highly successful "Left Behind" series of novels by LaHaye and Jenkins. Fear (horror) has become an evangelizing tool preferred by many conservative Christians, and the primary source of this fear is the apocalyptic narrative in the

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Bible, told mainly in the Book of Revelation. Boyer (1992) recounts the history of “dispensational premillennialism,” the prophetic religious belief that a long period of “Tribulation” will end with the second Coming of Christ, who will defeat the Antichrist and usher in a thousand-year reign (hence, millennialism), ending with the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment. Both Boyer and Wojcik (1997) show how this premillennial narrative enters American popular culture. This scenario paradoxically evokes both fear and joyful anticipation, but it is the fear that drives so many of the popular culture discourses. American obsession with Satanism, a Manichaean fixation as old as the Puritan witch trials, survives in contemporary legends, moral panics, and popular entertainments (Ellis 2000).

In addition to the Manichaean and premillennial formulae, other mythological formulae show up in American popular film, television, and fiction. American Religious Studies scholars have been drawn to popular culture since the 1970s. Two such scholars (Jewett and Lawrence 1977; Lawrence and Jewett 2002) trace one distinctive formula narrative – which they call the “American Monomyth,” a variant of Joseph Campbell’s monomyth – through several versions of American heroes as they turn up in popular culture, from Superman to the vigilante justice in the “Death Wish” films, from classic western films to the “Rambo” films to science fiction films like the “Terminator” series. The American Monomyth has religious elements drawn from the Bible, and what Jewett and Lawrence and other American Studies scholars have noted is that the western and science fiction are two popular culture genres well suited to posing large questions, including religious ones. American science fiction has explored religious ideas for decades, from television’s *Star Trek* (Wagner and Lundeen 1998; Porter and McLaren, eds. 1999; Kraemer, Cassidy, and Schwartz 2008) to television’s *Battlestar Galactica* (Eberl, ed. 2008).

Some scholars and critics have found religion in unlikely corners of popular culture. Back in the 1960s, Short’s (1965) book, *The Gospel According to “Peanuts”*, was read as widely among fans of the Charles Schultz comic strip as among scholars in American Religious Studies. The new millennium saw a new spate of “The Gospel According to [fill in the blank],” with subjects ranging from Harry Potter (Neal 2002) and “The Lord of the Rings” (Wood 2003), two British texts with large audiences in the US, both for the books and the films, to the children’s books by Dr. Seuss (Kemp 2004), *The Simpsons* television show (Pinsky 2007), and the music of Springsteen (Symynkywicz 2008). So rich are the research possibilities that new journals (e.g., *The Journal of Religion and Film*, 1997–present; *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 2002–present) have appeared to accommodate the new scholarship, as does the more general journal, *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* (1991–present).

The new millennium also brought increased interest in the relationships between religion and organized sports in American culture. Actually, Novak’s *The Joy of Sports* (1976) quite early made this connection, arguing that sporting events are rituals and ceremonies celebrating the American Civil Religion. Scholars then

neglected this insight for over 20 years, but when Bill McCartney, head football coach at the University of Colorado at Boulder, founded the Evangelical men's organization and social movement, Promise Keepers, in 1990, historians and others began to chart the very long history of American thought linking physical fitness and sports to moral purity and strength. "Muscular Christianity" (Ladd and Mathisen 1999; Putney 2003) had its roots in the nineteenth century but is as evident in the early twenty-first century (Baker 2007). The link between religion and sport also extends to the military (Higgs 1995).

Visual Culture

Material Culture Studies has been an important specialty within American Studies since the field's beginnings, but by the 1990s the emerging specialty of Visual Studies expanded the scope and content of texts that communicate meanings without words. The work of one American Studies scholar, in particular, illustrates this evolution. McDannell's (1994, 1998) initial work was in Material Culture Studies, but more recently she has turned her critical skills to photography (McDannell 2004) and to film (McDannell, ed. 2007), and in the meantime she edited an important two-volume collection of essays (McDannell, ed. 2001) that provides a good introduction to American Religious Studies in the new millennium. Another American Religious Studies scholar, David Morgan, models theory and practice in the criticism of religious visual culture (Morgan 1997, 2001, 2005).

The Internet

The Millennial generation has been raised in a technological world of communication, a world that changes on the time scale of months rather than years. First resistant to the Internet as the source of music, pornography, and other evils of American popular culture, religious organizations began to embrace the new electronic media as tools in the work of the organizations, especially youth work (youth ministries). Folklorists, media critics, and other social scientists (Hadden and Cowan, eds. 2000; Brasher 2001) are showing increasing interest in the whole range of religious uses of the Internet, which itself is a tool for the globalization of cultures (Dawson and Cowan 2004). Thus, one fruitful new direction of research in a transnational American Studies is this online world of religious communication.

E pluribus unum?

As dynamic systems, cultures more often experience tensions and fissures than stasis. Two decades' worth of American Religious Studies scholarship stressing

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particularities, to say nothing of two decades' worth of identity politics in the US, led some scholars to fret openly about the health of American pluralism. The culture wars reached a heated frenzy during the Clinton administration (1993–2001) and George W. Bush was elected in 2000 with substantial support from the religious right. As if these tensions were not enough, the attacks on September 11, 2001, made necessary a whole new, tense conversation between Muslims and everyone else in the US. Rhetoric in the presidential campaigns of 2000, 2004, and 2008 continued to fuel the idea that the culture wars are, in fact, religious wars, and the warfronts in Afghanistan (2001) and then Iraq (2003) seemed like “holy wars” on both sides.

Noted American religious historian and scholar Martin E. Marty (1997, 2005) took the lead in writing about the dangers of tribalism in American culture, especially after 9/11. Marty and others argued that American democratic and religious traditions provide a foundation for strengthening a weakening pluralism. The authors' essays, collected in a volume titled *One Nation Under God*, edited by Garber and Walkowitz (1999), convey less urgency than Marty that the particularities of American religious practices present a danger to American unity. In fact, many of the authors in that collection wish to resist the conflation of nationalism and religious hegemony. This debate reflects a key tension in American Studies in the first decade of the century – namely, do ideas of nationalism, patriotism, and American exceptionalism contaminate religious-based calls for the common good?

Scholars also jumped into the religious politics of the culture wars by taking a close look at the often-heard claims that “the United States was founded as a Christian nation.” Both Meacham's (2006) and Waldman's (2008) careful histories of the religious debate at the founding make it clear that the founders had a subtle and sometimes contradictory view of the relationship between religion and politics, and support neither the claim that the US was founded as a Christian nation nor the claim that the founders all endorsed a solid separation of Church and state.

The presidency of George W. Bush occasioned close scrutiny by scholars and journalists interested in the rise of the religious right and their access to power through Bush. Martin's (1996) earlier account received an update in the 2004 documentary film, *With God on Our Side: George W. Bush and the Rise of the Religious Right*, produced by A. Skaggs, D. Van Taylor, and A. Pomeroy. Wallis's (2005) attempt to carve a middle way on the relationship between religion and politics in the US was a reaction to the re-election of Bush in 2004, to the religiously driven foreign policy adventures of the US, and to the poor record of social and economic justice. Goldberg (2006) analyzed the “dominion theology” that gives Evangelicals the mission to take responsibility for all aspects of society, and Phillips (2006) links the ideologies of “radical” Christianity to American foreign and economic policies. Hulsether's (2007) excellent survey of the intertwining of religion, culture, and politics in the twentieth century touches on the history of all of these issues.

The first Gulf War (1990–1) revived a conversation between religious pacifists and those who believe that the US is justified in fighting a “Just War.” As noted above, religious-based war resistance and conscientious objection to military service was front-page news in the late 1960s and 1970s. The invasion of Afghanistan did not prompt much religious protest, but in the longer build-up to the invasion of Iraq there was time for a fuller public debate whether the invasion of Iraq could constitute a just war as defined in religious theory. Indeed, on the eve of the invasion, the Vatican, several religious leaders, and the bishops of President Bush’s own Methodist Church declared that what was coming did not meet the criteria of a just war.

Other scholarly trends in American Studies touched American Religious Studies in the first decade of the twenty-first century. There was a continued interest in the study of the cultural diversity of the United States (e.g., Carnes and Yang 2004; Heinze 2004), naturally, but equally visible were declarations that American Studies should become comparative. Sometimes carrying the label “globalization,” sometimes “postnational,” this initiative takes many forms. In any case, its topic is the flow of people, ideas, symbolic expressions, and material things (commodities, mainly) across national boundaries. American cultural commodities move in a global economy, and multinational corporations are the new face of commodity capitalism. Part of the agenda of this research is to eliminate any residual American exceptionalism and nationalism in American Studies and to chronicle all the forms of American imperialism and neocolonialism in the new millennium.

American Religious Studies ought to be at the center of this study of the globalization of cultures. After all, national borders mean nothing to world religions. World religions are among the oldest forms of global cultural systems. Yet most American Studies scholarship on globalization ignores religion. A special issue of the *American Quarterly* devoted entirely to articles on “Religion and Politics in the Contemporary United States” (Griffith and McAlister, eds. 2007) contains some essays that point to the possibilities of a transnational American Studies, and the “Introduction” to that issue by the editors usefully summarizes some of the landscape of American Religious Studies as of 2007.

The study of the cultural dimensions of food and foodways (customs relating to food), begun initially in the 1980s in Folklore Studies and then becoming a more general interest in American Studies, looked to religion as scholars took interest in ethnic foodways and the place of food in religious celebrations, from the Passover seder to the church picnic (e.g., Sack 2000). In fact, Food Studies are related to another research specialty developed in the 1980s and 1990s – the study of the body as a cultural “text” that tells us much about the ideas and anxieties in a society in place and time. “Muscular Christianity” actually was a nineteenth-century idea in the United States, and there is a rich history of American ideas linking bodies, diet, exercise, and good moral character (e.g., Griffith 2004).

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Coda

I wrote this chapter in the summer and fall of 2008, as the rhetoric of the presidential campaign hummed along to remind us of the importance of religion in understanding American politics and public life. Democratic candidates Clinton and Obama had held a “Compassion Forum” at Messiah College during the primary campaign (April, broadcast on CNN), and in August both Barack Obama and John McCain accepted Evangelical Christian pastor Rick Warren’s invitation to appear in a nationally televised “Faith Forum” at his megachurch in Southern California. McCain’s selection of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, an Evangelical Christian, as his Vice Presidential candidate energized the religious right, a political base lukewarm to McCain. Obama’s religious credentials were strong, and he weathered a controversy over heated sermons by his Chicago pastor and mentor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright (who, true to his namesake, knows how to deliver an American Jeremiad), which provided Obama an occasion to deliver an important speech defining his own religious beliefs. Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney had delivered an equally important speech about his Mormon faith during the Republican primaries, but without the happy ending for his candidacy. And early in the primary season, when one of the Republican candidates’ “debates” still had ten or so participants, three responded to a question that they believed the biblical account of creation and did not believe in biological evolution. One of those candidates was former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, an Evangelical Christian who did well in a few primaries before giving up the race. No matter where one looked during the presidential campaign, one almost always found religion in the mix. Even President Obama’s inaugural events in January of 2009 reflected the religious culture wars, as Obama asked Rick Warren – who openly condemned homosexuality on religious grounds – to deliver the invocation; Obama also asked Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Episcopal Bishop in the US, to deliver an invocation at another inaugural event.

Media coverage of the religious issues in the presidential campaign was inadequate to the task. During the controversy over Jeremiah Wright’s sermons, one longed for informed, thoughtful analysis of the tradition of the African American Jeremiad, itself a variant of the American Jeremiad (Bercovitch 1978). As Mitt Romney tried to assure people that Mormons were not a strange cult, and that Mormons share American values with most people, one wishes that Mormonism could have been placed in the broader history of American religion.

After an administration (George W. Bush’s) where religion affected federal science policy, the fact that some candidates believed in Intelligent Design was important; with intractable tensions and wars in the Middle East, a candidate’s views on the premillennialism based on the Christian Book of Revelation seemed like a legitimate bit of information for the voting public to know. The world longs to understand the nature of religious beliefs and practices in the United States,

especially as those beliefs and practices enter the public sphere in the US and in the world. American Studies needs American Religious Studies now more than ever.

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American Languages

Joshua L. Miller

Languages are spread by conquest . . . even if the British Isles should lose control of their world-wide empire, the North American republic, which is being transformed into an empire, will be powerful enough to . . . propagate among the nations English speech, which in time will be known as the American language.

Washington Post (June 9, 1910): 6; rpt *New Orleans Picayune*

Language has been a topic of such vivid and ongoing interest to US politicians, journalists, artists, and critics throughout a vast span of time that it is surprising how little scholarly consensus exists regarding “languages” as an analytic for the study of US culture and politics.

In considering matters of normative languages, national language policy debates, social group codes, bi- and multi-lingualism, situational code-switching, artistic idiolects, mixed languages, artificial and invented languages, it is immediately apparent that such questions have always preoccupied students of US cultures. However, important conversations among experts on histories of language change, synchronic studies of vernacular and multi-lingual diversity, debates on contemporary policy, and philosophical considerations of language innovation and loss proceed more or less in isolation, separated by disciplinary boundaries such as linguistics, literature, history, political science, and education.

Though it seems too obvious a point to state, there has never been a time when the United States has not been an intricately pluri-lingual nation. Stigmatization, exclusion, and criminalization of language forms recur in US history not for linguistic reasons, but because they have long been (and many argue remain) a legal and socially sanctioned arena for racism and other forms of hatred. Many have lamented US language chauvinism, as in the paradox of mono-lingual prestige against multi-lingual stigma, but its transgenerational resilience suggests that the fantasy of lingual uniformity retains symbolic power.¹ The writings of lawyer, historian, and activist Max J. Kohler constitute one instance of confronting English-Only Americanism. In the years between 1911 and 1924, Kohler wrote voluminously, including a compendium, *The Injustice of a Literacy Test for Immigrants* (1912),

publicity, legal briefs, and newspaper opinion pieces in order to marshal evidence against policies “requiring knowledge of English” for de facto or de jure citizenship.² Individuals like Kohler and organizations, such as the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign-Born (founded in 1933), have labored on behalf of minoritarian language rights and cultures, but remain little known today. Poor institutional memory of public debates and academic interventions relevant to the history of US languages in the interdisciplinary domains of American Studies has contributed to myopia regarding the trends of US language politics and thus to debates that reiterate past conflicts with cyclical predictability.

Moreover, scholars motivated by linguistic concerns who were writing in the 1880s, 1920s, 1960s, and 2000s rarely cite anything like a complete set of relevant predecessors. Consider what the term “language” has signified when invoked by Thomas Jefferson, Noah Webster, William Dwight Whitney, William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, the authors of the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, Myth and Symbol Americanists, structuralists, poststructuralists, and deconstructivists, and scholars of Gender, Sexuality, African American cultures, and Ethnic Studies. Where do such conceptions of language intersect, and how are current notions inherited from these varied disciplinary and methodologically rich precursors? In another vein, how might we begin to relate some of the lines of thought traced by theorists as linguistically oriented (and in many cases trained) as Saussure, Boas, Adorno, Gramsci, Bakhtin, Kristeva, Ngugi, Williams, Foucault, Said, Bourdieu, Derrida, Spivak, Glissant, Fusco, and Butler? And, to add one final vector, how might one put any of these conceptual frameworks into dialogue (so to speak) with the humanists and scientists who have made language their explicit object of study, linguists?

Language is, in a sense, an obvious and even staid subject of American Studies scholarship, since the founding of US culture as a subject of academic study was based in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on evidence of national linguistic difference in the literary vernaculars of the early nation writers, educational institutions, and political rhetoric later naturalized as distinctively “American.”³ Whether and how US English differed in kind from British English, rather than constituting a “degraded” or “degenerate” set of malapropisms or “slanguage,” was a recurring question for nineteenth-century US Americans in both populist and elite registers.⁴ Drawing upon these charged sentiments, early studies of American Civilization and American Culture took up the linguistic diversity and experimentation of US communities and texts to wide-ranging conclusions in works such as H. L. Mencken’s *The American Language* (1919–48) and *Prejudices* essays, Herbert Bolton’s *The Spanish Borderlands* (1921), Constance Roarke’s *American Humor* (1931), and later studies, as in John A. Kouwenhoven’s *Made In America* (1948), Leo Marx’s “The Vernacular Tradition in American Literature” (1960) and Richard Bridgman’s *The Colloquial Style in American Literature* (1960).⁵ In these ways, language has been and remains an abiding and central concern for Americanists.

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Despite a plethora of work on vernacularism in (and frequently as) US literature from the 1920s to the 1960s, which linked speech forms to cultural radicalism, democracy, pluralism, and conservatism in dialectical variation, a consistent feature of this scholarship was the near total exclusion of non-English languages from the study of US culture. What's striking about this absence is that this was not presumed to be the case in previous eras. Werner Sollors has pointed out that the landmark 1917–21 *Cambridge History of American Literature* included two chapters on “Non-English Literature” and one on the history of English.⁶ Surveying the publications of linguists, folklorists, and anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century illuminates a small, but notable, number of scholarly investigations of US Germans, Spanishes, Frenches, Creoles, Tagalogs, and Yiddishes, as well as work on Native American languages and initial studies of African American Englishes.⁷ In the 1960s and 1970s, revisionist African American, Chicana/o, and Native American historiography and criticism actively advanced critiques of exclusivist archives, research programs, and syllabi against linguistic exclusion. Even as these bodies of critical scholarship, 1980s canon and “value” debates, and 1990s multiculturalist challenges produced monumental changes to educational priorities with regard to text selection and pedagogies, relatively little curricular reform has emerged to revise the exclusion of multi-lingual US cultures from syllabi and canons.

Two developments during the 1990s and early 2000s in American Studies scholarship have directly contributed to a resurgence of interest in Language Studies: the broad-scale reassessments of US imperial pasts (frequently identified as “New Americanist” Studies) and the transnational turn to situate the US in relation to the Americas and Atlantic and Pacific oceanic crossings (“postnational American Studies” or “Americas Studies”).⁸ Both the International American Studies Association's first world congress and the first issues of the journal *Comparative American Studies* occurred in 2003 to provide fora for global scholarly exchanges. Another index of the linguistic dimensions of these trends can be seen in the program themes of American Studies Association (ASA) annual conventions, such as “American Studies and the Question of Empire” (1998), “American Studies in the World/The World in American Studies” (2000), “Crossroads of Culture” (2004), and “América Aquí” (2007). The presidential theme of the 2009 Modern Language Association (MLA) annual convention is “The Tasks of Translation.” In the context of scholarly investigations into the coercive racialized and sexualized regimes of violence produced by Native American removal, slavery, and territorial expansionism has come renewed interest in bi- and multi-lingual cultures. As active resistance to mono-lingual nativism, articulations of diasporism, ambivalent assimilation, and strategic non/compliance to normative principles, linguistically experimental cultures are now widely viewed as central rather than eclectic or marginal to American Studies.

In this context, multi-disciplinary Language Studies have illuminated new challenges and opportunities for American Studies, including official status for

Spanish and other languages, reconfigured canons and archives, and an active role in the maintenance and preservation of endangered languages.⁹ 2003 MLA President Mary Louise Pratt considers the US as a *cementerio de lenguas*/language graveyard to raise questions of institutional ethics and efficacy with regard to the role of universities in ongoing processes of language variation and extinction.¹⁰ And 2005 MLA President Donna Stanton argued that maintaining diversity through “linguistic human rights” should replace national security as the basis of language policy and educational mandates. The suggestions by Pratt and Stanton recall past MLA presidential addresses proposing greater academic investment in national language matters, which is to say that locating institutional histories of engagement and disregard is crucial to understanding languages as an analytic term for American Studies.¹¹

While this essay cannot answer definitively the questions raised in this introduction, it will address and reconsider *languages* as a new-old field of contestation for US American cultures. I intend to elaborate a view of critical Americanist Cultural Studies that draws on the historically nationalized conflicts that fire language politics and the intranational and international linguistic matter(s) of US culture. The presumptive primacy of the nation as the unit of differentiation can be productively reconsidered, since postimperial languages, such as Spanish, English, and Arabic, neither belong to one nation, nor have they emerged in various nations with predictable patterns of differentiation. In other words, the divergent Arabics of Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon do not parallel the Spanishes of El Salvador, Peru, and Argentina or the Englishes of South Africa, the Philippines, or the US. What does the recognition that a one-to-one relation between nation and language is a myth mean for American Studies?

As the semantic medium of everyday activity, language tends to be taken for granted; its naturalization is a function of the tautological conundrum that the only way to problematize language is with language itself. Since this has been a central concern in post-Enlightenment philosophy, linguistics, history, and literary criticism, substantial thought can be put in conversation to address these questions for Americanists. Along with the extraordinary difficulty of de-familiarizing a language to its own speakers, a perhaps related challenge is the babelian tendencies for language debates to splinter into hyperbolized utopian and apocalyptic cleavages.¹² Samuel Huntington’s *Who Are We?* (2004) exemplifies the condemnatory wing of academic language politics in arguing that Latina/o immigration has produced “creeping bilingualism,” a unique threat to the nation due to transnational ties to geographically proximate Latin American nations.¹³ He describes the diffusion of Spanish within the US as an unprecedented national security danger, a claim with a distinguished history, as German was an exceptional concern during World War I and as Arabic has been treated since 2001.

A perhaps related problem is the lack of specificity in the terminology regarding speech forms, starting with language, idiom, and dialect (the quip frequently misattributed to linguist Max Weinreich – that a language is a dialect with an army

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and a navy – is not quite right, since languages do not have a one-to-one relation to nations), but particularly difficult with mixed languages: creoles, pidgins, and vernaculars.¹⁴ Moreover, the terms referencing speech communities require precision in order to be useful, including poly- or pluri-lingual (the coexistence of multiple languages in one place, e.g. Arabic and English in Detroit), multi-lingual (intertwined or merged languages, code-switching between languages, and lexical borrowing, e.g. Spanglish, or switching between Hindi and English), mono-lingual (a speech community using one language), monoglossia (a speech community/situation using one idiom), diglossia (a community employing two idioms that usually have asymmetrical social status, as in African American Englishes and Jewish bil-lingualism), heteroglossia (anti- or non-hierarchical switching among multiple speech forms or “social dialects,” in Mikhail Bakhtin’s terms). Conceptual clarification enables interpretive approaches that employ historicist awareness of language politics and put American Studies in conversation with the multi-disciplinary field of Language Studies, including Comparative Studies, Histories of Linguistics, Multi-lingual Literary Studies, Gender and Sexualities Studies, Social Geography, Translation Theory, and Global/World Studies.

To adapt Ralph Ellison’s famous question, what would America be without non-English and mixed-language cultures?¹⁵ Imagine the nation bereft of Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*, Africanist traces and appropriations in African American English, Walt Whitman or Henry James’s French, Yiddish Modernism, José Martí’s “Nuestra América,” or the Chinese-language poems inscribed on the walls of Angel Island holding cells. With such works in mind, we might turn the question around to ask what’s “American” about multi-lingual US cultures? And how might our conceptions of US culture change when the objects of analysis, historical context, and interpretive methods take complexly inter-lingual mixtures as constitutive of US Americanism?

US English in the World and the World in US English

National as we were in the days when Noah Webster first put out his American Dictionary, we are to-day an international people in more senses than one.

Frank H. Vizetelly, “The Ideal Dictionary” (1926)¹⁶

The study of US languages has always been an explicitly transnational intellectual enterprise and one materially engaged with politics. The material stakes of language study and policy-making are apparent in the 1910 New Orleans newspaper article that I cite as the epigraph to this essay. Contemplating a sweep from Alexander the Great to British imperialism in India, the anonymous author describes language as sedimented historical evidence of forceful domination rather than of aesthetic refinement, civilizational greatness, or other de-politicized rationales for maintaining cultural-social inequalities. That writer’s relation of contemporary speech to military conquest shares a spirit of immanent Anglo-globalism with

lexicographer Frank Vizetelly's 1926 *American Speech* article proposing a dictionary for the interwar US to reflect an English expanded by "so many tongues . . . gathered in one territory under one flag," the most since "the building of the Tower of Babel."¹⁷ The US-as-Babel is a familiar refrain in every era, but Vizetelly argues for following H. L. Mencken's *The American Language* (the first three editions of which appeared 1919–23) to create a dictionary for US English reflecting the presence of non-English terms derived from "economic, industrial, and commercial" international relations.

These perspicacious descriptions of the US linguistic scene hint at the trans-temporal and cross-regional features of contemporary languages. Present-day usage in any era is not a *telos*, but a transition from a conflictual past that is, at best, partially understood and remains present as fragmentary traces naturalized within spoken and written forms of communication. Words are not invented, but inherited, and they bear the weight of past speech situations, even (and especially) when speakers are unaware of their previous invocations. Italian philologist and Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci described linguistic change as taking place over time, toward different conclusions, for varying reasons at once. There is never only one collective language situation, but many forces continually warring for position. Gramsci called "spontaneous grammar" the meta-linguistic structures limiting and shaping the articulations of an individual speaker who remains un- or semi-conscious of them.

The insights afforded by awareness of ongoing diachronic dynamism in linguistic forms (and the tendency of many to take comfort in the idea of uniform speech standards and static traditions) helps explain the appeal and interpretive power of keyword and etymological studies, such as Raymond Williams's enduring *Keywords* and its successors, notably the recent *Keywords of American Cultural Studies*.¹⁸ With more comprehensive aims, historical dictionaries modeled on the *Oxford English Dictionary* (notably the *Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles* [1938–44] and later historical dictionaries) make familiar and forgotten definitions and instances of past usage available in systematic fashion.¹⁹ The frequency of overdetermined and unpredictable meanings that remain embedded in certain words makes etymological recovery work into a kind of Nietzschean/Foucauldian genealogy in which words have messy and multiple origins that betray the racialized, triumphalist narratives of nationalism resting uneasily within. Across long time-spans, spikes of interest in language politics have manifested in a variety of social domains, rarely just one. Consequently, contextualized cultural study of US languages requires considerations not just of state policy, but also of demographic change, logics of political rhetoric, regimes of racialized violence, institutional histories of language study, and canons of cultural artworks.

"There is a notion," writes publisher and educator Ralph Olmstead Williams in an 1898 lead article for the journal *Modern Language Notes*, that the exclusive use of the terms "America and American" for the nation and people of the United States "is an outcome of our national arrogance – a concentrated extract of the

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bitter principle of the Monroe Doctrine.”²⁰ With more than 100 citations from French, Italian, Spanish, and English-language documents, the author contends that his sampling of international usage determines that “America” was neither a recent appropriation of expansionist nationalism, nor an overdetermined name claimed by nations throughout the Americas, but instead a lexical marker conventionally limited to signifying the US. But Williams’s own examples contradict his claims, most flagrantly when he takes up the pivotal question of Spanish and Latin American examples. Following five citations from just two writers, he admits, “One would get a wrong impression, however, if he thought that these quotations were typical of Spanish and Spanish-American usage. They are not.”²¹ Instead, his survey shows that the predominant term is not *americano*, but *norte-americano*, *anglo-americano*, and *yankee*, all of which preserve the term “Americano” for residents of the Americas. Williams’s philological keyword study is one small but telling instance of scholarly efforts to participate, in this case by selectively skewing evidence, in long-standing struggles over the term “America” within hemispheric nationalisms, cultural production, and linguistic study. Moreover, the timing of Williams’s article – in the year of US military occupations in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Guam – points to the need for contextualizing the continuous interplay between the findings of linguistic study and collective desires suffusing languages in the popular imaginary.

On a more sanguine note, histories of linguistics and cultural criticism also constitute moments of collective self-reflexivity and even revelation. The empiricist turn in US-based descriptivist linguistics, usually identified with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Leonard Bloomfield, established frameworks for investigating speech communities and patterns of dialect variation as complex (rather than primitive) systems and as culturally valued.²² In this spirit, semiotic examinations of US words and languages, like those of artistic mimesis, have enabled self-aware vernaculars and mixed idioms that perform and critique local, regional, national, ethno-racial, gendered, sexualized, cosmopolitan, and artificial/false identities. As instances of such work, we might think of the recovery projects of dialectologists and sociolinguists; the bi-lingual and non-English-language works inscribed, written, and performed by imprisoned, detained, and exiled poets (from sites including Native American reservations, Angel and Ellis Islands, US/Mexican borderlands, and the prison industrial complex); multi-lingual pop and hip-hop music by artists such as Shakira, MIA, the Brazilian Girls, Pink Martini, and Balkan Beat Box; and texts of “critical multilingualism,” as Brent Hayes Edwards describes the overt language-mixing experiments of Claude McKay and other black diasporic modernists, which could be extended to post-1965 new immigrant writers, such as Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Jessica Hagedorn, R. Zamora Linmark, and Ernesto Quiñonez.²³

While there are new aesthetic forms and political trends that have brought such texts to wider audiences, US cultural pluri- and multi-lingualism is not a recent phenomenon. The challenge to scholars of American Studies is how to read

histories and texts that use the materiality and symbolic force of languages to combat linguistic presumptions and preoccupations. One way to group the highly heterogeneous works referenced in the previous paragraph is to think of them as sharing the goal of calling attention to hierarchical systems of power encoded within and disguised by existing languages. All of the artists referenced above employ highly self-referential code-switching practices of multi-dialecticism and multi-lingualism. Through irony, faux nostalgia, documentarianism, manifestos, and countless other genres, they channel powerful currents of affect in order to up-end simple equations between static forms of speech and claims to citizenship and belonging. What results in their works is not one political imperative or aesthetic practice; rather, they form ranges of alternative idioms that satirize, mimic, parallel and condemn majoritarian speech forms.

In 2008, the United Nations “International Year of Languages,” a California truck driver with two decades of work experience was stopped on a highway and fined \$500 for not speaking English well, a Kansas elementary school threatened to expel students who refused to sign an English-only pledge, and the US army announced an initiative to hire military translators for a war in Iraq that had begun six years earlier.²⁴ A recently composed T-shirt makes the link between racialized and linguistic exclusions by bearing the words “Whites Only” in which the word “Whites” is crossed out and replaced by “English,” while a recent issue of a left-wing magazine graphically extended the same concept by resignifying an iconic Danny Lyon photograph from the civil rights movement.²⁵

Since the United States has never had an official language, why is a historical awareness of US languages necessary? A long history of US linguistic chauvinism, immigrant and other social group advocacy, and anti-immigrant and colonial subject policies illuminates the complex interplay among discourses of whiteness, nationalism, and language policies, both explicit and informal. The enslavement of African Americans involved unique language policies, as did the removal of Native Americans, but in both cases the nation instituted systematic policies of cultural erasure as part of a de-humanizing domination. Africans were divided ethnically, linguistically, and familiarly by slave traders and plantation owners in order to decrease their capabilities to coordinate revolts. Native Americans were forced from annexed lands, then forced into the reservation system, and, as children, were compelled to attend boarding schools that enforced the teaching of English.²⁶ Desires for belonging yield an affective politics of Americanization functioning powerfully in the realms of language. How can learning a language be harmful? When language learning is imposed as compulsory rather than voluntary and when the linguistic alterity is stigmatized and even criminalized. Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Ford were prominent (but far from the only) advocates of not merely the learning of English and not even just the learning of a distinctively US form of English, but also the unlearning of non-English languages.

The unusual status of US English as an informal standard developed in piecemeal fashion early in the twentieth century from the 1906 Naturalization Act,

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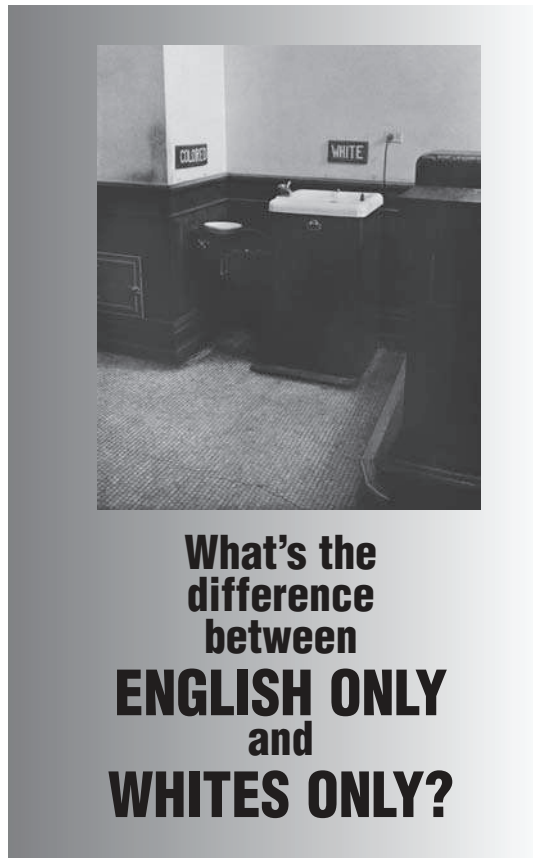


Figure 6.1 Segregated drinking fountains in the county courthouse, Albany, Georgia. Photograph by Danny Lyon. Reproduced by permission of Revolution Newspaper/revcom.us and Magnum Photos.

World War I-era Americanization programs, the Espionage and Alien Sedition Acts, Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924, and state literacy tests and language laws. Though many of these policies and programs were overturned, what emerged was a covert regulatory system instantiating stigma and prestige to speech forms, encouraging the forgetting of non-English languages, and overtly citizenship restrictions. Consequently, the hitherto perpetual problem of not knowing whether or what US English was, or whether it even existed obtained new force and practical urgency. A 1919 *Kansas City Star* headline aptly, if indelicately, summed up the question: “Which Language Do You Speak – English or American?”²⁷ The interwar era prediction by H. L. Mencken and countless others, including Frank Vizetelly in the epigraph to this section, that US English would reverse the curse of Babel and become a global second language through politics, commerce, and culture was widespread, if hotly contested. The same decades also gave rise to

Basic English, the Anglo-American Esperanto developed by Charles Ogden and elaborated by I. A. Richards, particularly in the aftermath of World War II. The associations among global English, New Criticism, and political internationalisms (both H. G. Welles and George Orwell imagined Basic as the idiom of totalitarian rule) evoke collective anxieties and fantasies of social control emergent in the early Cold War. Civil rights conflicts, the 1965 Immigration Act, and post-1960s educational battles, particularly around bi-lingual education and African American English were transformed by Reaganist Americanism and the resurgence (again) of anti-immigrant right-wing nativism, including the first federal language legislation ever considered by the US Congress, the 1982 English Language Amendment introduced by Senator S. I. Hayakawa.²⁸ Since 1982, language-policy proposals at local, state, and federal levels have been regularly proposed and adopted. As of 2009, James Crawford reports on his “Language Policy” website that 26 states (excepting those ruled unconstitutional) currently have laws declaring English as an official language, while four states have passed English-Plus resolutions.

Reading the Languages of American Cultures

The Text is that *social* space which leaves no language safe, outside, nor any subject of the enunciation in position as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder.

Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in *Image, Music, Text*,
transl. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977)

In every conceivable discourse – popular, scholarly, juridical, and so on – languages prove to be hornets’ nests of misunderstandings, paradoxes, and struggles over symbolic power and material resources. African American English has been subject to numerous educational, popular-public, legal, scholarly, and meta-theoretical clashes, only the most well known of which are the 1979 Ann Arbor school court case and the 1996 Oakland Ebonics controversy. And this problem has also affected Spanish-language bi-lingual education programs.

Part of the difficulty of these public conversations stems from the tautological paradox of seeking to de-familiarize the dominant language, particularly one that has been so energetically naturalized as plain or simple speech. Leo Marx recalled in 2003 that his late 1930s initiation to American Studies was based in the ideological exceptionalism that characterized the origins of the field: “Whereas most national identities derive from a people’s geographic or ethnolinguistic origins, they noted, the American identity was grounded in the universalist ideas and values of the Enlightenment.”²⁹ Marx’s phrasing points directly to the perceived antagonism between linguistically distinct racial and ethnic identities and unifying philosophical principles of US belonging. This false dichotomy remains a galvanizing force in contemporary language politics, both within and outside the academy. It is the straw woman (of color, in most instances) reanimated in

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public discussions of US language politics with nearly robotic regularity, that those who do not speak US English (or Englishes), or who retain affective public and private investments in other languages, are politically suspect.

The institutional history of linguistics is part of the story, since it re-emerged in the US during the interwar era as an academic domain of empirical study of actual speech communities and language trends.³⁰ The insights, preoccupations, evidence, and blind spots of linguistics will inform Americanist scholarship on the political and formal implications of US linguistic diversity. The pioneering Columbia University linguist George Philip Krapp was an early proponent of the “new science” of descriptive linguistics in *Modern English* (1910), *The Pronunciation of Standard English* (1919), *The English Language in America* (1925), and many other publications in which he argues on behalf of recognizing the validity of situationally appropriate speech forms, rather than “dogmatic” assumptions of normative linguistic standards.³¹ Tracing out the emerging lines of cultural analysis set out by anthropologists Franz Boas and his student Edward Sapir, Krapp and other descriptive linguists, including Leonard Bloomfield, called for studies not as extensions of civilizational greatness, as in Matthew Arnold’s “the best that has been thought and said,” but as analyses documenting the complexities of social realities, with equal attention to historically marginalized cultures and societies. “Could anything be more absurd than to stigmatize as incorrect a pronunciation which is in general use?” he asks, and elaborates, “All cultivated speakers do not speak alike in America.”³²

However, Krapp’s attempt to extend a similarly relativistic argument – that African Americans speak forms of English identical to those of white Americans of similar class and regional backgrounds – led him to assert a “baby-talk” theory of African American English, that white slaveowners used “a much simplified English” to speak with Africans:

the kind of English some people employ when they talk to babies. It would probably have no tenses of the verb, no distinctness of case in nouns or pronouns, no marks of singular or plural. Difficult sounds would be eliminated, as they are in baby talk . . . As the Negroes imported into America came from so many unrelated tribes, speaking languages so different that one tribe could not understand the language of another, they themselves were driven to the use of this infantile English in speaking to one another.³³

The anti-essentialist (and, from their perspective, anti-racist) arguments of Krapp and other interwar linguists that African American English contained few, if any, linguistic traces of African languages and that African American speech and language forms were indistinguishable from white Americans were thoroughly contested by Lorenzo Dow Turner’s 1940s studies of Africanisms in Gullah and later work on African American Englishes.³⁴ Contemporaries and successors of Turner – Melville Herskovitz, Winnifred Vass, Laurence Levine, Sterling Stuckey, William Labov, and Geneva Smitherman – have argued for the historical

specificities of African American linguistic cultures emerging from the brutal history of the circum-Atlantic slave trade.

The emergence of historicist accounts of the US as both densely pluri-lingual and intricately multi-lingual holds transformative consequences for both scholars and the public at large. In this light, the history of US cultures looks more like an ongoing dynamic of linguistic contact driven by the twinned logics of expansionism and internal acculturation. Rather than a separate history, US English can be understood as continuously contacting speech forms constructed as verbal otherness. In this history, linguistic alterity constitutes thriving sites of powerful cultural competition, desire, revulsion, appropriation, and exoticization. Moreover, many texts that appear to be mono-lingual prove to be either subtly multi-lingual or heteroglossic, a quality that immigrant and postcolonial (and descendants of displaced) writers have exploited.

Prioritizing heterodox language practices in Cultural Studies challenges some widely held presumptions, such as the notion that there is such a thing as mono-lingual US texts and communities. Instead, we might follow the insights of linguist Rosina Lippi-Green, who argues that what has been understood as normative or “standard” languages are far more complex and unstable sites of multiplicity. Texts that appear to be composed of a singular language are actually filled with diachronic change and synchronic variation. In its strongest form, this line of thought claims not merely that heteroglossia and multi-lingualism are the rule of everyday social life, rather than the exception, but also that US cultures have agilely exploited the tensions and explosive possibilities of rendering English as an impure mixture of languages and vernaculars.

Jacques Derrida provocatively phrases a parallel point regarding his relationship to French as an Algerian Jew who feels unhoused in and by the only language he has always known: “We never speak only one language.”³⁵ Whether internal heterogeneity within an imperial national/global language refers to historical inheritance and change, resistance to language imposition, variation among social groups and geographical regions, interlingual and neologistic innovation, or any other dynamic, the particularities of such manifestations require precise assessment and understanding.

In studies of linguistically experimental cultures, themes that frequently emerge include the in/authenticity, un/originality, ephemerality, and enduring seductiveness of unsanctioned and improper speech forms. Whether employed as linguistic masks, parody, or strategic misappropriations, “bad” languages frequently prove to be unexpected sources of social critique.³⁶ This linguistic arena of contact and contestation gives new meaning to Roland Barthes’s notion of the text as a social space. Barthes complicates the relation of language to artwork/culture/utterance from one of an artisan and her raw materials to a bi-directional and reverse perspective in which language is a historical construct and limited form of representation. In this view, texts become uncontrollable sites of linguistic danger, pleasure, and contest.

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Artists and individuals who have been traditionally understood to be composing or living in one language may be read as drawing upon linguistic diversity in more subtle and frequently ambivalent ways. Gertrude Stein, whose writing is infamously (and infuriatingly) monologic can be read as referencing the loss of immigrant languages and the emergence of non-native Englishes as the “exciting” feature of the “making of Americans.” In a late essay translated for a French newspaper, Stein wrote that the displaced and dispossessed have put British English through “something like a hydrolic press” and remade its words in a new landscape as “the American language.”³⁷ In the language practice derided as “Steinese,” she expresses not the utopianism of limitless linguistic resignification, but structural melancholic strains of loss and constraint dialectically entwined within the punning pleasure of playful verbal invention and aural recombination. Complex links between affect and temporality similarly suffuse the code-switching vernaculars in the works of African American writers such as Charles Chesnutt, Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, Amiri Baraka, Gayl Jones, John Edgar Wideman, and Toni Morrison.

In other words, rather than disjunctive newness claimed as Modernist innovation, the rhythms of Stein’s cyclical, reiterative prose evoke the social and historical tensions identified by Gramsci’s spontaneous grammar and other critiques of centripetal or enforced linguistic uniformity. In his formulations on the “ecology” of linguistic change, linguist Salikoko Mufwene argues that the history of “American Englishes” includes the development of White American English vernaculars (WAEVs) through interlingual contact that include koinéization (a leveling process among multiple speech forms coexisting in one geographical arena).³⁸ In this way, that which was presumed to be unaccented, singular, uniform, and normative in previous generations – White American English – proves instead to be internally rent, haphazardly developed, and plural. Moreover, the history of the strains of US English that have been widely understood as predominant was guided by the same patterns of contact with dialects and languages as those that took place in the history of African American English, which suggests that white or Anglo US Englishes resemble their stigmatized doppelgängers in most respects, a development that neatly reverses the logic and implications of the “baby talk” theory advanced by Krapp.

Quantitative and theoretical studies of linguistic diversity offer rich conceptual, methodological, and evidentiary archives to American Studies and vice versa. Reading US cultural production in relation to the development of WAEVs, for example, liberates readers from forcing diverse Anglo-American speech forms into a uniform national language and offers manifold occasions for fresh approaches to authors whose Englishes invoke other languages, such as Stein and Henry Roth. In a similar vein, we might consider other instances of seemingly monologic language play that reveal the subtle presences of other languages, such as writers of US English who grew up in and wrote previously in other languages, for example, H. T. Tsiang, Vladimir Nabokov, Jack Kerouac, and Ha Jin. The point is

not to detect and reify simple conceptions of influence and appropriation, whether involuntary or tactical, but rather to explore whether and how their Englishes retain lexical elements from other sources and how the interplay of code-switching innovation can seem undetectably “normal” while concealing more complex and risky experimentation beneath the surface of polished or “simple” prose. Such perspectives show the multifariousness of Theodore Roosevelt’s tough talk, Ernest Hemingway’s plain speech, Henry James’s cosmopolitan garrulousness, Dale Carnegie’s transparent communication, and Lionel Trilling’s urbane Anglophilia, to take just a few possibilities.³⁹ Each of these can be read as carefully stylized practices whose seemingly monologic qualities can be linked to new pedagogies for teaching writing as composition; ambivalence regarding the immigrant origins of ancestors; new aural media, such as radio, film, and television; masculinity reconfigured as postwar traumatized tourism, and so on.

Moreover, the same question can be approached from the opposite angle with respect to reading US texts written in Creole, Hindi, Gikuyu, and other languages. Not all non-English languages signify difference identically or even similarly. The linguistic systems circulating within the nation and animating national language debates do so on the basis of particular histories both within the US and without. Yiddish and Chinese in 1930s literary works reflect their own histories of racialized marginalization and draw on their own traditions of cultural accomplishment, even as they bear traces of new contacts, as Henry Roth’s young Yiddish-dominant protagonist of *Call It Sleep* (1934) finds himself in a Chinese laundry store sounding out Chinese words. Marc Shell and Werner Sollors’s *Multilingual Anthology of American Literature* goes farther than any preceding collection to envision linguistically non-Anglocentric US literary traditions, but the possibilities for rethinking cultural traditions through linguistic pluralism remain on the margins of most university and secondary school curricula. Such texts generate significant pedagogical and research challenges, though a strong case could be made for regularizing the teaching and reading of texts in translation within a national culture. Such courses will shed new light on US landscapes, genres, and historical trends when they are understood through the non-English writings of Omar Ibn Said, Victor Séjour, José Martí, Shalom Asch, Theodor Adorno, I. B. Singer, Pedro Salinas, Reinaldo Arenas, Gabriel Preil, and Tino Villanueva.

Greater depth in research and curricular approaches to US languages will bring new objects of analysis that productively unsettle current consensuses and will enable comparative and global perspectives on familiar texts. For example, we might read Kate Chopin and Gertrude Stein as experimenting with narrative form, multilingual speech forms, cross-race identifications, and sexualized social identities. And we can reconsider Walt Whitman, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and other canonical Anglo US figures who turn out to be inextricably connected to the Americas writ large through translation and adaption, as Kirsten Silva Gruesz describes the “origins of Latino writing” and in Latina/o and Afro-Latina/o writing on alternative Américas, as Doris Sommer, Alfred Arteaga, Coco Fusco, and

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Mark Sanders have shown.⁴⁰ Gustavo Pérez-Firmat reads the “logo-eroticism” of bi-lingual Spanish-American and Latina/o writers’ affiliative “tongue ties.”⁴¹ Nella Larsen and Anzia Yezierska artfully attend to verbal difference as aural dimensions of passing narratives. And we might, as Stephen Katz has, look at US Jews writing in Hebrew about Native Americans and African Americans in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴² Or we could examine the Filipina/o-Chicana/o labor alliances taking shape in Spanishes and Spanglishes. Certain authors, such as William Faulkner and Carson McCullers, may have new roles to play in literary history as we consider the whiteness of WAEVs in their writings with their differing histories of syntax, diction, and accent. Looking forward to the next section, we might ask whether one ought to classify Henry Roth’s intricately layered 1934 novel *Call It Sleep* as multi-lingual, mono-lingual heteroglossia, or translational polyglossia?⁴³ Might such distinctions illuminate elements of Modernist narrative experimentation via an immigrant boy’s social, interior, and anterior lives?

Syntactic Traces of Struggle

American Studies work in a variety of disciplines on “languages” revises long-standing conceptions of US cultures from mono-lingual to pluri-lingual and envisions classroom conversations, research publications, and public debates taking place in and about works composed in Chinese, Navajo, and Swahili. While attending to non-English-dominant US communities, American Cultural Studies has also come to prioritize the political and aesthetic range of multi-lingual and vernacular expressive cultures that combine and switch among idioms. Why might artists combine languages within social and cultural expressive forms? Rather than limiting the signficatory possibilities of multi-lingual forms to particular politics, social groups, or historical periods, in this section I describe a range of interpretive approaches toward studies of multi-lingual US communities and cultures.

While interlingual speech forms are not limited to the diasporic histories and cultures of transplanted peoples (an implication from the previous section is that language studies reveal all languages to be impure hybrid recombinations), the works of Native American, African American, Jewish, Irish, Latina/o, and Asian American communities have been crucial sites of research and debate on language difference. Sexual, disabled, and other stigmatized social groups have used paradigms and rhetorical strategies derived from diasporic groups to stake claims to rights and to generate expressive forms based on alternative and mixed languages (as in queer cultures and sign-language dialects). Moreover, multi-lingual texts, like vernacular works, have traditionally had strong affinities with realist methods – documenting speech forms as they are spoken – but avant-garde, musical, parodic, sci-fi, psychic-interiorist, artificial/invented, machine, and digital multi-lingual works have also long followed non- and anti-realist logics.

In diasporic US language studies, displacements are understood to reverberate intergenerationally at the levels of syntax and grammar, thus generating uncanny charges in mixed linguistic forms deemed improper, repellant, and/or seductive. This encompasses a wider range of practices than code-switching alone, and linguists and socio-linguists have described pidgins, creoles, and bilingual mixtures in relation to the demographic changes that generate language contact in patterns of replication, word borrowing, and morphological borrowing.⁴⁴ Extra-linguistic social factors complicate generalized principles by driving particular forms of contact and infusing linguistic variation with affective registers derived from nationalism and nativism, slavery and post-slavery racialization, imperialism and immigration, exclusion and expulsion, and so on. In this respect, Diaspora Studies constitute a crucial ongoing conversation with theories of collective belonging and language, as in George Steiner's extra-territoriality, Deleuze and Guattari's "minor literature," Edouard Glissant's creolité, Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi's "our text the homeland," Paul Gilroy's "Black Atlantic," Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin's anti-nationalist diasporas, and Brent Hayes Edwards's critical multi-lingualism, all of which directly respond to the main currents of cultural theory in its post-structuralist, postcolonial, and transnational movements.

Indigenous and exilic Cultural Studies have reinvigorated discussions of autochthonous languages of what is today the US in contact with languages from collective pasts in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Scholars of mixed-language US cultures have framed their objects of analysis to particularize the distinctive features of ethno-racial and geographical displacements, to focus on individual transnational exchanges, and to stake claims for US cultures and communities themselves as, by definition, interlingual and translational.

In these studies, diasporic conceptions of language contact have particular explanatory force for African American Englishes, discussions of which have a long and challenging history dating long before George P. Krapp's interwar work.⁴⁵ The degree of contentiousness of public, academic, and legal conversations over African American Englishes – as in the 1979 Ann Arbor and 1996 Oakland school-based controversies – requires consideration of the contexts of slavery and post-slavery violence directed toward African American literacy and expressive cultures.⁴⁶ As scholars have demonstrated, particularly since the 1970s and 1980s work of linguists, historians, and literary critics, African American writers and thinkers from Phyllis Wheatley to Sojourner Truth, Zora Neale Hurston to Toni Morrison, have engaged racism and racialization through code-switching multi-dialectism and literary diglossias. Chantal Zabus has used the term "relexification" to refer to African writers' Europhone texts as a process of shaping "a new register of communication out of an alien lexicon" that is neither African nor European, but an "interlanguage" or a "third register."⁴⁷ Relexification in this sense describes the productive dilemma of multi-lingual US cultures, which mark themselves both as belonging to the US by writing in English, and as alien by seductively puncturing and deforming English with words and

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conceptions derived from other languages in order to stimulate readers' discomfort reading idioms and texts that they had thought of as their own.

The notion that rigorous understanding of racialized domination requires reconsiderations of language and vice versa runs through postcolonial thought from Franz Fanon to Ngugi wa Thiongo, Gayatri Spivak, and Glissant. The intersections of semiotics and racialization have been foundational to Latina/o Studies scholarship as well, particularly that of Border Studies, which takes the US/Mexican history of annexation and violent antagonism as paradigmatic. As is frequently the case in histories of language and race, the term for the combined language of Latina/os, *Espanglish* (or *Spanglish*), is thought to have been coined as a derogatory descriptor, in this case by the Puerto Rican journalist Salvador Tío in 1952.⁴⁸ However, the term has since been transvaluated into a description of the syncopated fused idioms of Latina/o cultures. Perhaps the single most influential publication in the history of diasporic US multi-lingual cultures is Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1999), published by Aunt Lute Books in 1987. Though many bi-lingual Chicana/o texts preceded her work – including important works of scholarship and fiction by Américo Paredes, Jovita González, Josephina Niggli, John Rechy, Gary Soto, Luis Valdez, Rudolfo Anaya, and Sandra Cisneros – Anzaldúa's merger of essay, fiction, history, and poetry presents US identity as grounded in tri-racial (Latina, Native American, and Anglo), queer, and multi-lingual lived experience. Anzaldúa presents “el lenguaje de la frontera” as drawing upon innumerable normative, regional, and subversively inappropriate idioms to form a linguistic “homeland” for displaced peoples and secret or rebellious languages to combat “linguistic terrorism” (77, 80).

As Chicana/o realist and vanguardist artists demonstrate, developing modes of reading inter-lingual and multi-lingual texts requires interpretive approaches that address the dynamics particular to intranational and intratextual translation. In other words, multi-lingual texts draw upon, code-switch among, and/or mix languages to generate moments of partial translation and strategic non-translation within the texts themselves, as in Américo Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* (c.1940⁴⁹), Theresa Cha's *Dictée* (1982), and Irena Klepfisz's *A Few Words in the Mother's Tongue* (1990). The insights of Translation Studies and Language Theory illuminate the textual acts of passage between idioms, despite the fact that these are not situations of translation between discretely bounded (source and target) texts.⁵⁰ Instead, auto-translation and non-translation take place within the work, frequently at the level of words and phrases.⁵¹

The choice to use non-English words in US artworks has historically tended to hinder their potential audiences, leading to a flattening Anglocentrism in which all languages are represented in English that one critic dubbed “the *Hunt for Red October* effect,” after the film in which Sean Connery plays a Soviet submarine captain who inexplicably speaks Scottish English. Meir Sternberg describes the homogenizing convention of rendering heteroglossic scenes within linguistic uniformity as “intratextual standardization” and points to literary examples in the

works of Lewis Carroll and William Shakespeare.⁵² Though some recent big-budget Hollywood films may seem to have reversed this trend with poly-lingual movies of globalization, such as *Traffic* (2000), *Syriana* (2005), and *Babel* (2006), these films tend to use linguistic difference to portray parallel stories whose isolation from each other is punctured by seemingly random intersections. Such pluri-lingual films reify rather than challenge the national boundaries of languages. By contrast, in everyday life multi-lingual speech situations arise within the nation at all times, but intranational multi-lingualism remains rarer in US art.⁵³ Textual multi-lingualism is particularly unusual when it does not portray social groups with diasporic ties, which demonstrates the stakes when artists do combine languages and give rise to textual moments of partial, mis-, and non-translation.

Walter Benjamin's meditations on language and aesthetics are among the most frequently read texts on translation and offer one entry point for considering multi-lingual practice in this framework. Benjamin (1996) describes translation as inevitable and yet impossible within a modernity beset by the melancholy curse of deadening hypersignification (73). What revitalizes static languages is not nostalgia for lost simplicity, but unpredictable transformations through translation into unforeseen discoveries. Translation is not a poor approximation of language, but language itself. "All translation," he writes "is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages" (257). The impermanent "flux" of languages in general produces articulations and artworks as both inherently imperfect simulacra and as historical objects that are archives of their (new) time, rich with inherited meanings and dynamically ever changing. Benjamin's conception of translation posits a "kinship" among languages: the aim of translating is not to domesticate the foreign language, but to foreignize the familiar language. In this way, acts of language recombination that foreground the fragile artifices and inevitable inadequacies of semiotic transfer show the productive misfires and confusions of multi-lingualism and multi-dialectism (not the putative simplicity of mono-lingualism) to be characteristic of US languages.

This perspective shifts the terms of cultural analysis of languages to centralize implications of translation as both omnipresent and inadequate. From the perspective of pluri-lingual, multi-racial US trans/national cultures, which emerged in the contexts of immigration and imperial expansionism, translation is not a choice or an act, but everyday life itself. In this sense, too, theories of translation offer approaches to representations of linguistic asymmetries (as social inequality, exclusion, and suppression) and semiotic failure as language is understood to be inadequate to the task of representing "experience."⁵⁴ Within paradigmatic logics of removal, exclusion, segregation, and acculturation, questions of ethics and affective politics arise within which the inevitability of translation can be understood as everyday epistemologies of survival, or, as Svetlana Boym has put it, "estrangement" as "a dissident art of survival."⁵⁵ In this way, the translational idioms of John Okada's 1952 novel *No-No Boy* can be read as conveying a fractured sense of non-belonging among post-internment Japanese Americans

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through stilted English (representing both spoken Japanese and English), transliterated Japanese, and multivalent silences. Okada (1977) portrays loyalty conflicts bitterly dividing Japanese American war veterans, draft resisters, ambivalent parents, and children too young to have served. A linguistic marker of Okada's narratorial strategy is that Japanese-language speech is generally translated into English with untranslated lexical features, such as "Ya, ya" and the honorific "san," but the Japanese words that appear transliterated in the text are voiced by white, non-native-speaking characters, chiefly two potential bosses who speak Japanese words within expressions of helpless postwar liberal guilt regarding Japanese American internment.⁵⁶ The taut dialogue of Okada's novel follows its protagonist's interior experience, rendering the Japanese his father speaks, a language he has not heard during his wartime imprisonment, as stilted and "strange": "Ya, Ichiro, you have come home. How good that you have come home" (6–7). But the novel does not sharply differentiate spoken Japanese from English, even when they coexist within a conversation, as in the one between Ichiro and his father. The narrative creates a strategic intratextual standardization that mirrors Ichiro's psychic life and de-exoticizes Japanese American experience and expression. Even where the novel provides translations, Okada's narrative unmistakably represents gaps in meaning and painful silences within which interpersonal understanding remains incomplete.

Much more needs to be understood of writers' techniques for representing non-English US languages in inventive registers of English that do not neatly delineate boundaries between the idioms, as in works by Anzia Yezierska, Felipe Alfau, Carlos Bulosan, and Leslie Marmon Silko. Moreover, their narratives of immigration and imperial expansion employ auto-translation, non-translation, and transliteration of Yiddish, Hebrew, Spanish, Ilocano, and Native American words, but each of them plays with and resists naturalism's imperative of phonological exactitude. Instead of representing speech forms precisely as they are heard (by whom?) or creating distinct forms of English to represent different languages – as Henry Roth does in *Call It Sleep* – these texts portray verbal difference unpredictably, reversing and estranging the hierarchies of standard/non-standard and domestic/foreign.

Multi-lingual novels portray linguistic change across generational time through words and phrases that seem out of place as archaic, neologistic, or "foreign." Employing words denoting the past and the future, they foreground present-day seams of language contact as fusion and rupture. For the multi-lingual milieu of refugees, immigrants, and colonial subjects (and often their children and, in more complicated ways, their children's children) the question is not whether or when to translate, but how. In this framework, new traditions of multi-lingual and multi-dialect US cultures emerge as lineages linking artists whose formal innovations depict material dispossessions along the lines of class, race, and sexuality. As just one example of intersecting cultural traditions, Filipino-Hawai'iian writer R. Zamora Linmark cites the influence of Detroit poet Faye Kicknosway as he composed his novel *Rolling the Rs* in a fused idiom that he describes as "Pidgin English thrown

in with Tagalog, standard English with some Spanish. It's a laced-up invented language, but it was a language that was spoken in my physical setting."⁵⁷ Narrated from the perspective of queer schoolchildren acutely aware of US white supremacy and hetero-normative violence, Linmark portrays them as perceptive auditors resignifying pop culture, colonial histories, and racialized and sexualized domination through anti-nativist de-familiarization: "No need to think American to speak English because, to Mai-Lin, language is not words, but rhythms and sounds."⁵⁸ Comparative Language Studies might differentiate perspectives on national belonging, affective politics, and collective trauma in works by earlier mixed-language artists, folklorists, and translators, such as Yeziarska, John Dos Passos, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, and Américo Paredes, and consider intersections with later figures like Sandra Cisneros, Maxine Hong Kingston, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Michelle Cliff, Rosario Ferré, Jessica Hagedorn, Edwidge Danticat, Aryeh Lev Stollman, and Lois Yamanaka.

In her pivotal work *Dictée*, Korean American writer and video artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha renders intergenerational displacement through feminist and anti-imperial counter-histories, bodily theologies, and transtemporal classicisms in a multi-media work composed of seven languages. As critics have shown, Cha's radical multi-lingualism portrays language imposition as a wildly reiterative process producing an anti-hierarchical merger of French, English, Japanese, Chinese, Greek, and Latin through juxtapositions and non-literal translations.⁵⁹ Of these, the language least visibly present is Korean, which appears only in a frontispiece illustration of writing inscribed by imported Korean laborers within a Japanese coalmine. Reflecting the authoritarianism of multiple imperial conquests (Japanese, Chinese, French) carried out in linguistic and educational institutions, the work begins with dictation exercises that morph into ethereal poetry: "Ecrivez en francais: 1. If you like this better, tell me so at once . . . 3. The leaves have not fallen yet nor will they fall for some days."⁶⁰

Comparative considerations of multi-lingual aesthetics make resonances visible among otherwise disparate linguistically experimental writers, as Deborah Nix (2007) does with Gertrude Stein and Theresa Cha.⁶¹ Thematic affinities abound as well, and educational institutions figure prominently in many other multi-lingual US works, including Limark's *Rolling the R's* (1995), which challenges authoritarian pedagogies through witty resignifying, as in a student's English exam, "7. alienation, n. After defecting the Philippines of Mr. Marcos, Florante's family continues to write in this alienation" and "11. clandestine, adj. In this class is a clandestine boy who freaked out after I gave him a torrid kiss" (122). As in Cha's dictation exercises, the subjects of language imposition respond to standardizing imperatives by infusing English words with punning, translationally multiple, new meanings that are accurate, challenging, and mournful. Edgar's final answer on his exam captures the full affective range of multi-lingual US responses as it refuses to define the term: "20. destiny, n. I know this word so close to my heart that it hurts" (123).

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Language Loss and Reinvented Lexicons

How do you go back to a language you never had?

Louise Erdrich, "Two Languages in Mind, But Just One in the Heart,"

New York Times (May 22, 2000), E1

Multi-lingualisms have been frequently associated with polemicism, as a badge of cultural radicalism, elitism, or cosmopolitanism, but historically they have manifested in the US within a capacious affective swath, including ambivalent, secret, archaic, collectivist, satiric, shameful, and eccentric articulations. Interpreting multivalent US languages requires contextual and analytical, as well as linguistic, fluencies. Moreover, as even a brief survey of the long history of linguistically experimental US cultures demonstrates, pluri-lingualism makes productively strange political and aesthetic bedfellows, and one makes assumptions regarding the political content of language mixing and code-switching expression at one's own risk. No one political position is invariably associated with any particular speech form; each can articulate reactionary, radical, or any other position on the spectrum. Even what appears to be uni-lingual English can convey disruptively anti-standardizing impulses.

Socio-linguist Joshua Fishman has asked, "what do you lose when you lose your language?" One answer is that language loss is not a phenomenon that occurs to one individual; instead, it occurs to a collectivity in one time period, and it registers synchronically to later generations. The latter experience, an intergenerational awareness of familial or collective language change can be described as a melancholia of lost languages arising in the aftermath of English imposition. Aside from a predictable nostalgia, what other kinds of affective politics can arise with awareness of linguistic loss and variation? Louise Erdrich offers one perspective on this question in suggesting that Ojibwe was always present within her English, but that it re-emerged as simultaneously futurist and ancestral when she decided to study the language she had never spoken.⁶² John Edgar Wideman has described an analogous relationship to lost languages that preceded his birth by generations, and yet occupy a spectral presence in his writing as "an African-American language" that is "burdened and energized by opposition. African-rooted, culturally descended ways and means of speaking that emerged from the dungeon and dance of silence."⁶³

As Erdrich and Wideman suggest, multi-dialect cultures produce alternative projects for working through complex relations between temporality and linguistic variation in historical studies of displaced peoples, "heritage language study," and idioms reinvented in "post-vernacular" forms, such as Yiddish, Irish, African, and Native American languages, among many others. The MLA tracks the teaching of non-English languages in US colleges and universities and noted sharp increases in the number of students studying Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Spanish,

and American Sign Language in a 2006 report.⁶⁴ The MLA also maintains a digital “map of languages” spoken in the US, which demonstrates important intersections with linguistic geography and dialectology surveys that have been ongoing, in some cases, for close to a century.⁶⁵ The *Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada* project was initiated by Hans Kurath in 1931 and remains an active site of research with 10 regional atlases currently in preparation.⁶⁶

In the digital age, “dead” or disparate languages have been revived by online preservation efforts, wider text circulation via scanned and searchable works, and the popularity of Internet mash-ups and computer-generated hybrid works. Computer translation projects, such as multi-lingual email platforms and instant translation of web pages are also more common. Another likely path for Americanist Language Studies will be to develop transnational digital collaborative teaching and research projects. The ASA and IASA have each begun projects along these lines, and many universities are using travel exchanges and video conference technologies to facilitate international conversations. Though not exclusively organized around US concerns, the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC) facilitates relevant scholarly investigations through an annual conference, collective blogs, theme workshops, and an information commons.

American Studies has always had historicist and Comparative Language Studies within its purview, and current indicators suggest that these links will be even more present in the years to come. To utilize the vast research already accomplished and to coordinate new scholarly initiatives, Americanist Language Studies are needed to contextualize existing concerns in longer histories, such as the US military need for translators during the Iraq War, which has a history dating at least to World War I links between language politics, military service, and national security. With this trajectory for Comparativist American Language Studies, one can only begin to guess at the research that might be of interest, such as twenty-first-century immigration demographics, post-slavery racialization of idioms, economic stratification, new regionalisms (e.g. Southwest cultures), urbanity (e.g. Detroit and New Orleans), voting rights, bi-lingual education, and accent and labor discrimination. Literary, Visual, and Musical Cultural Studies are in conversation with global/planetary cultures, which raises new concerns regarding languages, indigeneity, Performance Studies, and multi-lingual popular cultures. The rise in interest in sign language referenced in the 2006 MLA report suggests crucial points of contact between Disability Studies and languages. Similarly, network theory and digital cultures link Science and Technology Studies to visual culture and translation.

Fantasies of connectedness – particularly the wish that speaking similarly will connote or generate like-mindedness – regularly recur in Americanist, Lingual, and Technology Studies, but as new (political, digital, cinematic) programs emerge to project hyper- or reverse-Babels, studies of the lived experiences of US languages will provide important conceptual groundworks.

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PART II

Ethnic Studies and American Studies

Blood Lines and Blood Shed: Intersectionality and Differential Consciousness in Ethnic Studies and American Studies

George Lipsitz

Ethnic Studies scholarship owes its existence to a long train of unacknowledged, unrewarded, and unofficial histories of learning, teaching, and organizing inside aggrieved communities of color. People who never set foot on college campuses unless employed to clean them have developed their own ways of knowing in order to analyze, interpret, and change their collective condition. Barred from entry into the official academy by overt discrimination and by the cumulative economic and educational disadvantages of racism, they established alternative academies in unexpected places. Fighting in the arenas open to them with the tools that were available, they fashioned networks of instruction and apprenticeship in the arts, fabricated repositories of collective memory in oral performances and alternative publications, and forged new ways of knowing from the lessons they learned from their linked fate as people of color.

The fragile foothold in the academic world that Ethnic Studies enjoys today owes its existence to these communities. When the rage and anger of oppressed people sparked violent insurgencies in cities and created a severe crisis for people in power during the 1960s, disciplined and organized political alliances within and across different racial groups demanded new educational practices and institutions capable of speaking honestly and accurately about the US racial order. As one character in Toni Cade Bambara's great novel *The Salt Eaters* explains to another, "we have not been scuffling in this waste-howling wilderness for the right to be stupid" (Bambara 1980: 46). From the freedom schools of the Southern civil rights movement to liberation theology study groups, from feminist

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consciousness-raising sessions to campaigns for cultural renewal and language instruction among Native Americans, from challenges to expert knowledge about drug treatment by the Asian Sisters' organization in Los Angeles to the educational campaigns against pesticide use in the fields by the United Farm Workers' Union, the democratic and egalitarian movements of the mid-twentieth century created new kinds of classrooms and curricula as well as new epistemologies and ontologies as part and parcel of the struggle to end the skewing of opportunities and life chances in the US along racial lines.

Many of the people who demanded relevant and anti-racist education during the 1960s received next to nothing directly for their efforts. The activist educational projects they advanced were often short-lived, but their struggles forced elites to make concessions. One of those concessions entailed the establishment of the Ethnic Studies courses, departments, and publications that exist today. The old order did not die off completely during the 1960s, but neither was it entirely successful in suppressing the challenges to its rule. Very few moments of upheaval result in final and fixed resolutions. Rebels win partial victories that become sites for new forms of institutional cooptation, but also enduring generators of new oppositional activity. Like civil rights laws, the war on poverty, and affirmative action, Ethnic Studies departments are one of those partial victories. The resources we possess have been given to us in stewardship because of the struggles of the past. Every class we teach, every word we write, every platform, podium, or microphone we command comes to us because of people who are not present to witness our work.

The reward structures of our profession and our society, however, encourage us to forget these connections, to welcome the personal privileges that come to professionals with secure employment, to be satisfied when Ethnic Studies scholarship is doing well even while ethnic people are still suffering terribly, to stop thinking about justice and start thinking about "just us." Yet social movements – even defeated ones – are not so easily suppressed. Scholarship and social movement work at the intersection of Ethnic Studies and American Studies remains tangled in the historical contradictions from which it emerged. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, defined these contradictions clearly late in his life. Surveying the terrain of anti-racist struggle at that time, he formulated an analysis that proved prescient in defining both the promise and the peril of contemporary Ethnic Studies work in American Studies. His analysis helps us see how our history both enables and inhibits the work we do, how it leaves us both haunted by the unfulfilled hopes and aspirations of the past, yet perpetually hopeful about our prospects for the future.

In "A Testament of Hope," an essay first published nine months after his death, King argued that the race-based mobilizations of the black freedom movement learned something important. He noted that they had produced a radical critique of society that went beyond the particular and parochial concerns of African Americans. "The black revolution is much more than a struggle for the rights of Negroes," King contended. He elaborated that the struggle "is forcing America

to face all its interrelated flaws – racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism. It is exposing the evils that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society. It reveals systemic rather than superficial flaws and suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced” (King 1991: 315).

King’s connection between the specific grievances of blacks and the interrelated flaws of US society blended his Christian universalism with the lessons that he and others learned from grass-roots activists like Ella Baker who believed that addressing local problems with an open mind would eventually enable people to see the systemic and structural sources of their grievances (Payne 1995: 101). King’s formulation echoed the principles of the “abolition democracy” that African people in America had fashioned 100 years earlier after the civil war. Newly emancipated and enfranchised citizens created a wide range of new democratic practices and institutions because they recognized that it would not suffice to be simply nominally free in a fundamentally unjust and hierarchical society. King argued that the black freedom movement of the twentieth century had to do more than merely excise expressly racist practices from American society; that it had to move beyond what Vincent Harding has described as the unsatisfactory project of de-segregating the ranks of “the pain inflictors of this nation and this world” (Harding 1986: 281). Like Harding, King recognized a global as well as a national dimension to this mission. Worshipping a God who came into the world to make “one blood” of all nations, King spoke from and for a people who had long been made to think globally, who looked beyond the United States as a way of rendering their subordination and de-humanization relative, provisional, and contingent, who consistently privileged visions of world-transcending citizenship over allegiances to any temporal homeland. King called for a pan-ethnic anti-racism capable of creating a more decent and democratic nation as a step on the road to building a better world (King 1981: 141).

Much of the best work that has been done in Ethnic Studies and American Studies during the past four decades resonates with the core concerns of Dr King’s message. Yet he also predicted that the work of radical democracy would face enormous obstacles. King believed that these impediments were already in place in the mid-sixties in response to the civil rights movement’s triumphs. In *Where Do We Go From Here? Chaos or Community*, a tremendously important, yet little-known (and regrettably now out-of-print) book published the year before his death, King delineated the contours of a counter-revolution that he predicted would confront the movement in the years ahead. The first phase of the struggle, he explained, entailed the de-segregation of public facilities and voting booths. Despite the terrible hate, hurt, and fear that accompanied these changes, King judged this phase to have been largely successful. The second phase, Dr King warned, would be more difficult.

He noted that superficial change had come cheaply for white America, that it cost whites very little to share public spaces with blacks, that extending the vote to previously disenfranchised citizens still left whites very much in control.

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Completing the civil rights agenda by making systemic changes, however, would be expensive. Eliminating slums, securing full employment, and replacing the “discount education” offered to blacks with access to top-quality schools would have to be purchased at a great price (King 1991: 557–8). King explained that its enemies wanted to stop the movement in mid-journey. In words that speak as powerfully to present realities as they do the conditions that Dr King confronted in 1967 he wrote:

Every civil rights law is still substantially more dishonored than honored. School desegregation is 90 percent unimplemented across the land; the free exercise of the franchise is the exception rather than the rule in the South; open occupancy laws theoretically apply to population centers embracing tens of millions, but grim ghettos contradict the fine language of the legislation. Despite the mandates of law, equal employment still remains a distant dream. (King 1991: 561)

King compared the situation facing the movement for social justice in the 1960s to the circumstances facing a hypothetical football team that took possession of the ball deep in its own territory. Through relentless effort and struggle the team reaches the 50-yard line. But, at that point, its opponents command them to pretend they have scored a touchdown and to give back the ball.

This, of course, is not the Dr King that the American public generally knows. The Dr King that the nation honors with a holiday every January appears as a parochial advocate of African American assimilation and inclusion, as a role model for his race. Forgotten are his efforts to mobilize Chicanos, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and poor whites in the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign. King’s passionate pacifism and militant commitment to the value of creative conflict become inverted in contemporary discourse into an endorsement of passivity and suffering, into a perverse formulation that deems militant resistance to injustice to be worse than injustice itself. The most famous sentence from King’s speech at the 1963 March on Washington in which he states his hope that one day his children will be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin becomes repeated incessantly and out of context to depict King as an advocate of color blindness and as an opponent of affirmative action. This stance has been promulgated relentlessly to protect the rewards of whiteness and to absolve society of any responsibility for addressing and redressing the predatory history and present-day privileges of whiteness. In fact, the historical King argued that a society that had imposed special burdens on blacks was obligated to create special mechanisms to help them. Nothing in his thoughts, words, or action can be fairly construed to argue that he would have been happy to have people suffer terribly as long as no one mentioned their color.

The hijacking of Dr King’s legacy by opportunistic opponents of his beliefs testifies to the accuracy of Claire Jean Kim’s observation that “in American society, racial dissenters can indeed speak truth to power, but power garbles the message,

rendering it harmless” (Kim 2000: 11). It is precisely in the context of that “garbling” that Ethnic Studies work emerged inside American Studies. Although grounded in thousands of different experiences, standpoints, and theories, Ethnic Studies scholarship and activist work has been shaped significantly by the power of its enemies, by the need to confront and contradict the seemingly interminable chain of inaccuracies, obfuscations, and outright lies that dominate discussions about race and other social identities. This has been no easy task. Anti-racist words are no more welcome in this society than anti-racist policies. It is hard to make right what centuries of social practice and scholarship have made wrong.

It might be easier to combat racism and the other cruelties connected to it if Dr King had been wrong, if racial injustices could actually be addressed in isolation from the interrelated flaws of American society, if the racial order of the United States depended only on aberrant acts by isolated and deluded individuals. Yet because racism is embedded in systems and structures, because it is learned and legitimated by principles, premises, and presumptions that often appear to have little direct relation to race, the pursuit of racial justice compels anti-racists to produce radical new ways of knowing and new ways of being, new imaginings of identities and identifications, new social practices and new social institutions.

For nearly two decades, American Studies has been the site of some of the most significant scholarship on social identities and social relations. Significant American Studies Association presidential addresses by Mary Helen Washington, Janice Radway, George Sanchez, Amy Kaplan, Emory Elliott, and Vicki Ruiz have noted, celebrated, and theorized this development as it emerged (Washington 1998: 1–23; Radway 1999: 1–32; Sanchez 2002: 1–23; Kaplan 2004: 1–18; Elliott 2007: 1–22; Ruiz 2008: 1–21). In 2008, the American Studies Association awarded its two most important book prizes to works situated at the crossroads of Ethnic Studies and American Studies. Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s *Golden Gulag* won the Lora Romero First Book Publication Prize, while Julie Sze’s *Noxious New York* secured the John Hope Franklin Publication Prize for the best overall book in the field (Gilmore 2007; Sze 2007). These books display their authors’ exceptional individual abilities as researchers, writers, analysts, and interpreters, but their existence also marks a moment of arrival for Ethnic Studies scholarship inside American Studies more generally.

Sze’s study explores grass-roots struggles against environmental racism in the New York neighborhoods of Sunset Park, Williamsburg, West Harlem, and the South Bronx. Gilmore’s monograph revolves around activism in Los Angeles by Mothers Reclaiming Our Children in response to the massive increase in the prison population in California during the 1980s and 1990s and its impact on communities of color. Both books owe their origins and evolution to conversation, cooperation, and collaboration between the authors and activist groups. Starting with the experiences, analyses, and actions of aggrieved groups in the midst of struggles for social justice, Sze and Gilmore draw upon their training as scholars to craft original and generative analyses of the broader causes and consequences of

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mass incarceration and environmental racism. They show that race derives its actual social meanings from structural as well as cultural configurations, that racism is not an aberrant or individual practice, but rather an integral part of how nearly everything works in this society. These books demonstrate that racial domination and anti-racist resistance are not the private and parochial concerns of communities of color, but instead templates that influence all social, economic, and political relations.

Sze shows how neoliberalism and its attendant imperatives of privatization impose new and deadly health hazards on communities of color. In response, activists find themselves forced to challenge expert knowledge and to create their own calculations of environmental risk and reward. Gilmore argues that the rapid expansion of prison construction in California in the 1980s and 1990s emanated from the confluence of changing rural land values, disinvestment in urban areas, moral panics about crime, and the problems posed for bond sellers by balanced budget conservatism. Prison construction provided economic opportunities for financiers and rural developers while creating jobs as guards for displaced industrial and agricultural workers. At the same time, massive incarceration solved a political problem for the right by criminalizing and disenfranchising large segments of the population of the inner-city communities that were most likely to oppose the regressive redistribution of wealth promoted by this new order.

Like Sze, Gilmore shows how neoliberal practices and processes provoked political mobilizations led by women of color who found themselves forced to attempt to address and redress the harm done to society and the state by the racial consequences of neoliberal policies. *Golden Gulag* and *Noxious New York* both owe a great deal to the decades of dialogue between scholars and social activists that have formed the definitive contours of Ethnic Studies scholarship inside American Studies. These books display firm grounding in the experiences, aspirations, and critiques generated by social movement struggles (Hale 2008). They proceed from the premise advanced by Robin Kelley in his magnificent book *Freedom Dreams* that “collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge” (Kelley 2002: 8). Sze and Gilmore connect themselves to the serious problems that communities of color face because of the cumulative vulnerabilities that make racialized groups suffer disproportionately from mass incarceration and environmental pollution. In the spirit of Amilcar Cabral’s warning to activists to tell no lies, mask no difficulties, and claim no easy victories, Sze and Gilmore delineate the full contours of racialized capitalism. No simple solution can solve the problems facing mothers of incarcerated children and neighborhood activists against environmental racism. In their lives, racism is not an isolated act of individual prejudice, but rather part of a collective, cumulative, and continuing system of power. Solving their particular problems requires a radical restructuring of social relations and social power. Although whites are also harmed by society’s reckless pollution of the environment and destructive mass incarcerations as well, people of color experience the worst consequences of these policies directly and immediately.

The focus in *Noxious New York* and *Golden Gulag* on the structural oppressions created by incarceration and environmental racism makes it necessary for Gilmore and Sze to study more than one racial group at a time. Like educational inequality, low-wage labor, or language discrimination, efforts to address local issues about incarceration and environmental racism lead logically to connections with other communities. All across the country, activists who have yet to be studied by scholars from the perspective that Sze and Gilmore deploy present this possibility. They have learned that confronting the causes, consequences, and cost of the mass incarceration of blacks cannot take place without addressing why Latinos and Native Americans also experience incarceration disproportionate to their numbers, that it is impossible to help Asian immigrant women garment workers without working with immigrant Latinas as well, that the “transit racism” that isolates inner-city blacks also relegates Asian and Latino/a immigrants to sub-par service. Black environmental justice activists in Houston cannot oppose incinerators in their own neighborhoods without recognizing the similarity between the problems they face and the asthma epidemics plaguing young Latinos in San Diego, without confronting why Laotian immigrant women in California experience higher rates of breast cancer than women from any other group, why Native Americans in Wisconsin find the fish that they eat is poisoned with mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls, or why African American children in St Louis routinely suffer from lead poisoning. Like other forms of structural injustice, environmental racism reveals that people of color share a linked fate.

Scholarly and social movement work that addresses immigrant rights, hate crimes, or residential segregation often promotes unexpected alliances across racial lines. This is not because people of color do not have rivalries, divisions, and ethnocentric attitudes, because they are immune to racist appeals, or because they even like each other very much. Rather, these alliances emerge from the recognition of necessity, from the realization that the obstacles that one’s own group faces stem from a system that affects others as well. Moreover, the cumulative vulnerabilities that make the consequences of structural racism so devastating do not emanate from race alone, but rather from the ways in which race intersects with class, gender, sexual identity, region, religion, citizenship status, and other identities. It should not be surprising that women of color figure so prominently in the groups studied by Sze and Gilmore. Challenges to expert knowledge, activist promotion of new social roles and social identities, and the systemic sexism and racism that force women of color to deal directly with the worst consequences of the organized abandonment of their families and communities compels the creation of new raced and gendered identities and social roles.

Scholarly work and social activism emanating from these social ills require complex and elaborate theories of identity, theories that take race and racism seriously while resisting any representations that reduce race to a uniform, discrete, ahistorical and homogenous category. Like the activists who organize around these issues, scholars of structural racism in Ethnic Studies and American Studies quickly

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discover that racist practices do not magically create unity among aggrieved groups, but on the contrary produce a seemingly endless proliferation of both alliances and antagonisms. Political alliances often do emerge from recognition of a linked fate, from understanding that mutual exposure to the same health hazards, policing practices, and impediments to asset accumulation give people important commonalities. Yet subordinated groups are also pitted against each other by their oppressors. The racial order always encourages them to try to make gains at each other's expense, to respond to victimization by victimizing someone else. The differentiated nature of structural racism also means that racialized people experience radical divisiveness within their own groups as well as across group lines. They often cling to imagined sources of superiority and differentiation that might insulate them from the humiliating stigmas associated with their identity. They dis-identify with non-normative sexual minorities inside their own group, promote class and caste hierarchies, or cultivate masculinist and sexist hierarchies. For communities of color, white supremacy has an internalized dimension. It promotes competition and contempt among people who see their own humiliation and subordination reflected in the eyes of people whose phenotypes and skin color most resemble their own. Yet this liability can be turned into an asset. The best social movement work and the best anti-racist Ethnic Studies in American Studies scholarship uses this radical divisiveness as a provocation to develop new theories of social identity and social relations that have implications for everyone.

Like grass-roots community activists in many different kinds of struggles, anti-racist Ethnic Studies scholars in American Studies work to transform the alienations and indignities of racism into forms of collective knowledge and collective action. They seek to show that the situated knowledge of aggrieved racialized individuals and groups tells us a great deal about the interrelated flaws of racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism. They fashion analyses and interpretations aimed at the radical reconstruction of society itself. Yet, in the course of doing this work, they frequently find themselves forced to confront the ways in which the educational system, dominant political discourse, electronic and print journalism, and the most powerful advertising and entertainment apparatuses in the history of the world work to "garble the message" and confuse the issue by promoting what Claire Jean Kim calls "color blind talk" (Kim 2000: 11).

Very few evils go away simply because you do not mention them. Yet from the Supreme Court down, powerful interests in our society have challenged the core concepts of the Ethnic Studies project to reveal and challenge the racial regimes by which we are governed. In the course of attempting to outlaw the use of race-conscious remedies for race-caused problems, well-financed and effective public relations campaigns have argued that color-bound problems can only be solved by color-blind solutions. This school of thought contends that the government will only make racism stronger by making reference to race, even if it does so in the context of trying to address and redress the long history of racial

injuries. Color-blind talk turns anti-essentialism into a new kind of essentialism that has deadly consequences. Prohibiting the mention of race does not reduce or eliminate racism, but rather protects and preserves it. As David Theo Goldberg explains, color blindness asks us “to give up on race before and without addressing the legacy, the roots, the scars of racism’s histories, the weights of race. We are being asked to give up on the word, the concept, the category, at most the categorizing. But not, pointedly not, the conditions for which those terms stand” (Goldberg 2009: 21).

In actual social life, it is not color consciousness that produces racism. The deployment of difference to create systematic unfair gains and unjust enrichments for some while imposing unearned impediments in the way of others is what gives racism its determinate meaning in our society. Race persists because racism exists. Of course, the idea that skin color, phenotype, and blood lines tell us anything meaningful about any individual or group of people is indeed an anthropological and biological fiction. Yet this fiction has become a social fact because people have believed in it and continue to act on that belief to skew opportunities and life chances along racial lines. Under these conditions, it makes sense for racialized groups to fight back by honoring what they have in common. The same blood lines that mark them for demeaning and discriminatory treatment become sources of solidarity and celebration. They transform segregation into congregation and turn negative ascription into positive affirmation (Lewis 1991: 90–1).

Many important intellectual and activist projects have proceeded from this strategy. They have attempted to comprehend the unique and singular experiences of individual racialized groups. Inside and outside the academy, long and honorable histories of research in Black Studies, Chicano/a and Latino/a Studies, Asian American Studies, and Native American Studies have produced significant understandings of why color counts and how racism works. Solidarities of sameness have fueled significant struggles for social justice by enabling people to organize and mobilize around their shared experiences with exploitation, exclusion, oppression, and suppression. White supremacy oppresses all aggrieved communities of color, but not in the same ways. Scholars and social activists engage in necessary and valuable work when they examine how each group experiences racism differently. The systematic violation of the Constitutional rights of blacks is not the same thing as the systematic violation of the treaty rights of Native Americans. Exclusionary immigration restriction statutes singled out Asians with mechanisms that were not deployed against other groups. For many years, state and federal laws impeded Asian American assimilation by imposing unique and specific mechanisms to prevent them from owning land or acquiring naturalized citizenship. The Supreme Court cruelly used this history to uphold the Japanese internment and its systematic violation of civil and human rights by arguing that Japanese Americans had proven themselves inassimilable. Colonized Filipinos were denied US citizenship, but colonized Puerto Ricans had citizenship imposed upon them. Between 1882 and 1965, government and business leaders collaborated to

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exclude Asian immigrants from the US while routinely promoting the importation of low-wage labor from Mexico. Many immigrant groups remained working class for little more than one or two generations, but successive cohorts of Mexican immigrants found their fragile foothold in US society undercut by the arrival of even newer and poorer immigrants from Mexico whose availability enabled employers to drive down wages and to worsen working conditions.

Despite these important differences, similarities also characterized the treatment these groups experienced, similarities between the fraudulent expropriation of Mexican American lands after the US Mexico–War of 1948 and the forced sale of Japanese American property during the internment of the 1940s, between black slavery and Indian slavery in the nineteenth century, between the assumption written into the Page Act of 1875 that most Chinese immigrant women were prostitutes and the practice of not prosecuting rapes against black women in the postbellum South on the presumption that these women could not have been violated because they had no virtue to lose. All communities of color in the United States have suffered from vigilante violence, denials of citizenship rights, impediments to acquiring and retaining property, and environmental racism. They have all been treated at one time or another as second-class legal subjects, as super-exploited workers, as demonized cultural others. Yet there has never been a uniform undifferentiated system of white supremacy that treated all people of color alike. For that reason, it has been important for each group to explore, understand, address, and redress its own unique circumstances. This work does not necessarily perpetuate division, however, because it also enables groups to compare their experiences, to learn from both similarities and differences in discerning how power works, to learn why groups are divided from one another, and to ask under what circumstances it would make sense to unite.

Starting with the unique and singular experiences of one group can thus be an essential part of the process of understanding the larger totality just as Dr King contended had been true of the black freedom movement. Each of the separate traditions of Ethnic Studies helps us understand more general principles about power and social identity in the United States in the past and present. African American Studies has been an especially generative source of critique about the elevation of property rights over human rights because African American persons were treated as property in the days of slavery and because white property has consistently been judged to be more valuable than black humanity ever since. Asian American Studies and Chicano/a and Latino/a Studies have illuminated the ways in which the US nation–state is also an empire, how efforts to expand access to citizenship rights inside the nation often come at the expense of exacerbating the divisions between citizens and aliens while leaving unchallenged the privileged relationship that the metropolis holds in relation to its periphery. Indigenous scholars and activists raise crucial questions about the legitimacy of the state itself. Their work reminds other aggrieved communities of color that even the victims of white supremacy have been exploiters and oppressors of others.

As long as groups are treated *as* groups, histories of shared blood lines will matter. Several chapters in this *Companion to American Studies* summarize and evaluate significant scholarship that has emanated from studies of a single group. Nothing in this chapter on Ethnic Studies should be construed as a criticism of that approach. There are times and circumstances when it makes sense for groups to come together in coalitions and other times and circumstances when groups need to take stock of where they have been and where they are going as a collectivity before they can work with others. As Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton argued during the 1960s, “before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks” (Ture and Hamilton 1992: 44). Yet no group is ever united enough to win freedom completely by itself, and when a group wins freedom it never wins it only for itself. Emancipation struggles are contagious. Martin Luther King, Jr, argued that an injustice anywhere was an injustice everywhere, but we can elaborate on that claim to affirm that victory over injustice anywhere is also victory over injustice everywhere.

The brilliant work of Chela Sandoval enables us to theorize these realities productively. She argues that social identities like race and gender become oppositional expressions of power by functioning largely as consensual illusions (Sandoval 2000: 63). Race-based mobilization proceeds from the strategic premise that the things that unite people in a group are more valuable than the things that divide them. But this recognition is tactical rather than philosophical or moral. The very act of declaring sameness immediately starts to reveal differences. There has never been one way to be black, one way to be a lesbian, one way to be a worker, or one way to be a citizen. Every group is actually a coalition characterized by contradictions and conflicts. It can be dangerous to be so rooted in anti-racist struggles that we see nothing other than race, that we come to believe that racial designations actually tell us something reliable about individuals or groups. Race-based mobilization and education always run the risk of reifying the very categories they seek to deconstruct. People may come to believe that the consensual illusion of race is real, that the solidarities that flow from shared skin color, phenotype, social treatment, or culture contain essential and immutable truths. They can become fixated on their own injuries as their favored way of recognizing themselves. They may become trapped in the very kinds of racial thinking they seek to transcend. Yet we cannot allow our identities to be determined by our enemies. Our lives cannot be reduced to responses to injuries inflicted on us by others. As Cedric Robinson has long maintained, the things that oppress us do not have to determine who we are. They are merely conditions of our existence.

Thus, effective anti-racist Ethnic Studies work in American Studies can be neither uncritically essentialist nor reflexively anti-essentialist, it can be neither metaphysically race blind nor perpetually race bound. Instead, it needs to understand the epistemological importance of tactically inhabiting racial subject positions as a step along the path of seeing realistically and honestly the things that divide us and the things that unite us. As Judith Butler argues:

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the terms by which we are hailed are rarely the ones we choose (and even when we try to impose protocols on how we are to be named we usually fail): but these terms we never really choose are the occasion for something we might still call agency, the repetition of an imaginary subordination for another purpose, one whose future is partly open. (Butler 1997: 38)

Solidarity based on identity is limited. Solidarities based on identities are unlimited. Scholars and social movement activists alike frequently find themselves forced to discover and invent forms of identification capable of speaking to the plural, diverse, and multiple conditions of social existence. Chela Sandoval theorizes these efforts as exercises in what she calls differential consciousness, a way of thinking and acting that requires confident commitments to provisional identities without precluding the possibility of transformation into other subject positions when circumstances warrant (Sandoval 2000: 60).

Important work in anti-racist American Studies/Ethnic Studies scholarship follows Sandoval's call for flexibility by identifying objects for study, social critique, and activism that reveal the racial regimes by which we are actually governed. Rather than emphasizing individual blood lines as scholarship on specific racial groups does, this school of thought looks to collective histories of blood shed, to the ruinous consequences of racism in our national past and present. From this perspective, we are all implicated in and affected by the legacies of hate, hurt, and fear that racial power promotes and preserves. In this way of thinking, the fact of collective injury becomes more important than the individual identities of the injured. What is important about aggrieved communities of color from this perspective is not only from what has been done to them and what they have done in response, but also what they have learned collectively about the nature of injustice and the measures needed to correct it. As Angela Davis argues, this work seeks to make identities points of departure rather than fixed categories, to politicize social identities so that people will derive their identities from their politics rather than deriving their politics from their identities (Davis 1997: 318).

Women of Color Feminism plays a central role in the theoretical formulations that have been most influential at the crossroads of Ethnic Studies and American Studies. The term signals more than the embodied identities of its most famous authors and adherents. Like class consciousness in the writings of Georg Lukács, Women of Color Feminism emanates from self-knowledge about necessity. It is not the sum or average of thoughts by individual women from racialized groups. It does not presume that raced women have perfect knowledge about race and power. It does not give specific individuals veto power over collective initiatives. Instead, Women of Color Feminism reflects the maximally competent understanding of power that might be theorized from the situated perspective of people who need to defend themselves and their communities through dynamics of difference as well as solidarities of sameness. It entails what Georg Lukács (in another context)

deems “the simultaneous recognition and transcendence of immediate appearances” (Lukács 1971: 8).

Women of Color Feminism emerged from the intersection of feminism and anti-racism. It expressed the experiences of scholars and activists who shared African American literary scholar Barbara Christian’s belief that “we cannot change our condition through a single minded banner” (Christian 1987: 4). Frequently asked to choose between their raced and gendered selves, told to suppress non-normative sexualities to protect the respectability of the larger racial or gendered group, and encouraged to enact unity by imposing uniformity, women of color responded by calling for a politics that speaks to the full complexity of the contradictions that shape their identities.

Legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” in a path-breaking 1989 article in the *Chicago Law Forum* that demonstrated the inadequacy of anti-discrimination laws written to adjudicate discrimination by race *or* gender but not by both (Crenshaw 1989). Presented as a black feminist challenge to the principles of insulation, isolation, and disaggregation embedded in anti-discrimination law, feminist theory, and anti-racist politics alike, Crenshaw’s article offered a practical critique of the “one group at a time” and the “there but for race or gender” approaches to discrimination while at the same time fashioning a profound philosophical challenge to the myth of the unified and “whole” citizen subject. Crenshaw’s concept has played a central role for scholars and social movement activists alike because it reveals how identities are complex, contradictory, and contested, how they are relational – yet structured in dominance. Sometimes profoundly misunderstood and misrepresented as an invitation to deal with all identities and oppressions equally and simultaneously, Crenshaw’s critique actually insists on evaluating which differences make a difference, on identifying the critical spaces from which power can be most productively perceived and critiqued. Perhaps most important, like Sandoval’s differential consciousness and Lisa Lowe’s “hybridity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity,” intersectionality encourages and enables unexpected alliances, affiliations, identities, and identifications (Lowe 1996: 60–83).

By postponing any premature unity, Women of Color Feminism helps us see how our differences and conflicts can contain valuable sources of information and insight. Andrea Smith, co-founder of the activist group Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, demonstrates how Native feminism can help destabilize normative notions of nations and nation-states. Smith argues that critiques of violations of civil liberties in the aftermath of 9/11 too often posit a prior democracy that is directly at odds with Native American experience. “Native genocide has been expressly sanctioned as *the law*,” she observes. Smith’s intervention is not to “add on” a Native American perspective to what we already know about the state, but rather to question the legitimacy of the state itself from the situated standpoint of Native peoples. Thus, from her perspective, the new totalitarianism of the Bush administration was not really new, but merely aimed at people who

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previously enjoyed immunity from the worst consequences of legal state actions (Smith 2008: 309).

Within American Studies, a rich tradition of critical, comparative, and relational Ethnic Studies has sought ways to build upon the dynamics of difference as well as the solidarities of sameness. This work aims to envision and enact new affiliations and alliances, to counter reductionist racisms with expanded notions of identities and identifications. The best of this scholarship thinks concretely about the ways in which expressive culture and institutions alike collaborate to give identities their determinate social meanings, about the ways in which institutions that seem at first glance to have little necessary relationship to race become central to the creation of racial projects and racial formations (Omi and Winant 1994).

Eithne Luibheid and Juana Rodriguez show how heterosexism and compulsory normativity have guided immigration policies from the nineteenth century to the present (Luibheid 2002; Rodriguez 2003). Lisa Marie Cacho delineates the ways in which activist immigrants and their advocates consequently internalize these beliefs and perform normativity to disarm their enemies, yet in the process callously disidentify with non-normative members of their own group (Cacho 2008). Natalia Molina and Nayan Shah reveal how public health professionals in the US from the Gilded Age through the 1930s turned racist ideas into medical practices that enacted physical, political, and social harm against communities of color. Physicians, medical officers, and scientists blamed immigrants from Asia and Mexico for the health problems they experienced because of their exploitation in the US. The medical establishments of this era treated people *with* problems *as* problems, and deployed racist explanations for illnesses that had social causes. The policies that emanated from those ideas inflicted terrible costs on exploited immigrants, excusing their mistreatment and legitimating their exploitation and oppression (Molina 2006; Shah 2001).

Molina's examination of the different kinds of racism directed against Mexican and Japanese immigrants offers an exemplary model of the value of comparative and relational work. Like Rachel Buff's comparisons and contrasts of how differentiated state understandings of citizenship shape the cultural and political life of Native Americans and Afro-Caribbean immigrants, Molina's work demonstrates how communities of color do not experience a uniform and undifferentiated exclusion from a homogenous white "center," but instead face a seemingly endless proliferation of forms of differentiated marginalization and suppression (Buff 2001).

This comparative and relational emphasis permeates important work on inter-ethnic conflicts and coalitions. Work on relations between Asian Americans and blacks has proven to be especially generative in revealing the complex connections between the national and international dimensions of racism, as exemplified in the scholarship of Scott Kurashige, Diane Fujino, Helen Jun, Claire Jean Kim, and Daniel Widener (Kurashige 2007; Fujino 2005; Jun 2003; Kim 2000; Widener forthcoming). International consciousness also pervades the exemplary work of Juan Flores on the ways in which immigrant experience inside the US changes

the racial orders of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic (as well as other Caribbean communities) through the transmission of cultural remittances: works of expressive culture that reflect immigrant exposure to North American racial categories and practices (Flores 2009).

American Studies scholars working in the Ethnic Studies tradition generally view expressive culture and commercialized leisure not as recreational escapes from social life but rather as technologies of identity, sites of contestation, and mechanisms that aggrieved groups create for expanding access to political and social activity. Important studies along these lines have examined how race inflects the meanings of seemingly race-neutral sounds, sights, and places. Josh Kun compares and contrasts representations of musical sounds in a broad range of genres and forms by blacks, Latino/as, and Jews to demonstrate the powerful ways in which national identities are heard as well as seen (Kun 2005). Ruby Tapia investigates visual imagery and representations in her comparative and relational study of how depictions of motherhood in popular photojournalism, film, and advertising often revolve around overt and covert assumptions about race (Tapia 2002, and forthcoming). Arlene Davila explores the ways in which gentrification and cultural tourism mediate relations between Puerto Ricans, other Latinos, and blacks in New York's East Harlem in the neoliberal era (Davila 2004). Joe Austin explores how neoliberalism's elevation of market spaces over social spaces explains New York City's war on graffiti during the last quarter of the twentieth century (Austin 2001). The early work of Tricia Rose and Sunaina Maira showed how hip hop culture emerged a key site for the negotiation and arbitration of gender identities and identifications (Rose 1994; Maira 2002). In their important new work, Rose and Maira have augmented and extended their analyses of commodification to show how cross-cultural consumption's utopian promises occlude the enduring inequalities and injustices that make racial and cultural reconciliation appealing in the first place (Rose 2008; Maira 2008).

Research by Cedric Robinson exposes how the rise of new communications and entertainment forms in the late nineteenth century shaped and reflected new forms of white supremacy. Robinson argues that racial regimes are innately unstable "regimes of truth," that "the production of race is chaotic." He explains that we cannot study one static racism, but rather must confront a steady stream of constructed social systems that deploy race in different ways, but always as a justification of asymmetrical power. In addition, Robinson reminds us that racial regimes remain unremittingly hostile to the disclosure, exhibition, and analysis of their reliance on race. Starting with the specific relationships that link commercial cinema to anti-black racism, Robinson produces general claims about how elites rely on a network of linked apparatuses that serve to render unjust power relations as natural, necessary, and inevitable. Yet Robinson's research also shows us that these aspirations to exercise yet occlude racial power always confront limits because of the knowledge and activism of those they attempt to subjugate (Robinson 2007).

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These advanced political analyses of expressive culture coexist in Ethnic Studies scholarship in American Studies with cultural analyses of political culture. The vehemence of resurgent anti-immigrant nativism over the past two decades has compelled scholars to reconsider how affect, emotion, and sentiment permeate white supremacist statements, beliefs, and actions. The volume *Immigrant Rights*, edited by Rachel Buff, brings together scholars and activists from diverse Ethnic Studies traditions to explore how controversies about immigration reveal the presence of the nation in the world and the world in the nation, how anti-immigrant mobilizations promote class exploitation, policing of non-normative sexualities, militarism, and national chauvinism. Racialized and racist portrayals of immigrants serve the interests of nativists, yet they also provoke mobilizations such as the massive demonstrations of May 1, 2006, where millions of immigrants and their supporters marched in the streets to proclaim the irreversible emergence of a multi-lingual, multi-racial, and multinational “America” (Buff 2008).

The practical needs of anti-racist activists and the programmatic work of Ethnic Studies departments and programs themselves encourage Ethnic Studies scholars to recuperate lost histories of inter-ethnic alliances and affiliations. Nikhil Pal Singh, Cynthia Young, Laura Pulido, and Jason Ferriera ground contemporary coalition work in the legacy of the consciousness and coalitions of the mid-twentieth century’s third world left (Singh 2005; Young 2006; Pulido 2006; Ferreira 2003). These scholars re-periodize the past, locating the civil rights struggles of the 1960s inside a longer historical arc that connects struggles for social justice inside the US to global histories of empire, migration, and war. At the same time, the shortcomings, failures, and defeats suffered by anti-racists compel James Lee and Cynthia Tolentino to interrogate the Ethnic Studies project itself, to trace its vexed history as an alternative path toward personal professionalization rather than as a collective endeavor on behalf of aggrieved communities (Lee 2004; Tolentino 2009). Arlene Davila warns Latino/a Studies scholars and activists against a public discourse that “serves to whitewash and align Latinos with projects that advance normativity, while creating inequalities among Latinos along the lines of citizenship, class, and other variables.” She argues that the institutional forces that create and sustain Latino/a Studies and other interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies programs inside the academy often leave them with limited resources, internal rivalries, and isolation from important scholarly currents in the disciplines, all of which encourage them to make gains at each other’s expense rather than participating in the radical reconstruction of society (Davila 2008: 138–60). Lee, Tolentino, and Davila start from different subject positions and subjectivities, but they all grapple with the dangerous possibility that Ethnic Studies will succeed as a professional endeavor while at the same time ethnic populations themselves suffer terribly from repression and racism. Indeed, the very visibility of token successes in Ethnic Studies and multicultural literature will certainly be used as proof that the society is not racist, to excuse and rationalize the organized abandonment of entire groups.

Addressing and alleviating that abandonment and suffering remains the primary obligation of Ethnic Studies scholars in American Studies. Some 40 years after the death of Martin Luther King we find ourselves once again at a crossroads. The problems that plague the economy and the environment, the persistence of wars overseas and wars at home against immigrants, queers, and low-wage workers, and the dreadful consequences of four decades of neoliberalism and white supremacy compel us to wake up, to speak up, and to stand up. The era of free market fundamentalism and revanchist racism has produced problems that the most powerful people and the most powerful institutions in our society cannot solve. The communities that campaigned for the existence of Ethnic Studies are largely worse off than they were 40 years ago, and they are not alone. In times of ferment and upheaval such as those we are certain to see in the years ahead, victories can bring about rapid changes that alter the future meaningfully. Yet defeats can consign us to decades and even centuries of continued suffering.

At this moment it is more important than ever to heed the words that Dr King spoke exactly one year before his death when he declared his opposition to the US war in Vietnam on April 4, 1967. King worried that what he called “the fierce urgency of now” would demand from us degrees of clarity, conviction, and courage that we might not have. Noting the ways in which decisions made in the United States influenced the fate of millions of people around the world, he wondered if we would tell our brothers and sisters around the globe that it was simply too late, that the alignment of forces in our country simply did not allow us to treat them as anything more than instruments for our own gain, that our interests would not allow their emergence in history as dignified and free men and women. Yet King argued that there was another choice. He called on his listeners to choose to rededicate themselves to what he termed “the long and bitter – but beautiful – struggle for a new world.” In words that apply as much to our day as to his, he concluded “The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we must choose in this crucial moment of human history” (King 1991: 243).

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Native American Studies

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Several issues dominate Native American Studies (NAS) today, the most central being those of Indian and tribal identities and tribal/national sovereignty. This essay explains the current status of those issues as well as those of education, land and the environment, gender and sexuality, and Indigenous Studies in a global sense. I address Native American Studies in terms of the United States and the Native nations and tribes that exist within its borders only because of limited space. It is important to note that Native groups, especially those near the borders of the US, have always recognized connections to people on the other sides of those borders, participating in trans- and international movements and communities. As such, I am neglecting indigenous populations throughout the rest of the Americas. This piece also does not address Native Hawaiian people, whose history is distinct and whose sovereignty and relationship to the US federal government are unique (see, e.g., Trask 1999; Halualani 2002; Kauanui 2008). I will, however, discuss larger Indigenous Studies toward the end of this piece. Throughout, I use the terms Indian, American Indian, Indigenous, Native person/people, and Native American interchangeably. I consider these terms placeholders for describing the descendants of the original inhabitants of the lands that have become the United States.

Sovereignty

The single most critical issue in Native American Studies today is also the single most important issue throughout Indian Country: tribal sovereignty. To that end, I will discuss in some detail the meaning and implications of tribal sovereignty, and its legal evolution. Within a Native framework, sovereignty denotes the right of a tribe to govern itself. Native tribes see themselves as sovereign nations, with all the rights and responsibilities afforded to all other nations. The legal status of that sovereignty has been challenged and complicated by strictures I

discuss in greater detail below, but the importance of this concept to tribal people is fundamental and transcends the merely legal. As Kidwell (Choctaw/Chippewa) and Velie (2005) note, sovereignty also “must be understood as a matter of identity, that is, the right of a tribe to define its own members and of members to identify themselves as tribal members” (78). Tribes and nations must be afforded their rights to define themselves, to act as collective entities, to maintain legal, financial, religious, political, and social autonomy. Johnson (1999) asserts, “sovereignty is crucial to the survival and development of the economic, cultural, and political life of tribes” (15). In 1983, President Reagan declared, “Our policy is to reaffirm dealing with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis.” The phrase “government-to-government” has appeared in all subsequent presidential statements on US federal Indian policies.

Legal history

United States federal legal history as relates to American Indians is generally divided into five or six eras. While the dates that mark the beginnings and ends of these eras vary depending on who defines them, they can be generally understood to encompass the colonial era (to 1830), removal and reservation era (1830–87), allotment and assimilation (1887–1934), reorganization (1934–53), termination and relocation (1953–68), and self-determination (1968–present). During the colonial era, the United States followed the pattern established by the British of making treaties with Native nations and recognizing their sovereignty as such. While the treaty era did not end with Removal, tribal sovereignty took a colossal hit, as “those tribes which resided within the acknowledged boundaries of the United States” were deemed, not sovereign nations, but “domestic dependent nations” (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, 1831*). Moreover, in 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which called for “exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi.” The most famous outcome of Indian Removal was the relocation of the Cherokee Nation in 1838–9 dubbed the Trail of Tears. The chief goal of Removal was to allow white settlers access to the lands of the Southeast. However, as the population of the United States grew and westward expansion continued, Native communities increasingly came into contact with white “settlers.” In order to facilitate its corresponding land grab, the United States, in 1851, created the first measure of the Indian Appropriations Act to concentrate Indian populations on reservations – ostensibly for their own protection.

This removal and reservation period ended in 1887 with the passage of the General Allotment (or Dawes) Act, which carved American Indian tribal lands into separate plots designated for individual ownership. The federal government saw this Act as a way to coax Indian people toward assimilation into Euro-American economic lifestyles, including farming and ranching. As an added incentive, those people who agreed to take land allotments were granted citizenship by the

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United States, a right not conveyed upon all Native people until 1924. After the divvying up of land by the Department of the Interior, leftover, or “surplus” lands were opened up to white settlers. During the Act’s roughly 50 years of existence, approximately two thirds of the allotted acreage had fallen out of Indian possession, largely through taxation for which Indian people were frequently unprepared, as well as the shady dealings of land speculators – often with assistance from local Indian agents appointed by the federal government.

The year 1934 saw the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), the central legal statute of what is called “the Indian New Deal.” Kelly (1994) notes this legislation was meant “not only to sweep away the repressive legislation of the past, but also to restore the powers of political and cultural self-determination which US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall had defined early in the nineteenth century,” in cases like *Cherokee v. Georgia* (464). The IRA strived to undo the work of allotment, returning tribal lands to collective tribal ownership, restoring the legislative powers of tribal governments and courts, and aiding in the creation of tribally controlled educational resources.

However, within a decade, the United States performed a near total reversal of its position in relation to tribal self-government and communal identities and ownership. The termination period dissolved not only tribal governments and courts, but 109 of the tribes themselves (Getches et al. 1998). Emphasizing assimilation once again, the federal government sought to encourage private land ownership under the auspices of freeing Native people “from Federal supervision and control and from all disabilities and limitations specially applicable to Indians” (Resolution 108). Further, as Canby (2004) explains, “Virtually all services administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs including education, housing and emergency welfare [were] discontinued” (59). The overall outcome of termination was that, “*Tribal sovereignty was effectively ended*” (Getches et al. 1998; italics original). Moreover, under Public Law 280 (1953), Indian populations and nations now fell under state, rather than exclusively federal or tribal, law. “Termination stands as a chilling reminder to Indian peoples that Congress can unilaterally decide to extinguish the special status and rights of tribes without Indian consent and without even hearing Indian views” (Getches et al. 1998). A continuation of termination policies can be seen in the BIA Relocation Program, which encouraged Native people to move from tribal lands and rural settings into cities where they could receive vocational training. However, removal from their communities, lack of preparation for the economic structures into which they were entering, and varying degrees of community support in the cities led to high rates of poverty, criminality, incarceration, alcoholism, depression, and flight from new urban lifestyles.

I mark the period of tribal self-determination’s beginning in 1968 with the passage of the Indian Civil Rights Act. However, this placement is somewhat problematic. Since the primary goal of the ICRA was to mandate the enforcement of the Bill of Rights within Native nations, it certainly contradicts tribal governmental

sovereignty. However, the ICRA also amended Public Law 280 to declare that tribal consent was required for states to assume jurisdiction over Indian land. In 1970, President Nixon called on Congress to reject the policy of termination in favor of one of self-determination. In the years since, the federal government has generally favored tribal self-rule and recognized tribal governments with rights (to some degree and for brevity's sake) akin to those of national governments.

I offer this rather lengthy overview of United States federal law as relates to Native people, tribes, and nations for a number of reasons. First, as with any sector of Ethnic Studies in particular, specific legal discourse and doctrine is fundamentally important. Because ethnically and racially identified groups have been historically marginalized by means of legal apparatuses, we must understand the appertaining laws. Second, because Native people are unique in their legal definition and legal relationships to the United States, the laws applying specifically to them must be understood. Third, these laws, and particularly the periodization of Native history that parallels these laws, are and have been directly manifested within artistic and cultural expressions by Native people, particularly in the contemporary focus on tribal sovereignty across NAS.

Identity

As is the case with other Ethnic Studies fields, issues of identity remain central within NAS as they do in Native American communities. American Indian identities are unique among ethnic categories in the United States because they comprise both legal and cultural statuses. The federal government recognizes American Indians as enrolled members of a “federally acknowledged tribal entity,” which Wilkins (Lumbee) (1997) explains is the BIA’s term for “various indigenous groups which are recognized as having a political relationship with the federal government – it includes tribal nations, bands, villages, communities, and pueblos, as well as Alaskan Inuits and Aleuts . . . The quoted figure does not include state-recognized tribes, nor does it include the more than one hundred nonrecognized groups which are in the process of petitioning the federal government in the hope of securing federal recognition” (1–2). Wilkins’s definition indicates a number of the pitfalls of relying on this federal definition of who is, and who is not, Indian. The process of federal recognition itself presents a challenging set of hurdles.

Federal regulations lay out the BIA’s “Procedure for Establishing that an American Indian Group Exists as an Indian Tribe” with seven “Mandatory Criteria” (Code 25, part 83). In sum, these criteria say that a petitioning tribe must: (1) prove a continuous American Indian identity since 1900; (2) comprise a distinct community “from historical times”; (3) maintain political influence over its members since historical times; (4) provide its governing document; (5) prove descent from a “historical Indian tribe”; (6) not be comprised of members of other tribes; and (7) not have been previously “terminated or forbidden the Federal

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relationship.” Tribes that have previously been terminated can, and have, been “restored.”

Nonetheless, providing evidence that they meet these mandatory criteria is frequently very difficult for tribes to do. The 1900 stipulation of the first criterion was revised from reading “since historical times” to address relocation, but often Native people cannot prove a historical continuity in a single location when they have been forcibly removed by the very federal government from which they are seeking recognition. Tribes often cannot provide substantive documentation to prove direct lines of biological descent, in part because marginalized groups are historically (and to this day) underrepresented in census counts, and in part because those members who could pass for non-Native frequently chose to do so for tactical reasons necessitated by their eras. Many tribes have so successfully integrated themselves into surrounding communities (a primary goal of federal Indian policy for decades) that they now cannot prove the cultural isolation and continuity that the BIA requires. So, while the federal government recognizes an Indian person as an enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe, such an approach leaves a great deal to be desired from the point of view of many communities that regard themselves as Native, including state-recognized and non-recognized groups. Hundreds of such groups have petitioned for federal recognition from coast to coast, including Alaska. The states of Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia currently house no federally recognized tribes, although there are clearly many indigenous groups and people within their borders.

Moreover, issues of Indian identity become further clouded once one leaves the legal arena. While the simplest and most generally accepted definition of an Indian person is one who is enrolled in a tribe (and here federal recognition sometimes but not always comes into play), it is not the only manner of determining who counts. Indeed, some tribes are beginning to expel former members from their rolls. Wilkins traces most purges to four factors: internal political squabbles; stricter racial requirements for membership; punishment for gang- or drug-related crime and, most often, during debates over sharing casino profits (“Indian Tribes Expel Members”). Many tribes make use of blood quantum, or degree of Indian blood, for the purposes of enrollment; not all do. As such, many enrolled members do not “look Indian” to outsiders. The reliance on visible phenotype does not necessarily apply to Native communities. Blood quantum itself is not generally seen as a historically situated Native practice. Forbes points out that blood quantum was first used in the Virginia colony as a method of determining who counted as black and who counted as Indian. However, Campbell and Greymorning (2007) demonstrate that the “hallmark of regulated Indian identity [came with] the passage of the 1887 General Allotment Act” (24). Blood quantum, then, is often seen as a method by which the federal government measures Indians, but, as Forbes also notes, as successive generations intermarry with other peoples, degrees of tribal

blood are inevitably going to decrease. Such a point is critical because, as Nagel (1997) notes, “American Indians have very high intermarriage rates compared to other racial groups”; over half of married Native people are married to non-Indians (336). Moreover, this exogamous trend can also apply in the case of Native people from different tribes. It is not uncommon for a person to have a high degree of Indian blood but to fail to “make” blood quantum for any of the individual tribes from which s/he descends. These intertribal and/or multi-racial individuals are common in urban settings as a product (and likely an administratively desired one) of the relocation program, as well as in regions with Native tribes and nations in close proximity to one another (Oklahoma is an obvious example).

With federal recognition and blood quantum such shaky determiners for proving Native identity, people often turn to more “traditional” methods of community belonging. Many Native people side with the assertion that Native identity is not so much based on what community an individual claims, but on what community claims that individual. In other words, if the tribal community says you are a member, then you are. This definition can appear to mirror that of enrollment, but needn’t necessarily as it is primarily social, not legal. Of course, community belonging and membership are neither fixed nor easily identifiable. Instead, they comprise an “I know it when I see it,” kind of subjective, moving target.

Tribal community recognition also proves challenging for Native people who live outside the community. Just as increasingly urban life has led to increased intermarriage, it has led to multi- or pan-tribal Indian communities. Many children who grow up in such settings are likely to have more interaction with Native people of tribes other than those of their parent(s). Adopted children have historically faced similar conflicts of identity, although 1978’s Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which strives to place Indian orphans and foster children with Indian parents, has worked to address those specific situations.

Tribal Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

Because American Indians comprise over 600 distinct tribes or nations, NAS is inherently interethnic as well as interdisciplinary. However, most NAS scholars are extremely wary of pan-ethnic statements about “Indians.” The above issues of identity feed directly into what has become the primary topic of discussion and debate with NAS in the contemporary moment: the debate between tribal nationalists and Native cosmopolitans. On the former side of this discussion lie several notable figures, including Craig Womack (Creek), Jace Weaver (Cherokee), Robert Warrior (Osage) – the so-called “3 Ws” – Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux). On the other side lie Arnold Krupat and Elvira Pulitano, as well as the scholars they claim and reaffirm, particularly Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) and Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee). While tribal

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nationalists assert that tribal cultures, their products, and artifacts ought to be studied and understood within their own tribal cultural contexts and traditions, cosmopolitans feel Native work is best understood within a matrix of intersecting traditions that inform one another. While these two sides are often pitted against each other, they are not mutually exclusive, nor do all of their practitioners see themselves at odds with the others.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn was among the first scholars identified as a nationalist, though Weaver et al. (2006) cite Simon Ortiz (Acoma) as their nationalist antecedent. Cook-Lynn (1996) asserts tribal nationalism's "set of unique aims – the interest in establishing the myths and metaphors of sovereign nationalism; the places, the mythological beings, the genre structures and plots of the oral traditions; the wars and war leaders, the treaties and accords with other nations as the so-called gold standard against which everything can be judged" (84). Tribal texts must be read within their sovereign tribal traditions as a way of reasserting and reinforcing tribal political and cultural sovereignty.

Like Cook-Lynn, Womack (1999) theorizes a need for tribal literary nationalism in a number of places. In *Red on Red*, he expresses, "My greatest wish is that tribes, and tribal members, will have an increasingly important role in evaluating tribal literatures" (1), and continues, "This book arises out of the conviction that Native literature, and the criticism that surrounds it, needs to see more attention devoted to tribally specific concerns" (1). However, Womack is quick to point out that he means his approach to be "more suggestive than prescriptive" (1) and that "there are also a number of legitimate approaches to analyzing Native literary production" (2). I illustrate Womack's qualifications of his own critical work because it has incorrectly been taken to read "tribal nationalism is the only way," or to imply that non-Native people should not participate in NAS.

Krupat (2002), by contrast, understands critics of Native cultural productions as fitting into one of three molds: the nationalist, the indigenist, or the cosmopolitan, privileging the last of these. He avers, "the cosmopolitan takes very seriously nationalist and indigenist insights, although her own position is that it is unwise to be bound too rigorously by either the nation or traditional knowledge" (ix). Krupat's cosmopolitan critic "must be committed to cross-cultural translation" (x), as opposed to focusing on the tribal nation and community as central. Krupat charges both Womack and Cook-Lynn with a "badly confused" essentialism, arguing that nationalists believe that "studying the effect of the meeting between [a] 'primary culture' and other cultures is of little concern" (20). Pulitano (2003) similarly opines, "any attempt to recover a 'pure' or 'authentic' Native form of discourse, one rigidly based on a Native perspective, is simply not possible since Native American narratives are by their very nature heavily heteroglot and hybridized" (13). Tribal nationalists, however, counter that just because they value tribal perspectives on literary and cultural productions, does not mean they see those tribal perspectives as pure. It means, instead, that tribal perspectives are no less tribal perspectives because of their contact with non-tribal, or even other tribal, discourses. For Womack,

for example, something does not stop being Creek because it is influenced by non-Creek forces. Instead, that thing remains or becomes Creek as Creek-ness expands to encompass it.

The above examples suggest that tribal nationalism is being fought out most in literary studies, but Warrior and Weaver take up the mantle in intersecting disciplines. Indeed, because so much of Native cultures is disseminated via narrative/story, *literature* becomes a broadly defined field that necessarily intersects with all others, including law, religion, and the environment. Warrior's (1995) primary focus has been on establishing, or, more to the point, identifying a Native intellectual tradition "that can and should inform the contemporary work of Native intellectuals." In *Tribal Secrets* (1995), he accomplishes this task through a thorough examination of the teachings of Vine Deloria, Jr, and John Joseph Matthews. In *The People and the Word* (2005), he does so through reading autobiographical/ethnobiographical texts from the likes of William Apess and N. Scott Momaday, those by and about boarding school students, and the writing of the Osage Constitution. This breadth shows the interdisciplinary connections that span much of NAS. He notes, "I am also concerned that, absent such specific discussion about the trajectories of Native intellectual work, what results in an inchoate body of knowledge that fails to speak to the aspirations and needs of people in the Native world – and this point is as true for policy and legal studies as it is for studies like this that concentrate on writing and literature" (xvi). Warrior strives toward a model for NAS that works for Native people, built out of Native practices, and looking toward the future.

Weaver's work is similarly diverse in scope to Warrior's. A former (or in his words "recovering") lawyer, Weaver is a Religious Studies, American Studies, Native American Literature, and legal scholar (*Other Words* 2001: ix). In his first book, *That the People Might Live* (1997a), he lays out his foundational concept of *communitism*. This neologism combines *community* and *activism*, declaring a sense of responsibility, what Weaver calls "commitment" to "Native community, including . . . the 'wider community' of Creation itself" (xiii). For Weaver, all Native intellectual endeavors ought to address the need of a community that is "first and foremost tribal" but which also extends beyond the reaches of the tribe (xiii). Weaver's commitment to the "wider community of Creation itself" is reflected in his edited environmentalist collection *Defending Mother Earth* (1997b). Weaver (2001) calls for such interdisciplinarity in order to bridge the fields of "history, literature, religious traditions and cultures, and law" in order to give "Native American Studies the intellectual coherence it needs if it is to take its place alongside other disciplines in the university."

Tribal nationalism not only opposes cosmopolitanism, but also pan-Indian approaches. Largely the product of urban relocation, pan-Indianism stems from Native people coming to identify with other Native people from different tribal backgrounds. Native people, generally speaking, define themselves, as Weaver notes above, by tribal/national affiliation. However, in writing something like "Native

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people, generally speaking,” I nod toward affinities shared by indigenous Americans. Within NAS, such statements must be qualified. While tribal traditions, religions, languages, and histories clearly contain their own unique elements, Native people in the US share similar, though certainly not identical histories of marginalization, exclusion, genocide, and ethnocide. Indeed, the very fact that the federal government has created laws describing its own relationships with Indians proves some of this shared history (the manifestations of which continue into the present and future). What’s more, the racist treatment that Native people encounter has little regard to their specific tribal affiliations. This is not to say we should allow the federal government or racist individuals to mandate Indian-ness upon Native people. It is only to say that there are real and material ways that pan-Indian identities are formed and reinforced, especially for those who are raised outside their tribal communities.

It is at this point that the work of Owens and Vizenor – the figures touted by cosmopolitans and maligned, generally speaking, by nationalists – come into play. In part, because both of these scholars (whose work ranges, like that of the nationalists, from Literature to Film, Drama, and Television, Social Sciences, Politics, Environment, and History, to name a few) pay particular attention to mixed bloods (or “crossbloods” in Vizenor’s lexicon), they focus less on tribal affiliations as central to identity. Vizenor’s work is heavily influenced by postmodernist theory, and he makes use of it in concert with specifically Anishinaabe stories and philosophies. However, he is also deeply distrustful of blood descent as a marker of Indian identity and of family as a necessary element of tribal affiliation. He notes that his “family was never nostalgic about my reservation. They lived more by stories than by actual visits, because the reservation was a place of bad memories, abuse, corrupt traditions, and poverty” (Vizenor and Lee 1999: 62). Rather than the tragedies of Native extinction or comfortable fictions of reservation idealism, Vizenor offers stories of survivance – a neologism combining survival and resistance. He challenges tribal identities as well, noting that “the many ceremonies, shamanic visions, practices, and experiences in native communities are so highly individualistic, diverse, and unique, that romantic reductions of tradition and community as common sources of native identity are difficult to support, even in theory” (1999: 29).

The Land

Because of stereotypes of Native people as environmentally enlightened, it would not surprise many to know that NAS deals heavily with issues of land and environment. These studies generally fall under three main, but certainly interrelated, categories: land ownership, resource management/control, and environmentalism. This first category serves as the foundation for the other two. The theft and loss of land remains engrained through NAS as it does through Native communities,

because land bears such importance to indigenous communities. Sean Kiccumah Teuton (Cherokee) (2008) notes, “Because Native cultural identity organizes experiences of homelands, dispossession, and exile, American Indian studies requires a thoroughgoing account of the constructed yet legitimate status of Native cultural geography” (46). Teuton calls such a construction of land and selfhood, *geoidentity*.

Many indigenous traditions hold that people emerged or were created in specific locations within the American landscape, placed in their lands by a Creator. Many traditions also say that we were helped into this world by various species. To that end, Weaver (1997a) has argued that “When Natives are removed from their traditional lands, they are robbed of more than territory; they are deprived of numinous landscapes that are central to their faith and their identity, lands populated by their relations, ancestors, animals, and beings both physical and mythological. A kind of psychic homicide is committed” (38). Relocation does not just lead to a cultural homesickness, but to a separation from the holiest of locations.

Indian people throughout the United States also, of course, face financial threats from loss of land and water rights. Donald Fixico’s (Shawnee, Sac and Fox, Creek, Seminole) (1998) *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century* describes a number of these threats in recent history and the contemporary moment. His text moves from the crooked land deals that plagued Oklahoma in the wake of the Dawes and Curtis Acts, to Osage oil rights, water rights in the Southwest, fishing and timber rights in the Northwest, and fishing, hunting, and mineral rights in the Midwest. However, like most scholarship in NAS, Fixico’s text refuses to focus solely on the historical wrongs done to Native people, but also pays great attention to methods of improvement and examples of Indigenous successes in the modern world. He notes that “Indian leadership” has adopted “modern corporate strategies to ensure the survival of their nations and people” (x).

These modern corporate strategies are seen, for example, in tribal mining concerns. Many tribes benefit financially from mining operations, a reversal of the “wave of policy initiatives to facilitate the development of mines on native lands through a rather ad hoc mixture of land appropriation, population displacement, and side payments that were anything but fair” (Ali 2003). In 1975, 25 tribes came together to found the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT), a group whose mission is to “support member Tribes as they develop their management capabilities and use their energy resources as the foundation for building stable, diversified self-governing economies (according to each Tribe’s own values and priorities)” (CERT). CERT represents yet another aspect of tribal sovereignty, as tribes appoint members to sit on its board, which, as a confederated, international coalition, enhances the power and protections of each of its members. In the United States, 54 tribes and nations are now members of CERT. Nonetheless, issues surrounding mining and the sale of natural resources remain divisive in many Native communities, particularly because of concerns over environmental issues.

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NAS scholars face an interesting bind in terms of discussing environmentalism from Native perspectives. The ecological Indian stereotype pervades US culture, and many Native critics are loath to lend credence to this mainstream image of Indians as environmental saviors. Russell Means (Lakota) (1997) explains, “Indians have been stereotyped far too long by the environmental movement as those with the mystical, ancient wisdom that alone can save the planet” (xvi). Indeed, Native communities have often been targets of toxic dumping and mining from outside corporations and government agencies (e.g., Weaver 1997b; Kuletz 1998; LaDuke 1999).

At the same time, many Native communities do maintain traditions (and whether these are recent additions to their traditions or span long histories is irrelevant to me) that claim an environmental, or, more to the point, ecological responsibility. Weaver’s above concept of “communitism” comes to bear here, with its recognition of human community with the other-than-human. Many Native traditions revolve around the Earth as a living or sentient entity; Mother Earth and Turtle Island are two of the most widely cited of such conceptions. Moreover, because the emergence stories I discuss above often prominently feature non-human creatures that help human beings to come into this world or to locate their homes, many cultures bind themselves to these species in the form of clan relationships and kinship. Duane Champagne (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) (1999) observes, “Native American cultural life has traditionally been deeply connected to the environment. Spiritual views and languages show great respect for the interconnectedness of humans, plants, animals, and the world” (275).

Education

The role of education remains, not surprisingly, a central concern for scholars of NAS. These studies cover a wide range of topics, however, from Indian boarding schools, Native pedagogy, the role of Native-run schools and colleges, to contemporary tribal relationships with higher education, particularly the discipline of Anthropology and NAGPRA, Museums and Archeology.

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School is the most famous of Indian boarding schools, operating from 1879–1918. As part of the assimilation movement, these schools removed children from their parents, ostensibly to teach them trades and allow them to be successful in the white world. Students at these schools were forbidden, often under corporal punishment, from retaining such cultural elements as language, religion, and dress, as the schools attempted to “civilize” them; in the words of Carlisle School founder Richard Pratt, “all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man” (1892: 46). Texts examining Indian boarding schools generally take one of two forms: histories of boarding school education (e.g., Adams 1997; Churchill 2004), and narratives from those who endured it (e.g., Tohe [Diné] 1999; Lomawaima 1995).

Again refusing to focus solely on the injustices of the past, studies of education within NAS are not limited to examinations of Indian boarding schools. A great

number of studies query the position of Native pedagogies and tribally run schools, be they primary, secondary, or college-level ones. Greg Sarris's (Pomo/Coast Miwok) (1993) *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, like so many other Native-authored texts, offers a multi-genre approach to Native storytelling, broadly defined. It begins with examples of some of the ways that Pomo stories and lessons are taught. These lessons are frequently presented through stories that are meant to be interpreted by the audience-participants. Sarris tells of a number of lessons, for example, learned while peeling potatoes with Pomo elders. The text goes on to explain educational approaches to teaching Native texts to non-Native readers and particular approaches to teaching in reservation classrooms. Sarris offers what he calls a "holistic approach to American Indian texts," and, again, the word *text* means more than written documents or artifacts. Judith T. Hanks's (Ojibwe) (1998) *Native American Pedagogy and Cognitive-Based Mathematics Instruction* works to understand Native students' disproportionate underperformance in math, as well as related science and engineering fields. Hanks's text, which investigates the education of Oneida elementary students, calls for a "culturally responsive pedagogy." She finds that students who are taught mathematics (and other fields) in ways that make sense in terms of their cultural backgrounds succeed at much higher rates than those who are instructed through a more Euro-American pedagogical approach (6). Champagne and Stauss (Jamestown S'Klallam) (2002) have edited *Native American Studies in Higher Education: Models for Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations*. More than 30 tribally run colleges exist across a dozen states, served as well by *The Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education*.

No element of education as it relates to Native people is more frequently discussed than that of Anthropology, which has a fraught relationship with Indian communities and with NAS. This social science is the most commonly vilified and/or lampooned of all academic practices. The first widely circulated critique of what many American Indians simply call "Anthros" appears in Vine Deloria, Jr's (Standing Rock Sioux) ([1969] 1988) "Anthropologists and Other Friends" in his foundational collection *Custer Died for Your Sins*. He avers, "The fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people are objects for observation, people are then considered objects for experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction. The anthropologist thus furnishes the justification for treating Indian people like so many chessmen available for anyone to play with" (81). He continues, "The massive volume of useless knowledge produced by anthropologists attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories has contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian people today" (81). This last point reverberates throughout NAS. Anthropologists, in seeking and *defining* real Indians, have tended to privilege distantly historically situated people and cultures. This definition permeates academic as well as popular imaginations of Native people until "Indian people begin to feel that they are merely shadows of a mythical super-Indian" (82). What possible place is there for contemporary American Indians in such a view? Countless other Native writers, thinkers, and scholars of NAS have

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piled on Anthropology for its combination of objectifying and ossifying definitions of indigenous populations, cultures, and traditions. (My use of the term *ossifying* nods toward the related field of Archeology.) A great many people continue to think of Native people and NAS as relegated solely to ethnographic endeavors into Indian history and precontact cultures. Countless books with titles such as *The Indians of North America* (and many with exactly that title) describe how Native people *were*, with little or no regard for how Native people *are*. The field is also challenged for failing to cooperate with Native elders and community members after the completion of fieldwork, and for, in effect, stealing Indian stories without giving proper credit or remuneration.

Anthropology's position as the single most distrusted (and mocked) field from the perspective of Native people, however, has not gone unnoticed by anthropologists. Indeed, because of the focused attention, Anthropology has made strides in correcting its tendency toward objectification. In Biolsi and Zimmerman (1997), Native and non-Native scholars discuss the changing (and sometimes unchanging) face of the field. Biolsi has also edited Blackwell's *Companion to Anthropology of American Indians* (2004; dedicated to Deloria), the final section of which takes a meta-anthropological approach. Many Native people have taken up the study of Anthropology and helped to push the field in directions that are more respectful and collaborative.

As Anthropology has evolved, so has the related field of Archeology. In 1990, President Clinton signed into law the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). This Bill was designed to correct centuries of grave-robbing and theft of sacred or culturally significant objects (also called "cultural resources"). Trope and Echo-Hawk (Pawnee) (2000) explain, "NAGPRA requires federal agencies (excluding the Smithsonian Institution) and museums (including state and local governments and educational institutions) to return human remains and associated funerary objects upon request of a lineal descendent, Indian tribe, or Native Hawaiian organization where the museum or agency itself identifies the cultural affiliation of the items through the required inventory process" (141). This exclusion of the Smithsonian is a glaringly large loophole in an Act shot through with loopholes. Many museums and curators are slow to complete the "required inventory process" and lineal descent is often difficult to prove. Nonetheless, NAGPRA, as well as the changes in Archeology and Museum practices – embodied by the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall in Washington, DC – represent the recognition of Native sovereignty over Native ancestors, stories, and property (see, e.g., Mihesua 2000).

Gender and Sexuality

In 1986, Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna) published *The Sacred Hoop*, vaulting discussions of gender within NAS into the mainstream. Her text celebrates "tribal

gynocracies,” or “woman-focused worldviews” as alternatives to European-styled patriarchy (2). To that end, she asserts, “understanding tribal cultures [is] essential to all responsible activists who seek life-affirming social change that can result in a real decrease in human and planetary destruction and in a real increase in quality of life for all inhabitants of planet earth” (2). In other words, Allen means to show examples of other lifeways to a largely mainstream audience, showing matriarchal practices and discussing the stories, poetry, histories, and social inclusion that those practices bring about.

Allen describes this inclusion in terms of queer sexualities, noting, “Some distinguishing features of a woman-centered social system include free and easy sexuality and wide latitude in personal style. This latitude means that a diversity of people, including gay males and lesbians, are not denied and are in fact likely to be accorded honor” (2). Consequently, a number of studies of the roles of queer sexualities exist within NAS. Gilley’s *Becoming Two-Spirit* (2006) is perhaps the most widely known. He notes, “historical Native ideas about gender did not employ the gender-binary, bodily-sex-equals-gender view commonly found in European society. Rather, male- and female-bodied persons had a myriad of gender roles that they fulfilled within their society. Genders as social categories were a malleable part of an individual’s identity and alterable throughout a person’s lifetime” (8–9). Many Native traditions do not view sexuality as tantamount to identity; many recognize fluidity of gender and of sexuality. However, homophobia is also alive and well in many Native communities. Womack (1998) hopes, “sovereign nations can make part of their concern homophobia,” seeing anti-gay sentiment as a product of contact and Native adaptation (215).

More recently, Andrea Smith’s (Cherokee) (2005) *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* addresses “sexual violence as a tool of patriarchy and colonialism in Native communities, both historically and today” (2). Moreover, she illustrates, “Putting Native women at the center of analysis compels us to look at the role of the state in perpetrating both race-based and gender-based violence. We cannot limit our conception of sexual violence to individual acts of rape” (3). Ultimately, Smith demonstrates the correlations between sexual violence enacted against Native women in particular and the violent, oppressive, and colonizing practices of the United States and its people against marginalized communities at home and abroad. She also provides examples of “anticolonial responses to gender violence,” which must address the sexism and patriarchy that exist in Native and non-Native American communities today, regardless of the gender equality that may have existed prior to contact. She avers, “Rather than adopt the strategy of fighting for sovereignty first and improving Native women’s status second, as many activists argue, we must understand that attacks on Native women’s status are themselves attacks on Native sovereignty” (138). This connection between personal liberty and safety and tribal sovereignty is critical. If Native people are not free to exist without the threat of physical violence or harassment, then Native sovereignty remains a distant target.

Indigenous Studies and Outgroup Portrayals

A fairly recent trend in NAS is the expansion to Indigenous or Fourth World Studies. As Chadwick Allen, one of the most prominent scholars of Indigenous Studies notes, the field “investigates the construction of indigeneity within the context of a deep and enduring settler colonization” (1). Although Allen (2002) refers here to his own work, *Blood Narrative*, his statement can safely be made about the field as a whole. Allen’s text pays particular attention to American Indian and Maori texts, but others in the field address indigeneity around the world. While many in the United States tend to think of Indian and Maori groups, alongside Native Hawaiian and Australian Aboriginal cultures, as the primary indigenous groups, others abound. The Ainu in Japan; the Hmong, the Ami, Atayal, Bunun, Paiwan, Pinpu Puyuma, Rukai, Saisia, Tsou, and Yami (Da-Wu) in Taiwan; and the Batak, Igorot, Lumad, Mangyan, Palawano, Tagbanua, and Tau’t Bato in the Philippines, are but a tiny sample of Asian indigeneities. Some scholars have placed Indigenous and Native American Studies within a postcolonial framework. But, since so many indigenous peoples’ lands remain occupied by colonizing forces, the wielding of this term – especially its “post-” prefix – has faced considerable opposition. The term “Fourth World” stems from Chief George Manuel’s (Shuswap) (1974) *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. Manuel’s famous definition of this term reveals the global commonalities among indigenous populations: the Fourth World is comprised of “indigenous peoples descended from a country’s aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territories and its riches” (40). Recently, Native American Studies scholars have, at long last, forged an organization dedicated to supporting and sharing work. That group, though clearly centered around American Indian Studies, welcomes Fourth World Studies by its very designation: Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA).

There have also been several book-length studies of outgroup portrayals of Native American people, cultures, and communities. Devon A. Mihesuah’s (Choctaw) (1997) *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities* directly confronts such outgroup constructions. This, and others (Berkhofer 1979; Huhndorf 2001; P. Deloria 2002; and Aleiss 2005), all take a tack akin to that of Orientalist Studies in Asian American-centered scholarship. These texts study representations about Native people that have shaped and continue to shape both non-Native and Native views about what it means to be Indian.

Conclusion

NAS continues to shape itself as an academic field whose scholars do not always agree about methodology and approach. We struggle, at times, to find the best

definition for our key terms; we disagree about how best to execute our goals. Many of these debates are passionate, even vitriolic. However, these disagreements do not, I think, denote a field in trouble or disrepair. Instead, they represent a vibrant community studying the cultural productions and conditions of vibrant communities. We are discussing the issues that are relevant to those among us within the community of Native American Studies, especially as this field relates to Native American people, cultures, rights, communities, and sovereignty.

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The Locations of Chicano/a and Latino/a Studies

Richard T. Rodríguez

As it makes sense to speak of a singular notion of *el Movimiento* (the Movement) to register the foundational, complementary struggles for equality forged by systematically disenfranchised Mexican American communities (many of whom adopted the word “Chicano” as an affirmative identity marker of racial-ethnic and class consciousness), it is also necessary to point to the specific organizational efforts that evolved on particular geopolitical fronts that make up the Movement.¹ To be sure, the history of the Chicano Movement is best understood as a spatially grounded activist assemblage. Though by no means an exhaustive list, this assemblage unquestionably consists of the struggle for farm workers’ rights (principally under the banner of the California-based United Farm Workers of America (UFW)); the formation of La Alianza which sought to return to native New Mexican descendants the land annexed by the United States after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; the walkouts (or blowouts) and demands made by high school and university students in many US cities for educational equality; the creation of La Raza Unida Party (RUP) in Crystal City, Texas, to contest marginalization of Chicanos under a Republican/Democratic Party hegemony; and the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Colorado, to promote “a militant ethos of Chicanismo” (García 1997) rooted in the organizing principle of *la familia* (the family) as a means through which to contest anti-Mexican discrimination.²

In tandem with these civil rights and social justice movements, Chicano Studies (later renamed Chicano/a or Chicana/Chicano Studies) would emerge as a discernible academic field of study in the heady moment of the 1960s.³ And, just as the Chicano Movement cannot be reduced to a singular entity, the various articulations and deployments of Chicano/a Studies based on the disparate spaces and places which the field and its thematic currents have originated and flourished must be accounted for.⁴ This point will also serve as the argumentative frame of this essay. The significance of space therefore contours the first section which maps Chicano/a Studies’ institutional proliferation and formation.

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From the trajectory of cultural nationalism, I also wish to show how the field's topical or curricular content – particularly rooted in the humanities – is also framed by location. I thus illustrate in the second and third sections how two places *cum* organizing principals integral to Chicano/a Studies – Aztlán and the family – supply the essential coordinates for mapping an array of concerns in the field. Yet, while Aztlán and the family have also functioned as essentialized places given how they are often shot through with meaning generated by their foundational metaphors, their significance beyond traditional signification has led to the extension of the field's boundaries. Finally, the essay's concluding section reflects on the discursive space of Border Studies and Latino/a Studies projects as they relate to Chicano/a Studies. Often seen at odds with Chicano/a Studies by their proponents who aim to initiate linkages with transnational and global interests by way of discarding narrow cultural nationalist inclinations, Border Studies and Latino/a Studies, I will argue, need not exist in tension with or supplant Chicano/a Studies. Yet I insist at the same time that Chicano/a Studies cannot afford to neglect what Latino/a Studies in particular provides both conceptually and methodologically, in light of the ever-changing locations for which these particular fields must account.

Institutional Space, Geographical Articulation

One of many demands made by students and educators in *el Movimiento*, Chicano Studies surfaced in various academic institutions as the result of organized protest against an educational hegemony that methodically ignored or misrepresented the history, culture, and experiences of Mexican Americans. While early scholars such as George I. Sánchez, Américo Paredes, Julián Samora and – from outside an academic context – Ernesto Galarza generated a critical body of scholarship that served as a precursory intellectual springboard from which to dive, the nominally identified field of Chicano Studies surfaced in the late 1960s.⁵ At a historic April 1969 conference held at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Carlos Muñoz, Jr, writes that in tandem with the formation of the student-based organization MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), “the demand was for Chicano Studies instead of Mexican American Studies, reflecting the cultural nationalist ideology of the Chicano Movement” (2007: 157). One of the movement's most significant manifestos – *El Plan de Santa Barbara* – was also drafted at the conference as “a master plan for Chicanos in higher education” (García 1996: 183).⁶ Particularly “focused on the role of the Chicano/a intellectual” as it “identified the institutions of higher education as strategic targets for political change” (Muñoz 2007: 101), *El Plan de Santa Barbara* helped crystallize the institutional implementation of Chicano/a Studies as interdisciplinary, while demanding the maintenance of ties to the community beyond the academy.⁷

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While scholars such as Ignacio M. García (1996) and Pedro A. Cabán (2003), following Carlos Muñoz, Jr, maintain that “the first Chicano Studies Department was established in California State College, Los Angeles” (Cabán 2003: 11), debates continue as to whether Chicano Studies first originated course by course within a curriculum without the authority of departmental status at California State College, Los Angeles (renamed California State University, Los Angeles), or California State College, San Fernando (renamed California State University, Northridge). Regardless of the desire to claim an identity as “the first,” it is accurate to note that students and scholars at both institutions began advocating on behalf of “Mexican American Studies” and “Chicano Studies” at their respective institutions at more or less the same time.

Various commentators have asserted that Chicano Studies is largely a California and, by extension, Southwest phenomenon. In her interview with Juan Zevallos Aguilar on “Latino Cultural Studies,” Puerto Rican scholar Frances Aparicio notes that “students and activists of Mexican origin in California, Texas, Colorado and the Southwest demanded programs that would reflect their history and culture and academic settings” and “beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Chicano studies in the West and Southwest” surfaced in academic settings (Aparicio 2003: 4). The leading role California played in the constitution of Chicano Studies may have everything to do with how its institutional origins are repeatedly traced back to the California State University (CSU) and, subsequently, the University of California (UC) systems. One need only consult Rodolfo F. Acuña’s “Chicana/o Studies and the American Paradigm” from *Sometimes There Is No Other Side: Chicanos and the Myth of Equality* (1998), and Carlos Muñoz, Jr’s “The Quest for Paradigm: The Struggle for Chicano/a Studies” from *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (2007) – two important statements on the field which identify a number of California colleges and universities known for their Mexican American and Chicano studies programs and departments – to comprehend the seminal role Californian sites of higher education played in the institutionalization of Chicano Studies.⁸

In Texas, while the field would indeed nominally manifest as “Chicano Studies” at, for example, the University of Texas at El Paso, it would surface more commonly as “Mexican American” Studies as evidenced by the naming of units and centers such as those housed at the University of Texas at both Austin and Arlington. Despite the occasional disagreement over the preference in terms within Texas, numerous scholars whose personal histories and critical inquiry find root in the state – most notably exemplified by José E. Limón and the Saldívar siblings (Sonia Saldívar-Hull, Ramón Saldívar, and José David Saldívar) – would invariably contribute to the solidification and expansion of Chicano/a Studies from the late 1970s onward. Even a Tejano scholar like Américo Paredes, who may not have regarded his work as part of a Chicano/a Studies tradition, nevertheless functioned as a pivotal figure in the establishment of a critical discourse identified as Chicano/a given his work’s ability to animate scholarly commitment charged by affirmation and resistance.

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The call for Chicano/a Studies, however, would resonate beyond the boundaries of the Southwestern terrain and reverberate within multiple spaces in the Midwest where, since the 1970s, Chicano Studies proliferated at numerous universities, including the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and Michigan State University. This makes perfect sense given how the flame of the Chicano Movement also burned bright in the Midwest. As Dionicio Nodín Valdés explains in the context of Chicano Studies' challenge to "the hegemony of European-based knowledge":

While the struggle over Chicano studies achieved its greatest successes in California, with important victories elsewhere in the Southwest, Chicano youth also participated in high school blowouts and university demonstrations in cities and on campuses throughout the Midwest. High school blowouts in Topeka in April 1970 protested against the lack of Chicano studies in the curriculum, while in Milwaukee the Centro Cultural Educativo Chicano-Boricua created an alternative high school with a curriculum that included courses on Mexican and Puerto Rican history and culture. (Valdés 2000: 199)

The linkage of Chicano with Boricua – a term akin to Chicano/a given its adoption by Puerto Ricans wishing to signal their indigenous Taíno heritage – also mirrors the unique constitution of Chicano/a Studies in the Midwest as it acknowledges the equal importance of Puerto Rican Studies in the region. Indeed, reflective of the coexistence of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the Midwest (most notably in cities like Chicago), programs and centers of Chicano-Boricua Studies at Wayne State University in Detroit and Indiana University in Bloomington did more than foreshadow future curricular trends to supplement “Chicano/a” or “Puerto Rican” with “Latino” to consider emergent ethnic and national groups who might be identified as such. Rather, they brought together two ostensibly disparate fields by grounding their academic significance in a regional frame that remains accountable to the real life interplay of social, economic, cultural, and political matters connecting Chicano/a and Puerto Rican communities (Rodríguez 2008). The indisputable evidence of this interplay thus counters the ahistorical argumentative misfire of scholars like Ignacio M. García who advocate for Chicano/a Studies autonomy based on size of population particular to region, on the one hand, and the presumption of segregated existence on the other. García claims, “The fact is that there are not enough Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and others to overwhelm the Mexican-origin population of the Southwest, Midwest, and West. The Puerto Rican and Dominican population, who have a very strong historical deviance from Chicanos, should retain their own study centers” (1996: 198). Connecting Chicano/a and Boricua made sense not only in terms of uniting two distinct communities for the sake of scholarly inquiry but also for enabling space to chart what Mérida Rúa calls “colao subjectivities,” that is, new ethnicities that broach more than one cultural or national historical experience such as “MexiRican” or “PortoMex.”

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Although institutional implementation of Chicano/a Studies through departments, programs, or centers does not – at least to my knowledge – exist outside of the US, the field has nonetheless traveled south to Mexico, overseas throughout Europe, and within Australia as witnessed by the proliferation of scholarship, course offerings, and occasional conferences in these locations. One can readily map the “steady growth of international attention to Chicano literature and criticism in countries such as France, Germany, Spain, and Mexico” (Chabram 1991: 128). Despite the enthusiasm behind Chicano/a Studies’ international embrace, its reception “at home” in the US has ranged from passionate advocacy to down-right repudiation. As proof of passionate advocacy, one need only consider the implementation of Chicano/a Studies programs and departments at recently established colleges and universities such as California State University, Channel Islands, while post-Baccalaureate degree-granting programs have surfaced at the University of California on both the Los Angeles and Santa Barbara campuses. Beyond standalone Chicano/a Studies programs and departments, the field is often accounted for in the now more common establishment of Latino/a Studies – which exist independently of or supplementary to the longer-standing fields of Chicano/a and Puerto Rican Studies (i.e., Chicano and Latino Studies at California State University at Long Beach, and Puerto Rican and Latino Studies at Brooklyn College) – and Latin American and Latino Studies (at, for example, the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of California at Santa Cruz). American Studies, Ethnic Studies, English/Literature, Spanish, Sociology, History, and Anthropology departments and programs, among other disciplines and fields, would also support Chicano/a Studies curriculum while providing necessary space for scholars working in the field.

As Chicano/a Studies has found support (although never unanimous, it should go without saying) in institutions of higher education, it has also garnered detractors in the post-9/11 era in which it is often cast as a threat to a cohesive American patriotism predicated upon “Western values.” In 2008, a US Representative from Arizona – Russell Pearce, R-Mesa – introduced “amendments to Senate Bill 1108 that would permit Arizona to confiscate books, ban Chicano studies and exclude the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) from Arizona’s campuses” (Acuña 2008). According to Pearce, Chicano/a Studies (and representative texts like Rodolfo Acuña’s landmark *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*) “denigrate American values and the teachings of Western civilization” as it “overtly encourage[s] dissent” (cited in Acuña 2008). Despite the ongoing efforts made by activists from the Movement onward to engage in struggles running the gamut from labor rights to positive representation in film, Chicanos and Chicanas would once again be rendered domestic foreigners – as was the case after the US annexation of Mexican land vis-à-vis the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo – or now terrorists, a racialized population whose questionable claims to American citizenship may necessitate expunging from the historical record. With this in mind, it becomes clear why Chicano/a cultural nationalism would continue

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to serve as an important means through which to empower a subordinated people by affirming a collective place for consolidating identity and consciousness within spaces hostile to difference.

Placing the Nation I: Aztlán

The early twenty-first-century tendency of vilifying Chicano/a Studies along the lines of Rep. Russell Pearce is echoed by conservative pundits like Patrick J. Buchanan who, in his books *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country* (2002) and *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America* (2006), views the academic field through the promotion of Aztlán as the training ground for staging a concerted assault against Western values on American territory. The threat of territorial infiltration undoubtedly charges Buchanan's anxiety as he regards Chicanos/as who stake claims for Aztlán – that is, staging a “reconquista” to reclaim ownership of US land once purportedly theirs – as, ironically, white supremacists in indigenous Mexican garb. Such claims, however, have been forcefully taken to task and humorously lampooned by the astute journalist Gustavo Arrellano in *Orange County: A Personal Memoir* (2008), a revealing book focusing on the spaces of Southern California that have spawned an abundance of racially motivated vitriol and anti-immigrant activity.

Apart from its mind-numbing reduction as proof of Chicano/a ideological warfare (ultimately resulting in cases of insufficient evidence), the political and symbolic currency of Aztlán has been wielded time and again throughout the 40-year course of Chicano/a Studies history.⁹ In their groundbreaking and influential essay “Chicana/o Cultural Representations: Reframing Alternative Critical Discourses,” Angie Chabram and Rosa Linda Fregoso clarify:

Aztlan, the legendary homeland of the Aztecs, claimed by Chicano cultural nationalism as the mythical place of the Chicano nation, gave this alternative space a cohesiveness. Chicano identity was framed in Aztlan. And, Aztlan provided the basis for a return to our roots, for a return to an identity before domination and subjugation – a voyage back to pre-Columbian times. In its most extreme cases, Aztlan was said to be located in the deepest layers of consciousness of every Chicano, an identification which thereby posited an essential Chicano subject for cultural identity. (1990: 204–5)¹⁰

Apart from the institutional and geographical placement of the field, what also locationally anchors Chicano/a Studies are the repeated references to Aztlán, the “legendary homeland” not merely transposed on or evolved as the present day Southwestern area of the United States, but a place which serves as one of Chicano/a Studies' fundamental framing devices. From its centrality in the Chicano

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nationalist primer *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (drafted at the legendary First National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver in March 1969 and co-authored by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales and poet Alurista) and the establishment of MEChA on high school and college campuses, to the naming of the foundational anthology of Mexican American literature edited by Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (1972) and the scholarly journal established at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1970, Aztlán continues to function as a key symbol, organizing principle, and, ultimately, place for Chicano/a Studies.

Rafael Pérez-Torres’s “Refiguring Aztlán” is arguably the most comprehensive analysis to date on the subject of Aztlán, as he rightly argues that “Aztlán stands as that region where the diverse political, geographic, and cultural concerns gripping the Chicano imagination meet” (1997: 27). Part reappraisal, part critique, Pérez-Torres’s essay makes the case that, “In the end, the terrain termed Aztlán comes to represent both specific geographic locales and the means of a counterdiscursive engagement” (28). However, he quickly points out that in “either case its efficacy in terms of political-institutional transformation remains questionable” (28). In conclusion, however, Pérez-Torres concedes, “We cannot abandon Aztlán, precisely because it serves to name that space of liberation so fondly yearned for. As such, it stands as a site of origin in the struggle to articulate, enact, and make present an absent unity. Aztlán is our start and end point of empowerment” (37).

In the aforementioned essay by Chabram and Fregoso, Aztlán indeed represents a specific geographic locale and also serves as “the means of a counterdiscursive engagement.” After grounding it in terms of location, Chabram and Fregoso argue that the cultural nationalist stance reflected in the deployment of Aztlán – and, by extension, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s epic poem “I am Joaquín,” as well as the Chicano student movement that “provided the enabling conditions for us to come into representation and claim our existence as Chicanos by stating as the movement song echoes: ‘Yo soy Chicano’ (I am Chicano)” (1990: 205) – rendered Chicano identity “a static, fixed, and one-dimensional formulation” (205). A counter-discourse is thus initiated when they declare “In retrospect, while many of these elements of coming into representation were positive, unfortunately the notion of a Chicano cultural identity itself was very problematic” (205). This allows the authors “to recuperate that which was silenced” and “to give voice to historically persistent forms and practices of resistance of our own people” (207). Chabram and Fregoso therefore set the stage for what would come to be known as “Cultural Studies” approaches to Chicano/a Studies, and also for a proliferation of academic inquiry on gender as reflected in their edited special issue for which their essay would serve as introduction.

Chabram and Fregoso have recently been taken to task by George Mariscal who argues that the conflation of “so-called nationalism” and the Movement has resulted in revisionist historiography in which the complexities of Movement history are conclusively erased. As he observes:

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Reading Movement practices through the work of British cultural critic Stuart Hall, Chabram and Fregoso had singled out “the Chicano student movement” as the origin of a “static, fixed, and one-dimensional formulation” of Chicano identity. Claiming that “Chicano nationalism” had thrust a heterogeneous community into an ontological space where history no longer existed, i.e. Aztlán, they accused the entire “Chicano movement” of erasing “the complexity of Chicano cultural identity,” especially “working-class and women’s cultural forms and practices.” (Mariscal 2005: 43)

Mariscal does not dismiss Chabram and Fregoso’s effort to provide space for previously silenced subjects but expresses concern with how these critics’ overly simplistic reading of the Movement has led to common-sense understandings of cultural nationalism that elide the complexities of gender politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s era. The work of Chicana cultural critic Dionne Espinoza provides confirmation of these complexities, Mariscal argues, given its exploration of the intersection of cultural nationalism and feminism, and “shows how the myth of a ‘transcendent Chicano subject’ was in reality a subject produced by ‘the tensions within nationalist discourse, the multiple voices and practices that superseded ‘ideal’ notions of Chicano subjectivity with ‘real’ experiences of that subjectivity emerging in social struggle” (Mariscal 2005: 43).

It is fair to say, however, that the critique of cultural nationalism in general and Aztlán in particular have provided the basis to venture into important new arenas of cultural analysis. For example, in her important study *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (2003), María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo moves beyond, yet relies on, challenges to Movement-inspired, “Aztlán-based Chicano nationalism” to assess “the residual effect of this era of Chicano nationalism: the continued use of *mestizaje* as a trope for Chicana/o identity and the presumed access to indigenous subjectivity that this biologized trope offers us” (278). In her assessment of writers Gloria Anzaldúa’s and Richard Rodriguez’s deployment of *mestizaje*, Saldaña-Portillo notes the ways in which *mestizaje* often operates at the expense of indigeneity and, in the case of Anzaldúa (who despite engaging *mestizaje* “with a feminist, queer twist”), leads to the “exclusion and, indeed, erasure of contemporary indigenous subjectivity and practices on both sides of the border” (282).¹¹ The challenge to Aztlán as an essentialized place has indeed helped move the field away from what might appear as a conceptual impasse but is rather a hegemonic knowledge dependent on the erasure of historical specificity and cultural conflict.

Yet, as the critique of Aztlán has proven enabling – namely for heterosexual critics such as Chabram, Fregoso, Pérez-Torres, and Saldaña-Portillo – a number of queer Chicano and Chicana writers have turned to Aztlán as a means to elaborate on their alienation from this Chicano/a “homeland” and its essentialized tenets, while pondering Aztlán’s use value beyond heteronormative cultural politics. In the story “My Aztlán: White Place” from his collection *City of God* (1994), the late Chicano gay writer Gil Cuadros candidly grapples with the politics

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of race and sexuality in his native Los Angeles, while signaling possibilities of belonging within the wider context of Aztlán. Furthermore, in her foundational essay, “Queer Aztlán: The Re-formation of Chicano Tribe” (1993), Chicana lesbian writer Cherríe Moraga sets the terms for establishing a “Chicano homeland that could embrace *all* its people, including its *jotería*” (1993: 147). Through this reconfigured Aztlán, Moraga seeks a generative “new nationalism in which la Chicana Indígena stands at the center, and heterosexism and homophobia are no longer the cultural order of the day” (150). Numerous conferences and symposia throughout California attest to the fact that this essay has motivated a younger generation of queer Chicanos/as to not only take up the notion of Aztlán for expounding on its symbolic value in a scholarly context, but also for organizing queer Chicano/a community networks beyond the academy. One might therefore understand Aztlán as an anchored place of sorts, continually challenged by multiple de-anchoring.

Placing the Nation II: *La Familia*

Interwoven with Moraga’s desire for a queer Aztlán is her aim to recast the family as a space open to differences centered on gender and sexuality. Despite the compelling arguments that the cultural nationalist ambitions structuring early Aztlán-grounded calls for identity promoted a masculine heteronormative ideal, the family as symbol and organizing principle would prove an even more entrenched place for fixing the codes of gender and sexuality. In Movement contexts the family would regularly manifest as an idealized kinship arrangement framed in nuclear terms, while also synonymously operating as *la raza* (the people/the race). The aforementioned *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* makes clear the two-pronged function of *la familia* for cultural empowerment:

Cultural values of our people strengthen our identity and the moral backbone of the movement. Our culture unites and educates the family of La Raza towards liberation with one heart and one mind. We must insure that our writers, poets, musicians, and artists produce literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture. Our cultural values of life, family, and home will serve as a powerful weapon to defeat the gringo dollar value system and encourage the process of love and brotherhood. (Valdez and Steiner 1972: 405)

Furthermore:

Political liberation can only come through an independent action on our part, since the two party system is the same animal with two heads that feeds from the same trough. Where we are a majority we will control; where we are a minority we will represent a pressure group. Nationally, we will represent one party, La Familia de La Raza. (Valdez and Steiner 1972: 405)

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In *El Plan* (or “The Chicano Movement Manifesto,” as Chicana feminist scholars Beatriz Pesquera and Denise Segura (1993) have called it), *la familia* connoted a biologically given family as much as a communitarian network comprised of *la gente* (the people). In many instances, these two distinctions converged to promote an interrelated function of the family with an endorsement of commonsensical patriarchal governance.

Although “machismo” would function as a hot-button issue during the Movement for Chicano Social Science scholars wishing to short-circuit the mainstream academic discourse on Mexican American family dysfunction it supposedly produced, leaders like Corky Gonzales felt the need to grant it intrinsic status for structuring Chicano/a family values (which after all lay at the heart of the Crusade for Justice, the organization by which he is principally known). For Gonzales, “*Machismo* means manhood. To the Mexican man machismo means to have the manly traits of honor and dignity. To have courage to fight. To keep his word and protect his name. To run his house, to control his woman, and to direct his children. This is machismo” (Steiner 1970: 386).

Challenges to machismo and familial patriarchal dominance were not uncommon; yet these challenges were met with downright hostility. With most challenges coming from women refusing backseat status in Movement matters, Chicanas would find themselves moved by the liberatory promise of feminism. In some movement quarters, however, feminism was rendered a pernicious threat to the family, and women who dared challenge the order of the Chicano family standard were cast as man-hating lesbians. For some, women’s liberation was deemed “a white thing,” positioned as antithetical to Chicano/a liberation. As José Armas clarifies:

The failure of the white women’s liberation movement to attract a mass following from the Chicana woman indicates something important. This apart from the fact that the family is the basis for all social development in the Chicano community and the woman plays a key role in that development. The white women’s liberation has little regard for the family as an institution. At least in the Chicano sense. (1975: 62–3)

Evidently, women’s empowerment and liberation – in the so-called “Chicano sense” – for Chicanas was not a viable option outside the family as they were to be wedded to that institution for better or worse. And, in his advocacy for machismo, Armas would maintain Chicanas’ capability of claiming machismo but only within the familial context through which they could display their strength as naturally nurturing mothers.

Although a great deal of the literature and visual culture of the Movement era solidified the image of the nuclear Chicano family (see Rodríguez 2009), Chicana scholars, cultural workers, and activists sought to do more than discard the family as an unyielding foundation of oppression, instead aiming to reconfigure it as a space in which to stage the promise of a democratic egalitarianism. Sociologist

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Maxine Baca Zinn's foundational essay "Political Familism: Toward Sex Role Equality in Chicano Families" (1975) makes this clear in her call for a "political familism," that is, "a phenomenon in which the continuity of family groups and the adherence to family ideology to provide the basis for struggle" (16). While not deviating from *El Plan's* intent on initiating a politics of *la familia de la raza*, Baca Zinn's argument pivots on both women's empowerment and a shift in familial authority. For Baca Zinn, political familism holds potential to "challenge women's and men's traditional positions; it changes women's relationship to the family, and it generates conditions for the emergence of women's consciousness" (19).

Yet some Chicanas specifically drew on the language of kinship in order to constitute alternative family networks that stood in opposition to patriarchal arrangements. In her ground-breaking research on Chicana activists in the Movement, Dionne Espinoza documents the emergence of the organization Las Adelitas de Aztlán, a women's collective that broke from the legendary paramilitary organization the Brown Berets. Frustrated by their subordination as women, Las Adelitas de Aztlán formed in large part through *comadrazgo* – that is, a communitarian bond consisting of both "fictive kin" and biological relations. As Espinoza explains:

It was in recognition of this bond that a flyer inviting women to join Las Adelitas de Aztlán invoked the phrase "porque somos una familia de hermanas" (because we are a family of sisters). This phrase, which was also printed on the banner they carried, gathered several resonant cultural concepts and mobilized them for a women's organization. First, the phrasing appropriated the Chicano movement's then-official equation of the family with the nation as a basis for organized cultural resistance. But it redefined the family – framed in the movement as the pairing of a man and woman in a relationship that subordinated women – as a "family of sisters." Second, the phrase implicitly translated *carnalismo*, or "brotherhood," which referred to the kinship of men in cultural terms, into a kinship of women – that is, sisterhood. (2001: 38)

For Espinoza, "It is no surprise that the invocation of sisterhood resonates with the slogan of women's liberation movements in the United States and was part of the widespread national surge of women's movements" (38–9). This would then undermine Armas's assertion regarding Chicana indebtedness to a singular vision of *la familia de la raza* and the relevance of women's liberation outside a Chicano context.

The critique of an essentialized Chicano cultural nationalism reliant on the normative family and the sustenance of gender hierarchies would indeed give way to a remarkable body of scholarship by Chicana feminist scholars. To be sure, the work of Marta Cotera, Anna Nieto-Gómez, Enriqueta Vásquez, Elizabeth Martínez, Cherrie Moraga, Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, Norma Alarcón, Sonia Saldivar-Hull, Emma Pérez, Deena González, Norma E. Cantú, Patricia Zavella, Maria Herrera-Sobek, Helena María Viramontes, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, Tey

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Diana Rebolledo, Edén E. Torres, Carla Trujillo, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Luz Calvo, Mary Pat Brady, Vicki L. Ruíz, Laura Pérez, Dionne Espinoza, and Catrióna Rueda Esquibel, among others, has made an indelible mark on the field. While reinvigorating Chicano/a Studies by showing how the field required placement on an intersectional axis for taking stock of the tantamount relevance of race, class, gender, and sexuality, their work would motivate a diversity of concerns pertinent to the community. From reconfiguring historically disempowered (and disempowering) figures such as La Malinche, La Llorona, and La Virgen de Guadalupe, to documenting an extensive history of activism and artistic practices, Chicana scholars have pushed the field forward on multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary fronts.¹² The impressive magnitude of Chicana feminist interventions is reflected in the 1995 name change of the field's only academic organization from the National Association of Chicano Studies to the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies.

Along with Cherríe Moraga's poignant reframing of *la familia* within the corpus of her work, many Chicano/a gay and lesbian cultural workers, such as San Francisco-based visual artist Eugene Rodríguez and novelist Felicia Luna Lemus writing from New York City, have reworked family organization in order to create spaces of belonging to encompass one's biological relatives as well as those based on choice and circumstance, while preserving the original goal of *la familia de la raza*, albeit from a non-heteronormative position. At a moment when advocates for "gay marriage" and defenders of "traditional family values" clash on the streets of major cities and minor towns in the United States, early and recent Chicano/a intellectuals, artists, and writers have much to offer for how to imagine kinship differently beyond the boundaries of marriage and the conventional family. Such challenges from within Chicano/a Studies underscore the desire to embrace queer communitarian subjectivities, enabling a shift from place to space which in turn signals a move away from essentialized nationalistic tendencies.¹³

Locating Borders and the Transnational Imaginary

Echoing the question posed in the title of Chicana feminist critic Sandra K. Soto's provocative essay, "Where in the Transnational World are U.S. Women of Color?" (2005), this essay ends by asking where in the "transnational" world is Chicano/a Studies. As one can point to the establishment of more Latino/a Studies programs and departments than Chicano/a Studies on a national scale, one must query the positioning of Chicano/a Studies in claims staked in the name of this more recent curricular project and examine the aspiration of Latino/a Studies practitioners to forge a transnational method of analysis.

Although Chicano/a Studies has come to be regarded by some as a relic mired the past, "provincial, outmoded, or lacking in theoretical sophistication" (Rodríguez 2008: 186) in its continued references to Aztlán or *la familia* in a global era, it

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has also been embraced – given its formulation of the borderlands – as an exemplary transnational project for American Studies. As Amy Kaplan notes:

The borderlands link the study of ethnicity and immigration inextricably to the study of international relations and empire. At these borders, foreign relations do not take place outside the boundaries of America, but instead constitute American nationality.

Moreover:

Chicano studies has brought an international perspective to American studies in part by reconceiving the concept of ethnicity (treated as a self-enclosed entity) through the theory and politics of post-coloniality. (16–17)

While Kaplan does not make a distinction between the two, the cultivation of Chicano Studies as “Border Studies” is due in large part to Chicana lesbian writer Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s ground-breaking text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (2007). In many ways, *Borderlands* set the stage for scholars who, inspired by her illuminating personal and philosophical ruminations, would begin identifying their work under the rubric of “Border Studies” (or “Border Theory”) in the move away from conceptual places like Aztlán consigned to yesteryear. As literary critic Manuel M. Martín-Rodríguez claims:

The predominant nationalistic drive of the 1960s and 1970s, whose preferred symbol was Aztlán, has been all but substituted by what I would call trans-aztlantic reformulations, which have two major directions. One direction, represented by Gloria Anzaldúa and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, among others, explores borderland identities and experiences; the other reclaims the hemispheric ramifications of cultural identity through the appropriation of José Martí’s notion of “our America” or reclaims “the common political, economic and socio-cultural web [that] connected the Caribbean, South and Central America with U.S. Hispanic communities” . . . as José D. Saldívar and others did. (2005: 796)

While one might find Martín-Rodríguez’s assertion questionable given Anzaldúa’s repeated references to Aztlán in *Borderlands* (undoubtedly as part of the borderlands she charts), he is nevertheless correct in registering a move toward “borderland identities and experiences” along with “the hemispheric ramifications of cultural identity” which, in many ways, despite Kaplan’s argument to the contrary, would mean abandoning the project of Chicano/a Studies.¹⁴

There is, however, another direction not explicitly captured by Martín-Rodríguez which is represented by the category of the transnational. Although not entirely distinct from borderlands or hemispheric approaches, the transnational as a mode of analysis similarly represents a shift from cultural nationalist frameworks especially given its central placement in discussions about Chicano/a Studies’

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connections or disconnections to Latino/a Studies. More often than not the presumed transnational impulse of Latino/a Studies is placed at odds with Chicano/a Studies. This has led to the mistaken assessment of Chicano/a Studies as entrenched in retrograde cultural nationalism and antithetical to transnational analytic frameworks, an assessment vigorously taken to task by George Mariscal in his compelling study, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965–1975* (2005). With an abundance of historical evidence (which might on the surface appear contradictory), Mariscal points to Chicano/a cultural nationalism's interlocking connections with transnational, international, and pan-ethnic political engagements.

As the border-as-metaphor gained widespread currency in mainstream Literary and Cultural Studies circles, many Chicano/a scholars would object to the careless disregard of the physical border dividing the United States and Mexico, and the violence particular to borders and borderlands. Indeed, many would refer back to Anzaldúa who described with utmost precision the highly charged nature of the specific border to which she referred.

The US–Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. (2007: 25)

A borderland – “a vague and undetermined place” – might certainly exist beyond the space of the US–Mexico border; Anzaldúa's specific borderland could not, many argued, be collapsed with any location where transgression might be executed by choice. To my mind, this argument works in tandem with scholars wishing to hold on to the cultural, political, and geographical specificity accounted for in Chicano/a Studies. This does not mean, however, that Chicano/a Studies is incompatible with Latino/a Studies. As previously made clear regarding the formation of programs like Chicano-Boricua Studies, more capacious formulations offer the possibility of a wider survey of the landscape.

In the introduction to his edited collection *Critical Latin American and Latino Studies* (2003), Juan Poblete offers an insightful argument for forging links between Area Studies and Ethnic Studies from which, respectively, Latin American Studies and Latino Studies stem. In an important critical move, Poblete takes on common assumptions made about both Latin American Studies and Latino Studies (which here channels Chicano/a and Puerto Rican Studies) in order to illustrate a generative overlap. Poblete writes:

Some of the discussion on area studies seems to assume that Latin American studies can be done away with as a remnant of the Cold War. Whether it is claimed that

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area studies is no longer necessary to the US national interest at this point or that it always may have been a bad form of “gringo” interventionism or epistemological imperialism is here immaterial. Some of the criticism of Chicano/a and Puerto Rican studies, on the other hand, seems to be based on the assumption that under new conditions of globalization, these two national/ethnic approaches would have lost their explanatory power. (2003: xxvii)

As Poblete pointedly argues, “These perspectives forget a number of key facts, such as the historically colonial and still existing neocolonial relationship of the United States with Mexico and Puerto Rico as well as the extent to which these two national populations combined account for a significant part of the ever-increasing Latin American immigration to the United States” (xxvii). But, rather than simply cite numbers and occupied territories, one must also signal the extensive intellectual histories of these two groups proliferating as Chicano/a Studies and Puerto Rican Studies that give way to an ethnically comparative Latino/a Studies.

Instead of writing off the efforts made under the rubric of Chicano/a Studies or trying to dress up the field in a way that ignores the distinctive features that may read as extraneous in an always changing academy with different theoretical thrusts continually appearing on the scene, it may prove instructive to recall the multi-layered goals which generated its existence, and how such goals deserve more than dismissal or presumed incompatibility with recent scholarly and conceptual objectives such as Postcolonial, Border, or even Latino/a Studies. As the late Chicana literary critic Lora Romero perceptively argues in response to Amy Kaplan’s adoption of Chicano Studies (as Border Studies) as the model for a transnational, postcolonial American Studies:

In the recent past, scholars doing postcolonial work under the auspices of Latin American Studies have demonstrated no more interest in Chicano culture and history than those working in what is called “American (Literary) Studies.” Latin Americanists’ commitment to postcolonial investigations did not produce the field of Chicano Studies; that field required the establishment of a separate and “self-enclosed” (to borrow Kaplan’s phrase) discipline in order to bring itself into being. Even now, as Chicano Studies gains recognition and prestige in American Studies and American Literature programs, Latin American Studies programs rarely house scholars working in Chicano Studies. (1995: 798)

One might also keep Romero’s insights in mind while learning from those put forward by Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo who, in her recent essay, “From the Borderlands to the Transnational? Critiquing Empire in the Twenty-First Century” (2007), makes an important plea for “a transnational and comparative model of Latina/o studies.” By foregrounding “United States nation-formation as an expansionist project in the Americas,” Saldaña-Portillo suggests moving “beyond border theory” and away from “think[ing] within a cumulative model

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of Latina/o studies, where Chicana/o or Puerto Rican history and culture form the core of the curriculum, with other Latina/o experiences seen as providing variety to these paradigmatic cases” (2007: 508). Saldaña-Portillo also argues that “changing demographics require us to reconsider the pedagogical reasons for and implications of internationalizing our approach to the study of Latina/o culture, politics, and history” (508–9). This argument, however, echoes those made by Ignacio García and Juan Poblete above and therefore begs the question of how to account for a more expansive Latino/a Studies beyond statistics or changing demographics. Moreover, such an endeavor cannot proliferate without duly noting how Chicano/a and Puerto Rican Studies enabled the field of Latino/a Studies vis-à-vis scholarly genealogies regularly renounced by Latin American Studies practitioners, all the while considering both working-class and immigrant communities in the US in which Latin American Studies loses interest (in the case of the former due to charges of inauthenticity, while for the latter as the result of geographical repositioning after the fact of border crossing).¹⁵ Yet, as Saldaña-Portillo acutely notes, a paradigm shift premised on “decentering rather than dismissal or a disparagement” might also enable the recognition of the continued value and function of the place of Chicano/a Studies in a suspiciously rendered “post-racial” national space in which retrenchment has undoubtedly become the name of the game.

Notes

- 1 While I follow the lead of Carlos Muñoz, Jr (2007) who refers to the Movement with a capital “M,” I hope to make clear that the Movement is a far-reaching political force that encompasses an array of struggles on multiple sites.
- 2 The individuals who played leading roles in these struggles (excepting the student movement – César Chávez, Reies López Tijerina, José Angel Gutiérrez, and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales – are often identified as the “four horsemen” of the Chicano Movement. Adding Dolores Huerta’s name to this list, film-maker and media activist Jesús Salvador Treviño rightly notes that, with the exception of Chávez, most Americans would be hard pressed to identify these activists in contrast to the likes of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr (2001: xiii).
- 3 I first use “Chicano Studies” to refer to its original coinage whereby women were presumably accounted for (yet often times subsumed) under the “o.” The shift to “Chicano/a Studies” or “Chicana/o Studies,” however, registers the renaming of the field which aimed to rescue women (vis-à-vis the deployment of the feminine “a”) from masculine containment.
- 4 My approach is indebted to two important studies that foreground space and place for conceptualizing numerous thematic currents in Chicano/a Studies: Raúl Homero Villa’s *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (2000), and Mary Pat Brady’s *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space* (2002). Consider as well Daniel D. Arreola’s edited collection, *Hispanic Spaces, Latino Places: Community and Cultural Diversity in Contemporary America* (2004), for a selection of insightful essays which employ space and place to account for shifting demographics, cultural practices, and community constitution.
- 5 Muñoz interestingly notes that “[t]hose who had begun to build a distinct Mexican American intellectual tradition did not share the ideology of the Chicano/a Generation of the 1960s, nor

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were they interested in helping to build Chicano Studies programs in concert with the Chicano student movement. Sánchez, Paredes and Samora were part of the Mexican-American Generation, whose ideology had been shaped by the politics of their youth during the 1930s and 1940s. As progressive as they were, they could not relate their own work to the task of building a Chicano/a consciousness in accordance with the cultural nationalist ideology of the Chicano Movement as a whole” (2007: 169).

- 6 *El Plan de Santa Barbara* “was edited by Jesús Chavarría, Fernando de Necochea, Juan Gómez-Quiñones, Paul Sanchez and Armando Valdez – all prominent members of the CCHE [Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education] Steering Committee. Chavarría did most of the editing work and wrote the manifesto that became the document’s preface” (Muñoz 2007: 199 n.18).
- 7 The question persists, however, if Chicano/a Studies has indeed developed as an interdisciplinary field of study or one simply comprised of many distinct disciplines (such as Sociology, Anthropology, History, and Literary Studies). Recently, Angie Chabram-Dernersesian prompted scholars to take up this question in relation to an interdisciplinary “Cultural Studies” model (2000).
- 8 The exception here is San Francisco State University (previously San Francisco State College) which opted for a program in La Raza Studies. Interesting to note is that the 1968 “Proposal for Raza Studies” (cited in Muñoz 2007: 157) aims to provide an educational curriculum for not only “Chicanos” but “Latinos” as well. I discuss the deployment of “Latino” in relation to “Chicano” below. I must also note that I do not go into detail here about the institutional politics regarding the difference between programs and departments (and in some cases research centers). However, for an excellent discussion of these differences, see Cabán (2003).
- 9 For an insightful discussion of pre-Movement uses – as well as spatial conceptualizations – of Aztlán, see Mary Pat Brady’s *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space* (2002).
- 10 As other scholars have elected, Chabram and Fregoso do not use the accent in their spelling of Aztlán.
- 11 For an excellent response to Saldaña-Portillo’s treatment of Anzaldúa, see Rafael Pérez-Torres’ *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture* (2006).
- 12 See, for example, Cherríe Moraga’s “A Long Line of Vendidas” (1983) and Norma Alarcón’s “Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism” (1989); Domino Renée Pérez’s *There Was a Woman: La Llorona from Folklore to Popular Culture* (2008); Ana Castillo’s edited collection, *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* (1997); Patricia Zavella’s *Women’s Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (1987); Vicki L. Ruiz’s *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (1999); and Laura Pérez’s *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities* (2007).
- 13 See the essay “My Heart Stood Still” by Daniel Teodoro Contreras and Dolissa Medina, which states: “We are a new generation of out, proud Queer Raza, and our people must listen as we speak. For though we have long been regarded as the missing heartbeat in the pulse of our communities, we respond with the truth that in this silence, a clarity of self and community for all of us can be found” (1995: np).
- 14 I am reminded of a prominent Latin American film scholar who during my graduate studies corrected me when I announced I wanted to investigate Chicano/a cinema, declaring that what I really meant was border cinema.
- 15 The website for the Latino Studies Program at New York University, Saldana-Portillo’s home institution, declares as one of its features, “The presence of Chicano scholars [which] offers the possibility of a comprehensive program that draws on both the west coast Chicano side of the field as well as the east coast Caribbean side. This will be particularly valuable in the study of the burgeoning Mexican population in NYC” (<<http://latinostudies.fas.nyu.edu/page/about>>; last accessed 1 February 2009).

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African American Studies

Jared Sexton

In the introduction to *(Dis)Forming the American Canon*, Ronald A. T. Judy writes: “The Black experience in the Western Hemisphere is unquestionably a valid object for scholarship as a historical cultural expression; this argument has been won. What remains is to realize its scholarship in properly academic terms of field” (Judy 1993: 7). This slightly overconfident passage is not, of course, a statement of the author’s position, but is offered as an expository comment on arguments made by then President of the Ford Foundation McGeorge Bundy, at the 1968 Yale University Conference “Black Studies in the University.” One could say rather straightforwardly that this gathering of students, faculty, and administrators marked a seminal moment in the institutional history of African American Studies. And in some respects the varied positions staked out there have continued to define many of the central concerns of the field, and perhaps some of its preoccupation with legitimacy as well. Yet, in retrospect, this event was perhaps more like a point of transition or quickening in the much longer process by which critical intellectual activity by and about people of African descent throughout the Atlantic world has been incorporated, however successfully, into the management strategies of “the crisis of European Man” discussed pointedly in Lewis Gordon’s (1995) elaborations on the thought of Frantz Fanon.

In part, the crisis stems from certain presuppositions of the Enlightenment project of “truth” in science and society: not only its false universality in light of an actual provincialism or its problematic of the disenchantment of the world, but also its involvement in an expanding set of brutal political and economic arrangements dividing humanity, symbolically and materially, into species of subjects and objects, a division corresponding to emergent ontological claims regarding modern freedom and modern slavery (Fischer 2004; Gilroy 1993; Lott 1999; Spillers 1991). Slavery – more precisely, *racial slavery* – thus imposes a sort of matrix or, bending Sartre’s famous phrase, an “untranscendable horizon” for the possibilities of black thought in the New World.¹ The history of that thought remains deeply engaged in attempts to understand more properly the complexities and internal

dynamics, the epochal scope, scale, and significance, and the continuing impact of racial slavery in theory, culture, and politics. And, I think, rightly so. For we do not simply inherit the aftermath of slavery; we inhabit its *afterlife*: “a measure of man and a ranking of life and worth that has yet to be undone . . . a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago” (Hartman 2007: 6).² This is as true for those asserting the triumph of an unsullied African agency as it is for those wondering whether we need such foundations to make the world anew.

The problem of speaking from the standpoint of the slave in a slave society, or, *pace* Gordon, speaking as a black in an anti-black world, has structured black critical discourse from its earliest moments of articulation – primarily in aesthetic production (from music and dance to visual arts and literature), but also in political rhetoric and philosophical and theoretical writing as well. The post-emancipation context has not so much relieved the problem of enunciation as it has recast it, time and again, throughout the last century and a half. The social, political, and economic relations of slavery were reorganized but not abolished by the strength of black freedom struggle in both its nineteenth- and twentieth-century dialectics: reconstruction and redemption, reform and retrenchment. The genealogy of the racial domination of blacks stretches across a broad web of “peculiar institutions” from slavery to mass imprisonment and beyond (Blackmon 2008; Crenshaw 1988; Wacquant 2002). This is also to say that African American Studies, an academic project catalyzed in the political ferment and crisis of the mid-century social movements, inherits this problem; it is the hard kernel around which it continues to grow.

A comprehensive review essay for our subject is a practical impossibility and so will not be attempted here. The reader in search of a more panoramic view would be well served to consult one or more of the excellent anthologies published of late (Gordon and Gordon 2006; Marable 2005; Bobo, Hudley, and Michel 2004; Norment 2001). On that score, there are also several related historical monographs worthy of serious study (Rojas 2007; Rooks 2007; Dagbovie 2007). So, rather than rehearse a narrative of historical development – dating from, say, the founding of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 or the more recent proliferation of academic programs since the watershed student protests of the late 1960s – this chapter discusses selectively some of the shifting intellectual and political stakes of the ongoing formation and institutionalization of the diverse scholarly enterprise known variously as Black Studies, Afro-American Studies, Pan-African Studies, African American Studies, Africana Studies, or African Diaspora Studies.

First, a banal observation about the institutional life of African American Studies in the early twenty-first-century United States: it betrays two general poles of inquiry and organization regarding the question of nation. On the one hand, a neonationalist ideological tendency under the heading of Afrocentrism, Afrology, or Africology (and some variants of Africana and African Diaspora thought) as elaborated in a rather vast academic literature spanning from canonical works such

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as Maulana Karenga's *Introduction to Black Studies* (1982) and Molefi Asante's *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987), to contemporary studies such as Richard Poe's *Black Spark, White Fire* (1997) and Robert Morkot's *The Egyptians* (2005). Though there are regular references to towering, usually male figures like W. E. B. Du Bois and Malcolm X, the pillars of Africology remain buttressed by works such as Willis N. Huggins and John G. Jackson's *An Introduction to African Civilization* (1969), Chancellor Williams's *The Destruction of Black Civilization* (1971), Cheikh Anta Diop's *The African Origins of Civilization* (1974), and Ivan Van Sertima's *They Came Before Columbus* (1976), followed closely by the corpuses of religious scholar Yoseph Ben-Jochannan, psychologist Wade Nobles, and historian John Henrik Clarke. This tendency has been further consolidated by the publication of collected volumes reflecting on the past, present, and future of the field and highlighting major developments in its formulation (Aldridge and James 2007; Hudson-Weems 2007; Asante and Karenga 2005; Conyers 2003). The academic infrastructure of Africology is sustained by professional organizations like the African Heritage Studies Association, the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, and the National Council for Black Studies, and by professional journals such as the *Journal of African Civilizations*, the *Journal of Black Studies*, the *Journal of Negro Education*, the *Journal of Pan-African Studies*, and the newly launched *International Journal of Africana Studies*.

Africology, "the Afrocentric study of African phenomena" (Asante 2006: 29), is not limited to arguments for a normative continuity throughout the African diaspora, maintained across millennia as an effect of the self-definition and self-determination of a romantic notion of recovered or recuperated African agency, whether explorations of the principles of Ma'at or the tenets of Kawaiida philosophy, studies in Egyptology, developments in Black Psychology, or even esoteric meditations on the biochemical properties of melanin. It also includes a wider array of contributions to what, in his *Afrotopia*, William Jeremiah Moses called "African American popular history": variegated attempts to posit the presupposition of latent or manifest pan-African solidarity, deriving from cultural and/or even biological linkages among black populations, rather than to promote its possibility as the outcome of politics.³

On the other hand, there is a postnationalist ideological tendency under the heading of what Marable (2005) calls "critical black studies." This tendency is elaborated in an even broader literature, ranging from Houston Baker's *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (1984) and Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought* (1990) to Sharon Holland's *Raising the Dead* (2000) and John L. Jackson's *Harlemworld* (2001). In addition to those anthologies cited above, one would have to highlight here the rich tradition of collected works contributing to the development of Black Women's Studies – from Toni Cade Bambara's *The Black Woman* (1970) and Barbara Smith's *Home Girls* (1983) to Beverly Guy-Sheftall's *Words of Fire* (1995) and *The Black Feminist Reader*, edited by Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (2000). Crucial as well would be the "Plum

Nelly” special issue of *Callaloo*, edited by Jennifer DeVere Brody and Dwight A. McBride (2000), and the recently published *Black Queer Studies* anthology, edited by E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson (2005), together announcing a vibrant and critical mass of scholars pursuing what Roderick Ferguson termed “queer of color critique” in his *Aberrations in Black* (2003). The related academic infrastructure obtains from the margins to the center of the major professional organizations of historians and social scientists in the US as well as more interdisciplinary humanities-based professional organizations like the American Studies Association and the Modern Language Association. Research in critical Black Studies circulates by way of professional journals specific to black intellectual discourse such as the *African American Review*, *Callaloo*, the *Journal of African American History*, *Sage, Souls*, and *Transition*; queer and/or feminist publications such as *differences*, *Feminist Studies*, *GLQ* and *Signs*; and venues geared more particularly toward the development of critical theory such as *American Quarterly*, *Cultural Critique*, *Diacritics*, *Race and Class*, and *Social Text*. Needless to say, there is considerable traffic in interests, authors, and arguments.

The general interpolation of African American Studies renders practitioners inevitable partisans in a series of overlapping debates and contests, but it does not render a strict intellectual and political divide. There is significant interaction and collaboration among scholars across what is more like a spectrum of orientations and leanings. Interdisciplinary combinations from the humanities and social sciences (and from the natural and biological sciences too) are *de rigueur*, even if many Afrocentric scholars understand their labors to proceed beneath a new (or, perhaps, ancient) disciplinary heading. Theorizations of the intersections of race, nation, class, gender, and sexuality, and a topical or thematic focus on the multiple forms of oppression that differentially locate black immigrants and native-born blacks, black women and men, black lesbians and gay men and their presumptively heterosexual counterparts, the black poor and the black middle class are now common to both tendencies, broadly speaking, if in grossly uneven quantities and qualities (Banikongo 1997; Blay 2008). In fact, one of the more productive developments of this intellectual exchange is growing critical attention to the history, culture, and politics of Afro-Latin America (Andrews 2004; Laó-Montes 2008). Despite popular misconceptions, though, one cannot read the political commitments of scholars directly off the map of the field we have sketched thus far. There are radicals and liberals, moderates and conservatives working in either vicinity, employing a range of analytic approaches from historical materialism to philosophical idealism, and, to repeat, betraying very different levels of sophistication regarding what Cathy Cohen (1999) terms “cross-cutting issues” in the study of black social, political, and cultural formations. However, it does seem to be the case that political liberalism generally, and certain strains of political conservatism regarding gender and sexuality particularly, are fairly congruent with Africology, whereas the implications – or at least the potential – for progressive and radical social change are far greater in critical Black Studies.

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The discrepancy between the critical and Afrocentric tendencies reaches beyond matters of theoretical orientation and political impetus. Or, rather, these matters are often expressed at another level. For Africology, the development of proper methodology is the principal criterion of discipline. This methodology must be founded in the moral principles of the great cultures of Africa (by which is meant the guiding beliefs of the civilizations of continental *antiquity*) if the discipline is to be both familiar to the “affective, cognitive and conative” predispositions of its practitioners and, ironically enough, recognizable within the terms of the Eurocentric university’s division of labor for the production of knowledge (Asante 1987). The aspiration is to create something like a unified field theory of an autochthonous African existence, regarding culture as the primordial ground of genuine, i.e., politically and economically protective and spiritually and psychologically nourishing, difference. Any departure from this protocol constitutes an engagement with “alien ideology,” which produces a psychopathology of the oppressed that estranges the will. It also represents a transgression of disciplinary scope, a dereliction of scientific method, and an abandonment of the vocation of the intellectual (all of which derive, happily enough, from precolonial African formations). It is not difficult to comprehend how this concern for a purported disciplinary integrity might cover for and rationalize a broader discipline for the social practices of African-descent people well beyond the halls of academe.

There is an additional institutional discrepancy, corresponding loosely to the ideological tendencies of neonationalism and postnationalism: the former more often find administrative footholds in less resourced public colleges and universities, including many historically black colleges and universities and, not infrequently, teaching-based institutions; while the latter more often operate within the precincts of top-tier research institutions, especially predominantly white private schools anchored by large foundations. This discrepancy has lent superficial credence to charges of elitism and disconnection from black constituencies levied by Africologists against their generally better-heeled and more feted colleagues (at least by standards of mainstream professional societies and the mass media outlets). However, the relative privilege and isolation of the black professoriate *as a class* (ongoing *proletarianization* of academic labor notwithstanding) renders that barb academic at best (Moten and Harney 2004). The correlative political claim that Africology is more radically transformative because it is less integrated into the knowledge industry is dubious as well. Not because a minimal degree of economic autonomy is unnecessary to possibilities for political transformation, but because Africology is perhaps more integrated, and just as commercially viable, as any critical Black Studies. Defensive attempts to distinguish authentic Afrocentrism from its niche-marketed, consumer knock-offs are telling in that respect. The insights of critical Black Studies are similarly absorbed by the *modus operandi* of liberal multiculturalism, its intersectional analyses of race, class, gender, and sexuality recoded as varieties of personalized consumption or domesticated as pseudo-populist electoral politics (Zizek 1997). Cornel West (2008) is among those

scholars in postnationalist African American Studies maintaining critical engagement with Afrocentrism, acknowledging its intellectual and political range and significance while challenging many of its basic tenets.⁴ Yet, beyond the work of differentiation and definition performed by generous critique – Africology is essentially right in its rejection of anti-blackness but desperately wrong in its adherence to patriarchy, heterosexism, entrepreneurial capital – it might be argued that Afrocentrism and critical Black Studies share a deeper “utopian” moment of misrecognition regarding the lived experience of the black. I would suggest this to be the case even in as arcane an area of specialization as Melanin Studies (contrary to Paul Gilroy’s dismissive comments on that score in *Against Race* (2000)).

The misrecognition that binds together our divergent tendencies obtains in an appropriation of the axioms of Cultural Studies, those grounding assumptions that enable the theorization of the counter-hegemonic historical bloc as a practice of coalition politics (the terms and constituents of coalition being a point of perennial debate). That is to say, Africology and critical Black Studies share not only a theory and criticism of anti-black racism (especially as it informs histories of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism), but also a general conception of power and resistance, presuming an elementary distinction between individual (or group) and society in order to gauge the relative success of the struggles for liberation of the former against the constraints of the latter (in fact, I have even relied on this language in the current chapter). This is why, despite often vehement disagreement about the source and structure of racial domination (and its relations to patriarchy, heterosexism, and historical capitalism), both tendencies expound notions of agency as a function of subjectivity, that is, the subject of consciousness. Most often, subjectivity is rooted in social and cultural practices sustaining counter-knowledge, or competing interpellation, as the fount of resistance. Resistance (or transformation) does not *emerge* from within material conditions of domination – as an effect of, say, the negations of unconscious displacement and condensation, the metonymy of desire, or the force of the imagination – as much as it *persists* as anteriority or exteriority (whether hybrid, parallel, residual, or pristine is a secondary debate). Critique would proceed here neither as a discounting of the cultural politics of everyday life nor as an indictment of revolutionary hope; it would be an attempt to problematize and provincialize the idea of hegemony and its dialectic of influence, leadership, and consent. Frank Wilderson’s *Social Identities* article, “Gramsci’s Black Marx,” is the seminal articulation of this critique:

The black body . . . is that constant reminder that not only can work not be reformed but it cannot be transformed to accommodate all subjects. [. . .] Whereas the positionality of the worker enables the reconfiguration of civil society, the positionality of the slave exists as a destabilizing force within civil society because civil society gains its coherence, *the very tabula rasa upon which workers and industrialists struggle for hegemony*, through the violence of black erasure. From the coherence of civil society the black subject beckons with the incoherence of civil war. Civil war, then,

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becomes that unthought but never forgotten specter waiting in the wings – the under-study of Gramsci’s hegemony. (2003: 238–40)⁵

Wilderson’s conclusion establishes new, or perhaps uncanny, terms of debate, posing what seem to be rather unavoidable questions for African American Studies in the early twenty-first century. State and civil society are predicated on the reproduction of black civil death; the social life of the hegemonic contest among the “free” (workers, immigrants, white women, even indigenous peoples, insofar as resistance to colonial genocide is constituted as a matter of *sovereignty*) relies on the social death of the slave. If this is so, then the only means to forge solidarity with the slave (for free and enslaved alike) is to “abandon decidedly, without reservation, the fundamental concepts through which we have so far represented the subject of the political and build our political philosophy anew starting from the one and only figure of the [slave]” (Agamben 2000: 16).

From this vantage, we note how the generative debates in the field of African American Studies about cross-cutting, internal differences, and relations among black populations – or African-derived peoples – throughout the Atlantic world are soldered at an acute angle to the whole question of comparative Ethnic Studies, involving the related academic fields of Asian American Studies, Chicano/Latino Studies, and Native American Studies. The latter inquiry is discernible, vexingly, in Afrocentrism, embedded in a model of political and cultural pluralism sanctioning racially and/or culturally separate and independent development, but it is overshadowed by the collective attempt to establish the centrality of African agency as demonstrated creative genius (“contributions to civilization”), rather than radical political transformation. Critical Black Studies scholars might take a page out of the Afrocentric handbook regarding its skepticism toward potential allies without thereby simply reinvesting the traces of its political envy. Not, as the handbook would have it, because non-blacks threaten dilution of some authentic cultural identity (or original biological stock) or alienation of psychological self, but because the paradigm of comparison-toward-coalition within comparative Ethnic Studies demands more than a simple discovery of the shared histories of suffering and struggle subtending the contemporary drive for multi-racial common ground.

In her revisionist history of the field of African American Studies, *White Money/Black Power*, Noliwe Rooks does not so much overvalue as misinterpret the significance of the multi-racial constituency of the 1968 San Francisco State University Third World Strike, one of the origins of Black Studies as an institutionalized academic activity. The foil for this revision, “one of the unremarked-upon legacies of the movement that spawned Black Studies as a field in America” (Rooks 2007: 4), is the doubtful claim that “a narrative about the beginning of Black Studies that includes white, Asian, Latino and Native American studies is so far removed from what most people think of when conjuring the history of the field, that it necessitates a fundamental rethinking of what many believe to

be self-evident facts.” Or, put slightly differently: “Overwhelmingly, history has forgotten that any but Black students were ever involved in the student strike that produced Black Studies at San Francisco State.” Rooks’s maverick intellectual task is to “sound a discordant note and disrupt comforting visual, historical, and oral narratives” (Rooks 2007: 5). The historical memory of multi-racial activism is that discordance and disruption. Yet this claim sits uncomfortably in Rooks’s account alongside her critique of the domesticating effects of ongoing white philanthropy (especially vis-à-vis the Ford Foundation) and the changing composition of black students and faculty at elite colleges across the US.

The political relations between McGeorge Bundy’s above-mentioned direction of the Ford Foundation’s philanthropic enterprise, its financial underwriting of the institutionalization of African American Studies in the late 1960s and 1970s, and his near contemporaneous oversight of the US military’s covert counter-insurgency operations in Latin America and Southeast Asia are left entirely unexplored in Rooks’s *White Money/Black Power*, and crucially so. (How might such “support” function as a form of domestic counter-insurgency?) Equally unexplored is the subsequent shift in funding trends across the philanthropic community, in favor of more explicitly multi-racial and transnational (i.e., immigration-based) research, teaching, and service provision, as privately funded non-profit sector organizations have proliferated in the last generation (INCITE! 2007). Rooks suggests that an African American Studies *thinking globally through the positionality of the slave* is beset on several sides by the ideologies and institutions of finance capital, transnationalism, and coalition politics (hallmarks of neoliberalism?), but she stops short of asserting and theorizing the point:

As “Black Studies” became “African American, Africana, and African Diaspora Studies,” Black students and faculty on white college campuses were less frequently African American – a trend that has increased. Indeed, the very question of what we mean when we say “Black students [or Black faculty],” has become a contested issue in and of itself. In 2005, increasing numbers of Black students are the children or grandchildren of first- or second-generation immigrants from the Caribbean or Africa. These students compose between 40 to 80 percent of Black students on elite college campuses. In short, *Black no longer means African American*. (Rooks 2007: 2; emphasis added)

African American Studies without African Americans: some would suggest, obviously, that in a broad sense “black” never did mean “African American” in any exclusive way (nor does African American designate simply being in or from the United States, since “American” has hemispheric significations as well). In fact, the restricted connotation of “black” in the United States has been criticized as a blind spot of much political and intellectual activity, in and beyond black studies per se. Nonetheless, the point is taken: when speaking of the institutionalization of African American Studies, whether friend or foe, insufficient critical attention has been given to the class composition and national origins – and the

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occluded political relation between these two axes – of its scholars and students. This point is beaten nearly to death in Cecil Brown’s recent polemic, *Dude Where’s My Black Studies Department?* (2007). I suspect Brown’s questions are shouted so loudly, at least in part, because their merits are so routinely dismissed.

There is a point at which critical negotiations of differences internal and external to the social category of racial blackness overlap: the politics of race mixture. From golf legend Tiger Woods and Academy Award-winner Halle Barry to megastar recording artist Mariah Carey and, most recently, President Barack Obama, the discourse of multi-racialism in the contemporary US has to do not only with hackneyed notions of black “progress” toward the American Dream of unfettered upward mobility, but also with matters of, as it were, horizontal interracial conflict and collaboration between blacks and other people of color in pursuit of multi-racial democracy. Multi-racialism is a discursive formation in which complex dynamics of racial identification, desire, and fantasy crash up against structural conditions of racial domination, exclusion, and inequality. African American Studies scholars have begun to think seriously along both the X and Y relational axes evoked by multi-racialism, producing carefully considered and well-argued treatments of the emergence of multi-racial identity claims (DaCosta 2007; Spencer 2006; Sundstrom 2008; Williams 2006) and critical meditations on the relative social, economic, and political positioning of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos in the wake of post-1965 mass immigration (Foner and Fredrickson 2004; Jaynes 2000; Yancey 2003). Though there is some disagreement about the details of the emerging situation, there seems to be a growing consensus that the more facile and celebratory renderings of “the browning of America” signaled by multi-racialism (as either the mixture or multiplication of racial groups) must be radically challenged in the name of social justice. Nonetheless, even the most trenchant critics have been reluctant to suggest anti-blackness as an organizing principle, rather than a blind spot or occasional excess, of multi-racial politics (Sexton 2008).

It was precisely this question of the political and intellectual relations between blacks and the “other others” of racial formation in the United States – immigrants of color, multi-racial people, American Indians – that animated a two-day symposium, “Black Thought in the Age of Terror,” at the University of California, Irvine, in the spring of 2006.⁶ In drafting a letter of invitation to potential participants and, before that, pitching the proposal to the proper authorities and financial handlers, the conveners wrote the following:

The thematic focus [of the symposium] will be upon the transformations of political culture and the range of state powers in and beyond the United States within the milieu of Homeland Security and the more immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. More to the point, [it] will provide a venue for examining the particular challenges faced by black populations in this context and their linkages to broader currents of related global change. We are especially concerned to understand better

how gender and sexuality and the movements of capital structure and mediate the lived experience of the black (and vice versa) in this [historical] conjuncture.

The intensified militarization of international relations pursued by the US under auspices of indeterminate “war on terror” has both demanded and contributed to widespread transformations of law and society and restructuring of the global political economy. The further consolidation of domestic police powers reinvigorated profound questions about the viability of democratic institutions, especially the delimitations of citizenship and the scope of civil rights and liberties. Moreover, its principle operations refocused already acute concerns about the troubling status of the US as the world’s most powerful racial state. This status both bears on characterizations of the current political landscape and establishes the most difficult challenges of collective opposition and transformation. How have the dynamics of racialization changed since 9/11? In what ways have they remained almost entirely unaltered?

We can admit that there is an art to grant-writing and to invitation as well. What happens once you secure the funding to bring participants together in one room is always another story. This is not to say that the invitation somehow mischaracterized the conditions of the encounter. It is to suggest, rather, that the very capacity (or compulsion) to pitch it *in that way* indicates something about the stricture of the contemporary political context. That one can formulate these questions in this precise way – “How have the dynamics of racialization changed since 9/11? In what ways have they remained almost entirely unaltered? – in order to solicit public financial support and pique genuine interest among the well-informed is less the measure of ethical expansion and analytical maturation – stridently pronounced as “moving beyond the black–white binary” – and more the sign of law enforcement regarding the permanent anonymity of black experience. In fact, it would be better to say that such questions, and the range of assumptions and dispositions they involve, provide both a sense of relief, *escape* really, and a renewable source of libidinal investment for the universe unfolding under the heading of global civil society. Some might recognize this analogizing as the wild and perilous swing of deeply ambivalent processes of identification across the color line – attachment and withdrawal, refusal and repudiation, retraction and recovery. The proposal and invitation continues:

In response to these questions, terror war at home and abroad has unleashed a renewed period of political analogizing in public discourse, symbolic activity frequently referencing an abstract black suffering, but often enough displacing historic black struggles as it builds upon their example: “Flying While Brown” is like “Driving While Black” (though police profiling – legally rationalized in current form as far back as the 1960s – was off the radar of most Arab, Muslim, and South Asian community-based organizations up to evening of September 10, 2001), the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride “builds on the history of the noble US civil rights movement” [or, as it has recently been averred, the upturn in the immigrant rights movement spurred by the introduction of the notorious HR 4437 is the “new civil rights

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movement reborn”] (though immigrant rights groups have been, to date, relatively unconcerned with the fate of black workers or the exorbitant rates of black unemployment – black economic dislocation being one of the *preconditions* of immigrant labor recruitment), the prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib is “reminiscent of the lynching of blacks” (though most who publicly denounce the cruelty of the former are relatively undisturbed about the similar and quotidian treatment of a mostly black domestic prison population), etc.

Proximate historical transformations subtending these conditions of diagnostic and organizational malaise were elaborated most directly in this assemblage by Professors Joy James, Riché Richardson, and Umoja Akinyele:

In this deeply convoluted context, which has been complicated further by the ongoing devastation of the Gulf of Mexico Region, the task for black political thought has emerged as two-fold: 1) how best to work within the popular sentiment for coalition, particularly across communities of color, in ways that enhance capacities for radical social change, and 2) how best to clarify and reassert the singularities of black existence in order to prevent the obfuscation of its particular demands. [. . .] Invited participants are thus asked to speak to the ways that sustained attention to the social positioning of blacks regarding any number of the salient issues – the metastases of racial profiling, the enforcement of discriminatory immigration policy, the betrayal of human rights conventions – serves to reconfigure the nature of analysis and the impetus of mobilization efforts in each instance. At another level of commentary, participants might attempt to draw such case studies into a more synthetic account, working to redefine, and perhaps interrogate, the broader organizing principles of a global civil society still very much in the making: law and labor, security and sovereignty, and, most important, freedom. (University of California 2006)

The latter task – the trenchant interrogation of racial blackness and/in the formulations of modernity and its leitmotif of freedom – was advanced immeasurably by Professors Lindon Barrett, Denise Ferreira da Silva, and Ronald Judy, each in their own way. Yet, as Wilderson again makes plain in his *Red, White, and Black* (2009), the grand and anxious question of freedom is preceded, logically and ontologically, by a perhaps more confounding question: what does it mean to suffer? To address such a query sufficiently is to disregard the official impatience that envelopes it. Of course, this sentiment of expediency plays to an understandably popular urgency that emanates from the severity of everyday life for the vast majority of black people and the attendant status anxiety of the so-called new black middle class. However, black creative intellectuals have done less and less talking about our pain of late and probably a bit too much posturing about our plans. If anything, we have a surplus of plans! What we do not have is a language – much less a political culture – that adequately articulates both the variance and commonality of our positions and our predicaments. African American Studies is perhaps more inarticulate about the dimensions and details of black suffering

today, in an era marked by transnationalism and multi-racialism, than it has been at any other historical juncture. I am speaking here of suffering in its fullest sense: not only as pain, which everyone experiences – say, the pain of alienation and exploitation – but also as that which blacks must *bear*, uniquely and singularly, that which we must *stand* and stand alone (see Sexton 2007).

The proposal and invitation continues:

The yield of this gathering will be to assemble leading scholars alongside emergent voices in the field of African American Studies in order to reflect critically upon the mutual implication of a proliferate and diverse racial formation with the living legacies of the black radical tradition in the age of American empire. The symposium seeks to depart from prevailing frameworks for comparative ethnic studies – that is, discerning how the respective experiences of blacks and other people of color are similar or dissimilar and what have been their historic interactions – to consider how the matrix of enslavement, which is to say the invention of “propertized human being” (Harris 1993), has not only shaped myriad forms of oppression and marginalization, but has compromised their modes of resistance and [their] claims to independence as well. If there is an overarching objective here, it is to properly illuminate what might be termed the *obscurity of black suffering*, to rescue it from the murky backwaters of persistent invisibility as well as the high-definition distortions of glaring and fascinated light.

Proper illumination is a catchy byline, an instance of wishful thinking, if ever there was one. But can we not speak of it more charitably, perhaps as a stratagem? Or as a spur that exercises the limits of our thinking?

In her ground-breaking *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman calls our attention to the ease with which scenes of spectacular violence against the black body – what she terms “inaugural moment[s] in the formation of the enslaved” – are reiterated in discourses both academic and popular, “the casualness,” she writes, “with which they are circulated, and the consequences of this routine display of the slave’s ravaged body”:

Rather than inciting indignation, too often they immure us to pain by virtue of their familiarity – the oft-repeated or restored character of these accounts and our distance from them are signaled by the theatrical language usually resorted to in describing these instances – and especially because they reinforce the spectacular character of black suffering. [. . .] At issue here is the precariousness of empathy and the uncertain line between witness and spectator. Only more obscene than the brutality unleashed at the whipping post is the demand that this suffering be materialized and evidenced by the display of the tortured body or endless recitations of the ghastly and terrible. In light of this, how does one give expression to these outrages without exacerbating the indifference to suffering that is the consequence of the benumbing spectacle or contend with narcissistic identification that obliterates the other or the prurience that too often is the response of such displays. (Hartman 1997: 4)

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To put it bluntly, how does one engage with black suffering at all without simply erasing it – refusing it, absorbing it, appropriating it – in the very same gesture? Hartman’s inventive response to what might appear, at first glance, to be a rhetorical question or a cruel joke (that is, making a case with evidence that is, strictly speaking, *inadmissible*) is to move away from the expected “invocations of the shocking and the terrible” and to look, alternately, at “scenes in which terror can hardly be discerned,” “the terror of the mundane and quotidian,” what she phrases oppositely as “the *diffusion* of terror.” What she finds, if calling it a “finding” is not immediately to betray it, is the recapitulation – the repetition and summation – of this spectacular primal scene across the entirety of the social text of racial slavery and its aftermath. That is to say, it is never the case that this terror is *not* present. It saturates the field of encounter. It is ubiquitous and yet it is, perhaps for the same reason, barely discernible. One wonders thus: how might the discussion of this dispersed, ambient terror become any more compelling than that which is condensed and acute? The point being not that blacks enter the wrong evidence or pursue the wrong argument, but rather that they are disallowed from entering evidence or building arguments in the first place, barred, as it were, from bringing charges and levying claims of grievance or injury as such. Again, what does it mean to suffer, in this way? This “challenge,” as Hartman modestly calls it, of giving expression to the inexpressible is taken up again in Fred Moten’s remarkable text, *In the Break*. In fact, it is the discrepancy between subjection and objection that launches the accomplishment of a project opened and closed around the impossibility and the inevitability of “the resistance of the object” (Moten 2003: 1). That, at least, is how it sounds to me. What is disquieting and provocative in this exchange is what I take to be a certain turning away from the implications of Hartman’s precarious distinction between witness and spectator, a positional instability that is not mitigated by transpositions in the sonic register, nor, for that matter, in the performance arts more generally (Barrett 1999; Weheliye 2005).

Following the interventions of David Marriott (2007) and Matt Richardson (2003), we cannot maintain that the dispossession of black personhood in the denial of black suffering is limited to the psychodynamics or narrative strategies of those who escape the badge of slavery. It is an intramural, indeed an intrapsychic, phenomenon as well. We learn from them that the collapse of boundary in the field of vision and its concept-metaphor in legal matters – seeing ourselves being seen, seeing ourselves as others, and seeing ourselves as others see ourselves – leads to a convolution that suggests the foreclosure of an uncompromised witness to the black, the intrusion of the position of a hostile, uncaring spectator preoccupying black subjectivity itself. We have always already looked at ourselves and looked on with the indifference, or the lust, that Hartman describes. Hence, the utopia of this permanent elsewhere turns out to be as much about our own unconscious commitment to the diffusion of terror as it is about the interest of the world in maintaining its status as dissembled or dissociated. Where, if anywhere, are we in the world, be it this one or that other that I’ve heard rumor is possible?

I conclude my comments on African American Studies with an extended citation from Hortense Spillers, in part because the present essay is an attempt to come to terms with the field of inquiry her labor delineates. I quote at length from her masterful 1994 *boundary 2* article, “The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Post-Date.” This critical homage to Harold Cruse on the silver anniversary of his *magnum opus* is also the presentation of what Spillers understatedly phrases “a few notes on the situation of the black creative intellectual today.” She writes:

What is the work of the black creative intellectual, *for all we know now*? The short answer is that the black creative intellectual must get busy *where he is*. There is no other work, if he has defined an essential aspect of his personhood as the commitment to reading, writing, and teaching. From Howard University to Cornell; from Wilberforce to Berkeley, from Tuskegee to Harvard; the relational object does not change, and *that*, it seems to me, decides the main problem to be disposed of – how to take hold, at last, of the intellectual object of work *in language*. The black creative intellectual . . . embraces the black musician and his music as the most desirable model/object. While African-American music, across long centuries, offers the single form of cultural production that the life-world can “read” through thick and thin, and while so consistent a genius glimmers through the music that is seems ordained by divine authority its very self, the intellectual rightly grasps the figure of the musician for the *wrong reasons*: not often do we get the impression that the musical performer promotes his own ego over the music, or that he prefers *it* to the requirements, conventions, and history of practices that converge *on the music*; if that were not so, then little in this arena of activity would exhibit the staying power that our arts of performance have shown over the long haul . . . What they have in common in their considerable divergence of time, location, and calling is performative excellence, and it seems to me that this is the page of music from which the black creative intellectual must learn to read . . . The black creative intellectual does not make music, as it were, and should not try, be he *can* “play.” (Spillers 2003: 450–1)

And play we must. If African American Studies can eschew the particularism of Afrocentrism and the comparativism of critical Black Studies, perhaps it can once again pose a genuine challenge – and an invitation – to the intertwined enterprises of postnational American Studies and postnational American politics. In a “post-black” era that all but declares as lost causes the field of African American Studies and the tradition of political struggle from which it arose, there is perhaps no better time to pursue this rearguard effort to its fullest, reaffirming the indispensability of “the study of Black life in [and beyond] the Western Hemisphere” and the “universal singularity” of the black freedom movement (Zizek 2008). If “black is a country” (Singh 2004), it is a stateless country, without birthright or territorial purchase; it is a feat of radical political imagination, the freedom dream of a blackened world in which all might become unmoored, forging, in struggle, a new people on a new earth.

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Notes

- 1 In using the term “racial slavery,” I am following the lead of noted historians such as David Brion Davis, former Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University. See Berlin (2006) for a review of Davis’s recent synthetic study, *The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. See also Baucom (2005), Blackburn (1997), and Sweet (1997, 2003).
- 2 Historian Richard Drayton (2005) refers to the afterlife of slavery as “a universe of risk” associated with “Africa’s signature.” For a review of Hartman’s memoir, see Spencer (2008).
- 3 One should not, of course, reduce African American popular history to this tendency. It is a diverse field, including Afrocentric approaches. On the field of Black Psychology, see Neville, Tynes, and Utsey (2008), Belgrave and Allison (2005), or Parham, White, and Ajamu (2008). The most famous, or infamous, example of melanin studies is, of course, Welsing (1991). For an excellent discussion of the racial politics surrounding the historical memory of ancient Egypt, see Keita (2000) and Bernal (2001). Shelby (2005) and Gooding-Williams (2005) have written excellent critiques of neo-nationalism and presented compelling arguments for a postnationalist black solidarity.
- 4 See, for instance, the many contributors to Glaude (2001).
- 5 Wilderson’s arguments, which he has since dubbed “Afro-Pessimism,” are developed at great length in his *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonism* (2009), and rendered literarily in his *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid*.
- 6 Panelists, respondents, and keynote speakers at “Black Thought” included: Lindon Barrett, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Shelleen Greene, Cheryl Harris, Joy James, Ronald Judy, David Marriott, Fred Moten, Matt Richardson, Riché Richardson, Akinyele Umoja, and Frank Wilderson. Others who sent words of support, but regretfully had to forego their invitations due to prior commitments or exigencies, included: Elizabeth Alexander, Saidiya Hartman, Kara Keeling, Wahneema Lubiano, Achille Mbembe, and Hortense Spillers.

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Reckoning Nation and Empire: Asian American Critique

Lisa Lowe

Since the emergence of Ethnic Studies in the 1970s, Asian American Studies has provided works that recover and reconstruct the histories of Asian immigration and settlement in the US, formerly illegible within the reigning American history of Puritans settling New England and moving westward across the frontier (Kwong 1979; Kim 1982; Takaki 1989; Yung 1995). In emphasizing the paradoxical emergence of Asian Americans, excluded from national citizenship yet recruited as immigrant labor from Asian countries in which the US sought dominance, recent work in Asian American Studies has presented a coherent critique of American exceptionalism, the familiar claims of which are that the US was a modern nation distinguished from older European empires, founded on liberal democratic principles of inclusion and not itself an empire that colonized or subordinated others (Okimoto 1994).

Asian American Studies have emphasized the history of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Indian immigration to the US from the mid-nineteenth century to World War II as one of laborers subject to exclusion Acts and laws that *racialized* them as “non-white aliens ineligible to citizenship,” and has historicized US citizenship as a racially exclusive institution that was, since the 1790 statute, restricted to “free whites” only (Lowe 1986; Shah 2001; Lee 2003; Ngai 2005). Furthermore, scholars have argued that the presence of Asians in the US reveals the imperial and expansionist character of US nation-building, from the colonization of the Philippines and the annexing of Hawaiian and Pacific Islands, to US wars in Asia throughout the twentieth century: against Japan in World War II, in Korea, and in Vietnam (Bascara 2006). While the series of repeal Acts in the mid-twentieth century finally permitted naturalization of Asians as citizens, the marking of Asian Americans as racially “other” endured, punctuated by the construction of Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese as “enemies” in war (Lee 1999). Elsewhere, I have suggested that a national memory haunts the conception of the “Asian American,” persisting beyond the repeal of actual laws prohibiting Asians

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from citizenship and sustained by the wars in Asia, in which the Asian is always seen as an immigrant, as the “foreigner-within,” even when born in the US and the descendant of generations born here before (Lowe 1996). By the late twentieth century, a period of economic globalization and interconnection, “Asia” emerged as a particularly complicated double-front of threat and necessity for the US: on the one hand, industrialized nations in Asia became prominent, competitive economic rivals, while, on the other hand, new post-1965 Asian immigration provided necessary low-wage, skilled, and professional labor for the domestic national economy (Hong 2006).

In this essay, I speculate on the continuing relevance and refocusing of Asian American studies in our contemporary post-9/11 moment, one in which Asian Americans are becoming a significant minority community in the USA, and when the US national security state has shifted its projection of the racial enemy from East Asia to the Middle Eastern, Central Asia, and South Asia. Moustafa Bayoumi (2008) has argued that the surveillance of Muslim and Arab Americans after the US declaration of the “war on terror” resembles the historical treatment of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans in World War II. While the US wages war in Iraq and Afghanistan, as yet there has been little reckoning in the US public sphere with that violence and the longer history of war and empire out of which it comes. In this sense, Asian American Studies may contribute its critique of US nationalism and empire in the twentieth century, as the US public reckons with US war and empire in the twenty-first century. By means of a discussion of Chang-rae Lee’s 1999 novel, *A Gesture Life*, a Korean American novel that portrays an immigrant war survivor of World War II in Asia, I attempt to elaborate the significance of Asian American critique to this contemporary moment of US nationalism and empire. *A Gesture Life* depicts an immigrant survivor of war attempting to reckon with his responsibility for the deaths of others. It delivers nothing like a story of effective reckoning, however, but rather depicts the survivor’s performance of a failure to reckon as he subsumes terror and averts responsibility; the novel stages the narrator’s “unreliable” account of himself, both detailing the banality of retirement, and displaying the artifice he must employ to suppress the intruding flashbacks of his past as a medical officer in the Japanese army. Rather than repeating existing interpretations of the novel as a representation of Korean women victimized by the Japanese military, I suggest another approach that may provide an occasion for discussing the place of the “Asian American” in reckoning with the violence of US empire. In doing so, I raise some questions about Asian American Studies in a time of war and neoliberal globalization.

By the late 1990s, a crisis of US state sovereignty that expressed itself in the 2008 financial collapse was already well developed (Lowe 2008). As industrial economies in China and India increased production, US productive power waned, and the US state came into greater and greater contradiction with the priorities of transnational economy. The globalizing economic operations, that increased dependence on immigrant labor and exporting of manufacturing to processing zones,

challenged the traditional autonomy of the US state, historically understood as the exclusive right of the modern nation-state to govern people, borders, and territory. The state increasingly lost legitimacy as it abandoned any role as a guardian of social welfare, and its functions became more disaggregated. Rather than broadening social or economic enfranchisement, the state struggled to maintain its legitimacy by exerting legal, policing, and military controls over migrant workers, poor communities of color, and other territories. The September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center provided the conditions for the US government to imagine a “solution” to this crisis of sovereignty through a national project of war in Afghanistan and occupation of Iraq.

Immediately after the attacks, the US government’s swift recruitment of public grief and injury into national war suggested the degree to which the post-9/11 “structure of feeling” sought to reconstitute the US national polity through an understanding of human vulnerability to loss. Yet, from the outset, the US war in Iraq appeared to many to have been an attempt to occupy the oil-rich region in order to resolve the much longer-standing crisis in US sovereignty. In light of the global importance of oil, those who designed the US occupation of Iraq may have imagined it as the means to control not merely the resource, but to gain influence over the most economically productive competitors in the global system, including China and India. Progressive intellectuals have speculated about the ambivalent creation of political community through the work of mourning loss, asking if subjects undone by grief might present the occasion to reinvent and interrogate understandings of collectivity. After 9/11, Judith Butler commented in *Precarious Life*, “Loss has made a tenuous ‘we’ of us all,” (Butler 2004: 20), acknowledging both the promise and peril of a politics of mourning. Yet violent war has characterized the historical emergence of the US as a society and a nation long before September 11th – from the destruction and dispossession of indigenous peoples to the enslavement of Africans and the unfinished work of emancipation, from the stolen labors of indentured and immigrant workers to the losses of life as the US waged wars in Latin America, East, Northeast, and Southeast Asia, and now Central Asia and the Middle East. These conditions have been more often elided by an official history of American exceptionalism, the promise of freedom through citizenship, and progress through pluralism and expansion. Moreover, the exceptionalist narrative conceals the continuing US responsibility for bringing catastrophic violence to communities who have long contended with vulnerability to death (Mamdani 2004). In this sense, grieving loss may open up the recovery of histories of slavery, war, and dispossession lost beneath the official narrative of national development, providing the grounds for new political claims (Eng and Kazanjian 2003). Activating an open, unending relationship to the past rather than a totalizing national narrative, grief may permit reckoning with war and historical violence, and move us from individualized mourning to projects of collective war memories, social movements for redress and reparations, or public campaigns for the prosecution of war crimes (Yoneyama 2003; Nguyen-Vo 2005).

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Nevertheless, a politics of human vulnerability risks engaging a universalism that commits violence anew, reiterating and appropriating divisions as it makes claims to grief. However seductive we may find the proposal of solidarities forged through commonly acknowledged loss, the understanding of commonality as defined by a shared condition of human life is, precisely, a “tenuous,” ambivalent one, owing to the tension between, on the one hand, a desire for a common ontology of the “human,” and, on the other hand, the social histories of unequal distribution of vulnerability to violence and death.

Anchoring the “ethical” in a common human condition employs a provisional “we,” yet making the “human” legible in terms of loss simultaneously demonstrates the limits of this universal claim: the human lives affirmed as vulnerable subjects in need of protection are inextricably bound to the negation of the humanity of those populations deemed less than human. Within the US, defining humanity as life vulnerable to death carries the historical violence that long affirmed white citizens as more human, and disavowed others as less so, even after the Fourteenth Amendment and legislations granting naturalization to Native, Asian, and Mexican persons. Not only is there a radical non-equivalence between those accorded humanity, and those who have been cast as “disposable,” but histories demonstrate that the two conditions are inextricably bound together, that modern political sovereignty is founded precisely on an exemption of life relegated to the non-human in order to provide for the human (Mbembe 2003; Agamben 1998; Gilmore 2007). We see today the longevity of this bond, in which the human life of “liberal citizens” protected by the state is bound to the denigration of populations – in Iraq, in Guantánamo, in US poverty and imprisonment – cast as *in violation* of human life, set outside of human society (Williams 2010). Indeed, any reading of national mourning must necessarily situate the stakes of reckoning within the struggles over which populations are recognized as the legitimate citizenry and what historiography is assembled to support those claims. The positing of a common human condition as the ethical ground often correlates with the modern nation’s political investment in uniting the particular stories of subjects and localities with the universal narrative of the nation-state. In this context, Asian American Studies is challenged to navigate between the gestures of the dominant universal and the minority particular, understanding that violence accompanies not only exclusion from the universal, but also inclusion or assimilation to it.

In my discussion, I suggest that Chang-rae Lee’s *A Gesture Life* (1999) is a literary text that both portrays and critically comments upon these dilemmas for Asian American Studies. I am interested both in the novel’s depiction of the formal management of historical trauma of war in Asia through the repetition of ekphrastic device and gendered abjection, and in the matter of what it means for the *figure* of the Asian American as US citizen to do the “work” of reckoning with the violence of empire for the US national public at the end of the twentieth century. The aim here is not to judge Lee’s novel as adequate historical representation of Japanese war crimes, but rather to explore how, paradoxically, it may

be in its “aesthetics of inadequacy,” that the novel offers a literary lesson about the further reckoning that would be necessary for the US in order to become responsible for not only its Cold War relationship to East Asia, but its longer history of empire. This Korean American text may enlist its US readership in the dilemma of responsibility for others, as well as dramatizing how the “Asian American” as liberal citizen-subject bears witness to this condition in an oscillation between reckoning and responsibility that continues to be incomplete.

Lee’s *A Gesture Life* is a provocative, disturbing novel that has already been at the center of numerous scholarly debates. The portrait of an “unreliable” first-person narrator who recounts his relationship to the Asian wartime conditions he survived, it has been discussed, along with Nora Okja Keller’s 1997 novel *Comfort Woman*, as a “first” Korean American novel to thematize the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery during World War II. “Comfort women” was the euphemism used for Japanese military sexual enslavement, in which an estimated 200,000 young women were forced into servicing Japanese troops during Japan’s colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the early 1930s through to the end of World War II. In the early 1990s, Korean activists and survivors of wartime sexual slavery began to demonstrate in campaigns for redress from the Japanese government.¹ Recently, the topic has increasingly attracted the attention of students and scholars in Asian American Studies. Critics like Laura Hyun Yi Kang (2003) argue that Asian American interest in the “comfort women” may contribute to the discursive construction of Korean women as exemplary subjugated victims. Kandice Chuh (2003) suggests that this Asian American investment enacts what Rey Chow (1993: 13) terms “self-subalternization,” a process by which the critic identifies with a position of powerlessness to paradoxically claim a certain kind of power. Legal theorist Leti Volpp (1994) has likewise interrogated the ways in which the battered, violated racialized female body such as that of the Korean comfort woman has repeatedly served as an organizing trope rationalizing feminist discourse. The anthropologist Lisa Yoneyama (2003) has examined the limited ways in which US juridical discourses have recognized the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery, observing that the juridical legibility of the “comfort woman” is enabled by an “Americanization” of transnational justice in which it has been possible to adjudicate war crimes when “justice” contributes to the US postwar role of “liberator and rehabilitator.”

I join these discussions to the extent that I am concerned, too, with how Lee’s novel provides an account of reckoning through the Asian American relationship to the figure of the wartime comfort woman, although I am posing somewhat different questions about the text. Rather than focusing on the appropriation of the victims of military sexual slavery by either the Asian American text or its Asian American critics, I want to examine how the narrator’s abjection of the comfort woman becomes the means to detail a story of complicity, a complicity that ultimately draws an analogy between the Korean collaborator with Japanese war crimes and the role of the post-1965 Asian American “model minority” in absolving

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the US state of responsibility for imperial war during the twentieth century. As Victor Bascara argues in his book *Model-Minority Imperialism*, the national representation of the successful integration of Asian Americans has created an amnesia about US wars in Asia – in the Philippines, Japan, Korea and Vietnam – unburdening the US of reckoning with its imperialism, “thereby burdening the present with a past it once needed to forget” (Bascara 2006: xviii). The figure of the Asian American as “model minority” often serves as the *simulacrum* for immigrant inclusion and historical progress; the performance of Asian American assimilation is invoked as evidence that the nation has transcended its racialized past, erasing the persistence of race and empire today. Despite the myth of the model minority, a racial memory haunts the story of Asian American assimilation, persisting beyond the repeal of individual laws, which marks the “Asian American” as the remnant of US imperial wars. Thus, it is significant that the narrator of Lee’s *A Gesture Life* (1999) simulates a “post-racial” American voice in order to insist on a triumphant recovery from both colonialism and war in East Asia, obscuring an earlier history of Asian immigrant exclusion. Taking refuge in an invented post-racial subjectivity in order to manage the violence of war, he ultimately displaces the burden of war trauma and complicity through an abjection of the figure of the “comfort woman,” just as US nationalism resolves national responsibilities for wars in Asia through its displacement in the assimilation of the Asian war refugee as the “model minority” (Espiritu 2006).

In Lee’s *A Gesture Life*, a retired medical supply business owner, Franklin Hata, describes his life as a resident of a small New York suburb, Bedley Run. He modestly boasts that he has become accepted in his small community; he is proud to have become a town fixture and mascot. Never overstepping the boundaries of decorum, he keeps his garden well tended, makes his neighbors comfortable, and avoids the tawdry, unseemly social elements at the margins of the city. For the first part of the novel, we are to believe that he is an apparently comfortable Japanese American who has spent some 30 tranquil years as an upstanding citizen of Bedley Run, “the model minority” who confirms the community’s tolerance and benevolence. Yet, as the past breaks through the present, we learn his life spans three continents, that he is ethnic Korean, adopted and raised in Japan while the Japanese were the occupying colonial power in Korea, finally immigrating to the US, “passing” as a Japanese American. Inadvertently, slowly, he discloses how his life has been shaped by his service as a medic in World War II in the Imperial Army of Japan, in charge of the Korean “comfort women,” and of his troubled relationship with the war orphan he adopted once he immigrated to the US. In other words, the novel demonstrates and details how a story of Asian American post-racial assimilation can provide an aesthetic form for mediating an unspeakably traumatic history.

Histories of trauma are often accessed through testimonies, memoirs, and historical and literary accounts. Soldiers faced with mass death, survivors of genocide, children separated from kin, families in interminable displacement after war – these

are often formally represented through indirection, temporal belatedness, repetition, fragmentation, and varieties of rhetorical detour that mediate the shocks of violence and its survival. Psychoanalysis explains these formal elements as traumatic symptoms; literary criticism parses them as the aesthetics of form, while historical materialism implicates a concept of history to explain such representational practices as media through which collective reckoning may occur (Benjamin [1940] 1969). Psychoanalysis treats trauma as a violent experience that overwhelms the subject so profoundly that it exceeds the boundaries of the ego and precludes the kind of specular or cognitive distance necessary to “know” what has happened (Freud [1914] 1957). Because the traumatic experience is inassimilable and inaccessible in its own time, it is seized only belatedly, and incompletely, in testimony or interlocution with another. Psychoanalyst Dori Laub discusses the inability to fully witness the event as it occurs, suggesting that there is always something unknown, hidden from the survivor, a gap that carries the force of the event and does so precisely at the expense of simple knowledge and memory (Laub 1992). The force of what cannot be apprehended is expressed in a trope or figure through which the trauma is “known.” Laub discusses an Auschwitz survivor for whom the figure of suddenly exploding chimneys stands in for the excess that cannot be grasped, and relays concretely the inability to tell; where it cannot signify *what* happened, it signifies *that* it happened. Not only the events of violent mass destruction, but the passing out of them, are traumatic; survival itself can be a social crisis, a vertiginous collectivity. In this sense, a fundamental instability of testimony can also create great difficulty, for survivors’ testimony is often taken as a claim to experience, and institutions often encourage survivors to “speak *for* the dead,” and this speech may be used to authorize histories, official and unofficial, more and less legible or legitimate. The vast majority of survivors of wars, genocides, or other forms of mass violence never have the opportunity to testify, and access to speech is itself a register through which an international division of humanity is articulated; to privilege speech as evidence ignores the greater conditions in which most survivors do not speak and their testimonies are largely ignored or unremembered.²

If a narrative trope condensing the force of what cannot be told enables the survivor to apprehend the traumatic past, it is precisely this *troping* of historical trauma that is portrayed in Lee’s *A Gesture Life*. In the novel, Hata repeats the literary device of *ekphrasis* as he struggles to prevent his relation to his wartime past from erupting into his contemporary narrative of contented suburban assimilation. The classical meaning of *ekphrasis* is “a rhetorical description of a work of art,” or a “speech which vividly brings the subject before our eyes” (Preminger 1993: 1383). Its classic example in epic is Homer’s description of Achilles’ shield, after which *ekphrasis* has a long history as the poetic description of paintings, statues, churches, estates, and gardens (Krieger 1992). Yet *ekphrasis* is more than literary language that “makes seen”; it is a poetics that makes visible an enclosed, silent, often pastoral, movement, which serves as homage to something

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lost: a principle or quality of a higher order – beauty, harmony, nobility. In Hata’s narrative, however, *ekphrasis* is a literary figure that “makes visible” while it belies the desire to render invisible. In his paradigmatic description, he is located at a distance from a silent yet visually engrossing scene; he is helpless and unable to move, as if hypnotically subdued. When there is a fire at his stately Tudor revival home, for example, he represents himself caught in the middle of a telephone call, paralyzed as he watches the flames, transfixed:

And then it happens, the fire, miraculously appearing from the deep pile of the rug where it meets the marble flooring. The flames are not high, or fierce; they are not spreading, and the whole sight, somehow, is a disappointment. It all seems perfectly controlled, the way fires burn in the movies and at theme parks, with a shut-off quality, and very colorful. But what there is volumes of is smoke, which now bellows and rises up in great flumes against the ceiling. Upstairs, I hear the piercing ring of the smoke alarm.

“Oh, Doc . . .” Liv Crawford says in a singsong voice. “That sounds like your smoke alarm.”

“Yes,” I say . . . “The family room is on fire.” (Lee 1999: 34)

The fire is without scent or heat, presented as a visual description of an artificial scene (it is compared to “the movies and at theme parks”). The passage marks the temporal lag between Hata’s perception of the “perfectly controlled” portrait, and his belated understanding that his house is burning; the image of the flames is cut off from the capacity of fire to destroy. In fact, his acknowledgment that the fire might endanger him only occurs when Liv Crawford, who has heard the smoke alarm on her end of the telephone, names it as such, and subsequently enters the house to save him. The *ekphrasis* here is not used to praise beauty (in fact, his rendering demotes the scene through understatement, “the whole sight, somehow, is a disappointment”), but the visual portrait is rather a means to introduce his temporality of belatedness and his location as a distant viewer of action from which he is removed.

Shortly after the fire, Hata’s narrative of his peaceful, suburban retirement begins to unravel, interrupted by abruptly graphic images of wartime. The *ekphrastic* portrait of the fire in his home furnishes the paradigm that is repeated as the narrative reaches for images to crystallize each memory.³ In a series of long flashbacks, Hata remembers himself being stationed as a medic at a Japanese army installation in rural Burma in 1944. Then named Lieutenant Kurohata, he was in charge of overseeing the health and hygiene of a fresh detachment of five Korean “comfort women.” Historian Takashi Fujitani (2007) has argued that, in World War II, both the US and Japanese states exercised power over populations primarily through the negativity of the *right to kill*; but as both nations sought to make use of the labor of the colonized, defeated, or interned, this older modality was complemented by a new mode, exercised through the “positive” or productive logic of the *right to make live*. The lieutenant is literally responsible, through medical

hygiene and military surveillance, for forcibly making the women live, insuring their sexual availability and preventing them from taking their own lives. It is there that he meets K (short for her Korean name “Kkutaeh”), a young “comfort woman,” and his narrative about her seeks to represent his struggle with his complicity for her capture and subjugation as a love story. Initially, he portrays himself as a young protector of the abused K and casts himself as her courtly romantic partner. When K attempts to resist servicing the officers, Kurohata is ordered to punish her by sequestering her in a closet in the infirmary; he reframes this story as a clandestine romance that begins with him whispering in Korean, disclosing to her that he is not Japanese, and he fashions his sexual relation with K as that of “a young man in the blush of his first sexual love” (263). When he witnesses a senior officer preparing to rape K, he regards the scene as if from the periphery, unseen yet watching from the room’s corner. K stabs the officer, knowingly inaugurating her own death. When K asks Hata to kill her, to save her from subjection to the troops, Hata is unable to do so.

Through *ekphrasis*, Hata displaces the war trauma through the gendered abjection of K. He depicts himself as being too late to be responsible for the impending violence, and unable to save K from the soldiers who have savagely raped, dismembered, and murdered her, in the ultimate example of *ekphrastic* management of trauma of war:

I ran up the north path toward the clearing . . . But I wasn’t halfway there when I met them coming back, singly and together and in small groups. The men. It was the men. Twenty-five of them, thirty of them. I had to slow as they went past. Some were half-dressed, shirtless, trouserless, half-hopping to pull on boots. They were generally quiet. The quiet after great celebration. They were flecked with blood, and muddy dirt, some more than others. One with his hands and forearms as if dipped in crimson. Another’s face smudged with it, the color strange in his hair. One of them was completely clean, only his boots soiled; he was vomiting as he walked. Shiboru carried his saber, wiping it lazily in the tall grass. His face was bleeding, but he was unconcerned. He did not see me; none of them did. They could have been returning from a volleyball match, thoroughly enervated, sobered by near glory.

Then they were all gone. I walked the rest of the way to the clearing. The air was cooler there, the treetops shading the falling sun. Mostly it was like any other place I had ever been. Yet I could not smell or hear or see as I did my medic’s work. I could not feel my hands as they gathered, nor could I feel the weight of such remains. (Lee 1999: 304–5)

The frenzied violence is contained, rendered as if a “still movement” in a painted still life of textured hues and pastoral beauty. All violence has been absorbed, all sound muted, the lethal motion already past in an aestheticized post-mortem. Everything has already occurred, nothing flutters or seeps; only the pigments remains. The framing of the tableau simulates a moral posture that poses as the

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engagement of the relation between himself and K, yet it exemplifies precisely a pacification of feverish violence and death through emphasizing visual portrait. He slows and mutes the enormity of the event with adverbs and understatement. Hata contends with his wartime collaboration by aestheticizing the murderous soldiers as “flecked with blood,” “dipped in crimson,” “the color strange in his hair”; the blood is from a painter’s palette, not the aftermath of sadistic madness. He describes the dead quiet following the soldiers’ savagery as “the quiet after great celebration.” Ultimately, the novel portrays Hata’s ineffective reckoning with his military colonial complicity as the repeated apprehension of a violent scene of loss, rendered from a distance, to which he always arrives too late. In this manner, he defers his acknowledgment of the violence of Japanese colonial subjugation of Korea for which his Japanese adoption and his service in the Japanese military are representative instances; even as he details, he postpones reckoning with his collaboration with the Japanese use of Korean women in sexual slavery; and he evades the recognition of a desire for redemption that his adoption of a young war orphan implicitly demanded.

In an illuminating discussion of the ethics of reckoning, literary critic Cathy Caruth (1996) rereads Freud’s famous case of the father who has lost his child, who dreams the night following the child’s death. After a few hours’ sleep, the father dreams that the son awakens him, reproaching him, saying “Father, don’t you see I’m burning?” The man awakens, rushes to the room where his dead son lies, and finds that the son’s clothed arm has been burnt by a lighted candle that has just fallen. Freud interprets the dream as the father’s wish to remain in a sleeping state in which the child continues to live, while Lacan interprets the dream as more importantly the vehicle for the father’s wish to awaken. Like Lacan, Caruth focuses on the father’s desire to awaken to his ethical responsibility for the son’s death. For Caruth, however, this desire to awaken is paradoxical: the father’s awakening to the son’s plea to be seen represents not only a responding, but it also entails a realization of the impossibility of a proper response; for, in waking, the father discovers that he is not only too late to prevent the burning, but too late to witness the child’s dying as it occurred. Awakening figures the “trauma” of understanding *both* the necessity *and* the impossibility of adequately responding to another’s death. The significance of the father’s awakening is also his reckoning with the responsibility of waking, the condition of living after, that of surviving to tell the story of the burning *and what it means to have not seen*. The awakening becomes an act that commemorates a missed reality, but it is a reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly, in some never attained awakening. The ethical act, becomes, for the father, the work of “passing on” the paradoxical awakening to others, the paradox of both the effort to see and the repeated failure to have seen in time. Caruth explains that the awakening consists *not* in seeing but in “handing over the seeing it does not and cannot contain to another (and another future)” (Caruth 1996: 111–12).

Like the father's dream of awakening to the son's plea to be seen, *A Gesture Life* presents Hata's post-racial somnambulance as if he is in a "dream," repeating his relation to a scene in which he is unable to stop the impending violence toward the other for whom he is responsible. Hata's insistent repetition of the scene – from his observations of a young girl in Singapore who jumped to her death, to the murder of K's sister by Corporal Endo, and finally K's ravaging by the troops – expresses paradoxically *both* a wish to bear witness *and* a recognition of the impossibility of doing so. At the end of the novel, he states wearily, "I can hardly bear to be a witness anymore." (Lee 1999: 332)

Once settled in the US after the war, Hata adopts a mixed-race Korean war orphan, whom he names "Sunny." The adoption is a repetition of a misplaced desire to reckon with his role in the war, and this desire is continually met by Sunny's angry rejection. Hata inserts the child in his ritual repetition as the substitute for K whom he is over and over again trying to "protect," intently soliciting from her the "forgiveness" he would never receive from K (the story of K itself being a *troping* of the greater reckoning with traumatic destruction of war): he closely manages Sunny's activities, enclosing her in his home and in his rituals, routines, and expectation, just as, during the war, he shut, locked, and fed K in the infirmary closet. Yet, when Sunny is a young adult, he finds himself again belated, too late to "save" her, as he was K, from a sexual assault and a later pregnancy. Indeed, Hata's substitution of Sunny for K implies an equation that is itself a telling misapprehension, signaling what I am identifying as the novel's central allegory: in the allegory, we may consider the Japanese war crime of military slavery during World War II as a reference to *United States military empire* – in the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, and, now, Afghanistan and Iraq.⁴ This structuring allegory, drawing on the alignment of US and Japanese interests, beginning with the US postwar occupation and throughout its aftermath, ironically unsettles Hata's apparent Asian American "assimilation."

The adoption of Sunny in order to make a "family" recalls the historical period of Japanese occupation of Korea and Taiwan, in which the Japanese national representation of "Asia as one family" served as a powerful ideology for absorbing heterogeneous colonial populations into the Japanese empire, and a material means to subordinate colonial, economically subordinated, and gendered others. As all Japanese were regarded as "children" to the Emperor, so the Japanese Emperor would look upon other Asians as his "children," as well. A discourse about race and family was predominant in "Japanization," the imperial process that paradoxically included and subordinated the colonized Korean and Taiwanese populations (Ching 2001; Fujitani 2007). Just as the language of family was a historical mechanism of Japan's colonial incorporation and racial abjection of Korea, Hata forcibly attempts to enclose Sunny in a family domesticity against which she continually rebels.

Yet, while Hata describes Sunny as "dark," he never acknowledges or names her racialized difference from the white suburban community. A stray, elliptical

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statement suggests that Sunny is perhaps a child of a Korean mother and African American father, (“the likely product . . . of a night’s wanton encounter between a GI and a local bar girl,” Lee 1999: 204), yet Hata treats her racial difference with studied indirection: “I had assumed the child and I would have a ready, natural affinity . . . But when I saw her for the first time I realized there could be no such conceit for us, no easy persuasion. Her hair, her skin, were there to see, self-evident, and it was obvious how some other color (or colors) ran deep within her. And perhaps it was right from that moment, the very start, that the young girl sensed my hesitance, the blighted hope in my eyes” (204). Yet, despite Hata’s insistence that he is unconcerned by race, we observe that Sunny’s actions, nevertheless, are quite explicit that her racial identification is not “white.” She chooses black and Puerto Rican friends, her child Thomas has a black father; she raises him away from Bedley Run, declaring bitterly to Hata: “And you should know that I won’t take a step in that town, and neither will Thomas” (215). Hata’s denial of Sunny’s racialization is commensurate with the denial of his own, both of which undergird his untenable narrative of content assimilation, his story that he is “beyond” the historical violence of race. When Sunny leaves home, she indicts Hata as the town’s “Good Charlie,” an Asian “Uncle Tom,” who “makes a whole life out of gestures” (95). By the novel’s end, Hata is alone, haunted by Sunny’s reproaches. Sunny’s words appear to jar Hata from his dream of assimilation, waking him to the persistent conditions of racialized violence as if to say “Father, don’t you see I am burning?” Oscillating between the effort to reckon and the failure to do so, Hata as the Asian American “post-racial” subject performs over and over his inadequacy to the responsibility for the history of others. The memory of the desire to act, even as he found it impossible to do so, becomes homage to the missed realities of war and colonial violence, repeating endlessly, in a “gesture” that never attains closure. The Asian American novel performs the “gesture life” of reckoning for an American public engaged for much of the twentieth century in wars in Asia.

We often read and teach Asian American literature under the imperative of uncovering the histories of Asian immigration, whose most common stories are struggles against barriers and exclusions, hard work and diligence, and the achievement of family reunification and settlement in the new society. Oddly, *A Gesture Life* both acknowledges the imperative of this established immigrant genre, and yet differs, in rather anomalous ways, from it. In this sense, we might consider *A Gesture Life* as a commentary on the tasks and obligations of Asian Americans themselves in the work of the nation-state: the novel situates the presence of the Asian American in the US as evidence of US geopolitical involvement in Asia, and points to the ways building the twentieth century as what Henry Luce called “the New American Century,” which involved the US securing an empire in Asia (Luce [1941] 1999). In other words, the post-1965 Asian American communities are precisely formed by the contradictions of America’s interventions in Korea and Vietnam, and Asian American literature that appears

to testify to the US as “liberator” may often present immanent critiques of the Cold War emergence of the US as leader of “the free world,” and its pluralist promises of inclusion (Kim 2010). With its focus on Hata’s management of past war violence, *A Gesture of Life* also suggests that Asian American literature may have a significant role in contending with traumatic histories for a US public, with ramifications for the contemporary national moment replete with war and its legacies of race and immigration. Hata’s “post-racial” claim is a “gesture” of disavowal that paradoxically acknowledges as it denies; the force of the claim to assimilation actually acknowledges the persistence of race as the mark of US empire, whose continual denial serves the nation-state as an alibi in further wars. In my approach to *A Gesture of Life*, often interpreted as an Asian American novel that thematizes the invisible Asian victims of World War II, I have suggested to the contrary that the novel be read as an indictment of the *model minoritization* of the Asian American, whose democratic inclusion is made to serve as an apology for US imperial wars. That Hata substitutes Sunny, a child of the US war in Korea, for K, the woman lost to Japanese military aggression, reveals substitution as a crucial narrative procedure in the Asian American apology, which requires that Japan, rather than the US, be figured as the imperial power out of which the assimilated liberal citizen emerges. Hata’s failed substitutions guide us to read the story of Hata’s reckoning with his complicity as an allegory for the US reckoning with war.

Thus, in *A Gesture of Life*, Hata’s ethic of reckoning is not the claim to have acted adequately, the claim to faithful representation, presence, and verisimilitude – not the story that Hata loved and saved K, or that he was redeemed by the adopted war orphan – but it is rather the portrait of his repeated attempts and failures, and the inevitable incompleteness of the process of reckoning. A portrait of inadequate reckoning, the novel’s Asian American *gesture* reveals and refers us to the necessity of further collective social responsibility to be taken for historical and contemporary war. Its ethic is to hand over the labor of reckoning, which it does not and cannot complete, to the “tenuous we” bound to the deaths of others. Its incompleteness tells us that this reckoning is still the ongoing project of our times.

Notes

- 1 “Comfort women” and “comfort house” were euphemisms for the practice of forcing women – ages 12 and up – to work as sex slaves in military brothels in Japanese-occupied countries during World War II. Most of the women were Korean due to the Japanese colonization of Korea 1910–45, but a significant proportion were from the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, China, Taiwan, Japan, Dutch East Indies, and other Japanese-occupied countries and regions. This particular aspect of World War II has historically been given very little importance or prominence in the international scene, and almost always receives no mention in historical textbooks or encyclopedias. The Japanese government has refused to take any

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- responsibility or issue apologies or compensation to the women involved, in the face of organized redress and reparations movements by transnational feminist groups in East Asia (Choi 1997; Park 2005).
- 2 In framing her collection of oral testimonies of Afghan women, for example, Anne Cubilié cautions that written testimonies published for an international audience constitute a rare elite stratum of testimony (Cubilié 2003).
 - 3 When Hata describes a suicide at a “comfort station” in Singapore by the young girl who jumps to break her own neck, he avoids stating that she regarded death as far better than facing rape and ravaging by the hundreds of soldiers: “The girl was naked, and the skin of her young body looked smooth and perfect, except that her neck was crooked too far upward . . . The girl was the first dead person I had ever seen” (Lee 1999: 107). Later, he describes K’s sister “comfort woman,” killed by an officer, with an equally clinical, aesthetically distanced regard:

She was dead. Her throat was slashed, deeply, very near to the bone. She had probably died in less than a minute. There was much blood, naturally, but it was almost wholly pooled in a broad blot beneath her, the dry red earth turned a rich hue of brown. There was little blood on her person, hardly a spatter or speck anywhere save on her collar and on the tops of her shoulders, where the fabric had begun blotting it back up. It was as though she had gently lain down for him and calmly waited for the slashing cut. (180)
 - 4 Kandice Chuh observes that Hata’s substitution of Sunny for K involves a telling mistake: while K figures Japanese military oppression in Korea, Sunny figures US military intervention in Korea. The mistake of replacing K with Sunny “suggests the inadequacy of the U.S. hegemonic narrative that explains Korean freedom from Japanese occupation as gifted by U.S. forces” (Chuh 2003: 15).

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PART

III

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Western Hemispheric Drama and Performance

Harilaos Stecopoulos

Hemispheric American culture begins for many writers with a New World response to a canonical European drama, *The Tempest*. One can find hemispheric “riffs” on Ariel or Caliban in the works of Aimé Césaire, George Lamming, Roberto Fernández Retamar, and José Enrique Rodó, to name only the most famous *littérateurs* engaged in this practice.¹ Yet the fact that a drama occupies an important place in hemispheric American culture has not had much of an impact on recent scholarship in the field. In the many current monographs and anthologies that engage with the literatures and cultures of the Americas, few critics have taken up the generic implications of *The Tempest* as a pivotal text in the hemispheric imagination. The field of hemispheric American Studies instead has devoted itself to the study of the novel, non-fiction prose, and film. Thus, Gustav Pérez Firmat’s *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* largely ignores drama and performance; George Handley’s *Postslavery Literatures in the Americas* confines itself to the novel; and Caroline Levander and Robert Levine’s anthology *Hemispheric American Studies* includes only one chapter that focuses primarily on any form of theater. That the cultures and societies of the Americas often celebrate drama and other popular performative forms – parades, carnivals, historical pageants – makes this omission all the more glaring.

One can attribute the marginalization of the performative in some of the more important volumes of Hemispheric Studies to a number of factors, among them, an overweening investment in high-profile novelists (Faulkner, García Márquez, Carpentier), an institutional and economic dependence on the translation and publication of foreign-language works, and an indifference to genre and form that continues to haunt many otherwise innovative Cultural Studies projects. For the most part, Hemispheric Studies continues to ignore drama – a topic I shall address toward the end of this essay – but, in the past 10 years or so, a small but influential group of critics has begun to create a new field of Hemispheric Performance Studies focused on Popular Music, Performance Art, and other cultural forms that tend to fall outside the proscenium arch. Inspired in part by the growing prominence

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of activist-artists who take the Americas as their purview (among them, Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and Carmelita Tropicana), such prominent scholars as Diana Taylor, Joseph Roach, and José David Saldivar have begun to articulate a notion of Hemispheric Studies that takes performance seriously as its focus and *raison d'être*. In what follows, I shall survey some of the main assumptions and arguments that structure this nascent field imaginary, and then turn to a consideration of a certain type of hemispheric drama, those that deal overtly, if at times experimentally, with the fictions of history. The latter move will, in turn, lead to a brief speculation on how historical drama has played a vital role in the construction of a hemispheric public sphere.

It might seem counterintuitive to read drama in a postnational frame. After all, ever since the Enlightenment, drama has been closely linked to the articulation of nationalist sentiments in the West. As Loren Kruger has argued, European nations have tended to find in theater a way of rallying their citizens around a quasi-mythic social and cultural inheritance that seems to have the potential to instantiate and validate the imagined community.² The United States tends to diverge from the European model given its inheritance of a Puritan anti-theatrical prejudice, but even here the stage has played an important role in national formation;³ when New York fans of actor Edwin Forrest rioted after the performance of visiting English actor William Charles Macready in 1849, they demonstrated that theater could incite nativist feeling in the world's new democracy. Yet, if nationhood and theater appear peculiarly and indissolubly linked in the West, it is precisely the strength of this connection that seems for many contemporary critics to demand interrogation. In American Studies, a number of books have appeared recently that take seriously the challenge of assessing in historical and political terms how drama and performance at once contribute to and challenge the production of hegemonic US identity. At the same time, those scholars interested in questions of nationhood have been forced to confront the fact that any meditation on theater and the imagined community tends to lead to – or, indeed, founder on – the question of the postnational. To take one example, Stephen E. Wilmer's fine book *Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities* (2002) surveys a wide range of drama and performance from the Ghost Dance to workers' pageants to Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. Wilmer demonstrates unequivocally that theater and subaltern theater in particular has been no less important than other cultural forms to the making of Americans. Yet, even as Wilmer attends to the multiple communities who have contributed to US drama and performance, thus contesting the racism and patriarchy of cultural nationalism, he is still to some degree invested in the notion that the task of the cultural critic is to adhere to the geography of nationhood. It is only at the end of his volume that Wilmer acknowledges how some late twentieth-century forms of theater testify less to debates over national belonging than to the production of new post- and transnational identities, writing that the "multicultural performances in the 1990s helped to question the dominant

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concept of a unified nation.”⁴ For Wilmer, theater is by and large a national, if not a nationalist, enterprise.

What Wilmer offers as a concluding move, Hemispheric Performance Studies takes as its starting point. Hemispheric Performance Studies specialists share Wilmer’s investment in a startling variety of performances and performers, not to mention his sensitivity to the cultural construction of political forms, but they insist on pushing this heterodox impulse beyond normative geopolitical formations. For these scholars, the Americas take on greater significance than any individual nation and its struggle over the meaning of community. To borrow from Diana Taylor, perhaps the most pivotal figure in the emergence of Hemispheric Performance Studies: “The Americas, I had been taught to believe, are one . . . Produced and organized through mutually constitutive scenarios, acts, transactions, migrations, and social systems, our hemisphere proves a contested and entangled space . . . The apparent discreetness of nation-states, national languages, and official religions barely hides the deep intermingling of peoples, languages, and cultural practices.”⁵ From Taylor’s perspective, we may imagine, any book that bears the subtitle “Staging American Identities,” as Wilmer’s does, necessarily brings to mind the very struggle over how to define America or, better, the Americas, and their multiple intersecting identities and communities. However much Performance and Theater Studies scholars may need to engage the question of the nation – and we do – this concern cannot blind us to the fact that the history and meaning of performance often tends to defy normative political geography.

At the heart of Hemispheric Performance Studies is the assumption that, in the words of Jill Lane, “the history of American theaters does not simply trace a teleology of the growth of ‘national’ expression in the US, Brazil, Cuba, or any other new American nation: it is first a history of the struggle over performance as a site of power itself.”⁶ Crucially, for Lane and others, this “struggle” takes shape in both diachronic (“history”) and synchronic (“site”) terms. The postnationalist approach to American drama and performance takes as a given that one cannot remap the conventional geography of culture without rethinking traditional modes of temporality. Dramas, parades, agitprop, acts of all kinds exist by virtue of their reiteration – they are “twice-behaved behavior” in Richard Schechner’s famous formulation. Yet the reiterative quality of performance signifies not only temporally, but also spatially, inasmuch as it suggests a capacity to repeat with a difference certain behaviors in a new setting or context. As Taylor points out, performances are “always in situ,” but they also “travel, challenging and influencing other performances” (3). To be sure, all aesthetic and cultural products have the capacity to circulate and, indeed, to jump geographic scale. Millions of copies of novels, CDs, and DVDs are shipped and downloaded everyday. Yet performance is another sort of cultural experience, one that exists by virtue of its “liveness.” “The copy renders performance authentic and allows the spectator to find in the performer ‘presence,’” argues Peggy Phelan. “Presence can be had only

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in the citation of authenticity, through reference to something called ‘live.’”⁷ This places the performance in its specific environment, but it also reminds us of its intense mobility; there are infinite environments available to the performers. If performance requires live “presence” to make a claim for the authentic or the genuine then this aesthetic category seems more open to – even demanding of – a traveling status than its textual or cinematic counterparts. To borrow from Dwight Conquergood, “Performance privileges . . . the mobile over the monumental.”⁸ When Mexican director Seki Sano staged Tennessee Williams’s play *A Streetcar Named Desire* in Mexico City in 1948, the enthusiastic audience response didn’t so much suggest the transhistorical appeal of a literary masterwork as offer a new perspective on a powerful Northern nation whose commitment to a so-called Good Neighbor policy had virtually disappeared. Sano’s performative reiteration of Williams’s play testified to a literary connection linking North and South, and at the same time offered younger Mexican playwrights and performers a means of reimagining the category of dramatic realism.⁹ The fact that performance only exists through reiteration imbues it with an extraordinary potential to transgress and subvert vast geopolitical divisions.

I stress the mobility of drama and performance in order to highlight the degree to which Performance Studies has a somewhat natural fit with the recent transnational turn among US-based Americanists. Yet movement across national boundaries isn’t the only point of connection between these two innovative methodologies. As Susan Gillman and John Carlos Rowe each have argued, albeit in different ways, transnational Literary Studies doesn’t so much jettison the historical as rediscover it through a radical remapping of cultural and political geographies.¹⁰ These critics and other postnationalist Americanists based in English and American Studies departments would, I believe, agree with Diana Taylor’s claim that, “A hemispheric perspective stretches the spatial and temporal framework to recognize the interconnectedness of seemingly separate geographical and political areas and the degree to which our past continues to haunt our present” (2003: 277). Taylor draws an analogy between the line that marks national borders in the Americas and the “slash” that distinguishes past from present (277). In her view, both attempts at delineation deny the very interconnectedness that underwrites American identity in the hemispheric frame; these fortified lines of difference suppress or obstruct the transmission of bodies, performances, memories, and knowledge across time and space.

Admittedly, one can cite any number of social and cultural phenomena that suffer erasure or neglect thanks to the distinctions typical of hegemonic geopolitics and historiography. Yet, as Taylor argues, performance suffers more than most, if only because these acts seem to stand at a distant remove from the authority and power of textual artifacts. Taylor takes great pains to emphasize that the transnational American elite have for the most part dismissed performances as “ephemeral . . . phenomena [that] cannot serve to create or transmit knowledge” or, alternately, rejected performances as forms that transmit “idolatrous or

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opaque” knowledge (33–4). Taylor doesn’t reject the archive altogether – she concedes that in many cases the archive and the repertoire work in tandem – but rather emphasizes how from the colonial administrations of early America to today’s universities, subaltern performances have rarely commanded much attention from the status quo. For her, as for so many Performance Studies scholars, any attempt to privilege the repertoire is a radical gesture designed to reclaim that which an explicitly textual imperial apparatus has long denied: the rights, agency, and expressivity of unlettered and disenfranchised subjects.

It is important to recognize that Taylor doesn’t simply find the repertoire a passive object in need of scholarly rescue; to the contrary, she argues forcefully that quotidian performance has long functioned as a mnemonic means of epistemology and communication that we are only beginning to fully understand. “Part of what performance and performance studies allows us to *do*,” writes Taylor, “is to take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge” (26). That any such reconsideration of these mnemonic performative practices demands on our part a new sensitivity to the role of the body and embodiment is something of an article of faith with Taylor. Performance offers us special insight into the vagaries of knowledge and transmission because it is physical, indeed, corporeal, and thus capable of registering social and cultural memory at the level of flesh and sinew. To borrow from historian Pierre Nora, performance allows for the expression of “gestures and habits . . . skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body’s inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories.”¹¹ Embodied performance has the capacity to function as a “site of convergence binding . . . the diachronic and the synchronic, memory with knowledge” thanks to the body’s capacity to serve as an almost inadvertent record or register of movement and sound.

Crucially, the body does not always figure *in extremis* for Taylor. While this critic does point to examples of traumatic memories – the conquistadors’ brutal dealings with First Peoples, the losses of Argentineans whose parents vanished during “the Dirty War,” New Yorkers’ responses to the attacks of 9/11 – she also insists that embodied practice does not always transmit tragic knowledge. Rejecting the temptation to invoke a shared past of conquest, colonialism, slavery, and exploitation that might underwrite a transnational American bond, Taylor argues instead that we should attend to the hemispheric connections that link quotidian struggles over performance. “The language of tragedy and uniqueness works against broader emancipatory politics because it detaches events from the context that might help explain them . . . Instead of isolationist perspectives and politics, I’ve tried to focus on the messy entanglements that constitute hemispheric relations” (274). Her book balances an interest in so-called “limit cases” with a comparable investment in far less extreme examples of what she dubs “episodic practice”: Latin television fortune-teller Walter Mercado; Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Pena’s Guatinaui (a fictive Indian name) act entitled “Two

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Undiscovered Amerindians Visit . . .”; and an everyday dispute between street musicians and New York police in Central Park.

The Mercado example is particularly fascinating given that in this case the embodied practice with which Taylor is concerned appears on screen and thus is not, properly speaking, present. A television psychic whose daily performances are typically watched by 120 million people, Mercado has white skin, elegant manners, and a general upper-crust demeanor. He seems at first glance to have little if anything to do with the “liveness” of the largely subaltern performers and performances so central to Taylor’s study. Yet, for Taylor, it is precisely Mercado’s disembodiment – a state she implicitly links to his whiteness – that renders him pivotal to the creation of a public sphere for the transnational Latin American elite. Sharing neither a performance tradition nor a print culture, these affluent cultural consumers can only bond via televisual viewing habits (120); like Benedict Anderson’s famous newspaper readers, reading the same articles on the same day and thus fostering some sense of imagined connection, the Mercado fans know that they are part of a massive Hispanophone community who all tune into this outrageous occultist at a pre-assigned time. Taylor attempts to link this remarkably quotidian, not to say, postmodern creation of a Latin American public, to a *longue durée* history of other soothsayers and oracles who have played crucial roles in the Latin world. Yet even as one agrees with her that spiritual performers have for centuries offered “oppositional movements in the Americas” different ways to “sidestep dominant power” – consider the Ghost Dance – the connection between these figures and Mercado’s televisual psychic healing seems tenuous at best (114). One cannot help but think that Mercado offers a typically postmodern pastiche of this spiritual tradition even as his act may in fact engender real world bonds among disconnected Latin subjects. Not so much a ghostly citation of a Montezuma’s oracle as a Debordian spectacle, Mercado highlights the ways in which embodiment necessarily becomes a slippery term in technological modernity and postmodernity.

While we should appreciate Taylor’s desire to move beyond the tragic allure of the “limit case” and take seriously quotidian examples of hemispheric performance like the Mercado television show, we must also remain attentive to what artist-scholar Coco Fusco has called “the other history of intercultural performance.”¹² For Fusco, intercultural performance doesn’t so much transmit subaltern knowledge, thus breaking down spatial and temporal borders, as contribute to a hegemonic tradition of racism and exploitation very much aligned with the official archive. Countering the idea that performance art is by definition avant-garde and thus inherently subversive, Fusco writes, “Since the early days of the Conquest, ‘aboriginal samples’ of people from Africa, Asia, and the Americas were brought to Europe for aesthetic contemplation, scientific analysis, and entertainment” (146). While Taylor and indeed most Hemispheric Performance Studies scholars tend to find the American “origins of intercultural performance” in European interaction with Native American performers, or with the conscription of Native

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American into Catholic rituals, Fusco finds the beginnings of this sort of embodied practice in such shows as the display of the Hottentot Venus in early nineteenth-century Europe or the staging of a mock Indian battle at the *fin-de-siècle* Trans-Mississippi International Exhibition in Omaha. For Fusco, that is, the other history of intercultural performance is in many respects a tragic history in which “ethnographic spectacles circulated and reinforced stereotypes, stressing that difference was apparent in the bodies on display” (152). One senses in her argument a reluctance, indeed, a refusal, to ascribe mnemonic and epistemological resistance to hemispheric performers when confronted by indisputable evidence of historical trauma. The disturbing popularity of “Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit,” Fusco’s collaboration with artist-scholar Guillermo Gómez-Peña, testifies to the continuing relevance of this troubling legacy. When a large percentage of viewers in New York, Madrid, and Buenos Aires assumed that Fusco and Gómez-Peña were in fact members of a strange and exotic lost tribe – feeding, poking, and prodding the performers at will – these audience members demonstrated all too well how this sort of embodied practice has long marked a narrative of objectification, violence, and loss.

In *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, Joseph Roach also pursues “an alternative historical model of intercultural encounter, one based on performance,” that would prove “more resistant to the polarizing reductions of manifest destiny and less susceptible to the temptations of amnesia” (189). Yet he is arguably more invested in highlighting precisely those “limit cases” that Taylor abjures, and Fusco emphasizes, if only because his Atlanticist purview demands a consistent focus on the horrors of slavery. In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach engages with what he describes as “the three-sided relationship of memory, performance, and substitution,” (2) and, in a more political vein, with how “memory retains its consequences” (4). Roach offers a rich understanding of this relationship in his account of surrogation. Described by Roach as a central means by which “culture reproduces and re-creates itself,” surrogation is in his account a descriptor of how we address and seek to ameliorate loss and change through substitution (2).¹³ If surrogation – performance by another name – seems to recall the diachronic cultural process Amiri Baraka once dubbed “the changing same,” Roach’s understanding of that substitution renders it distinctly transnational. In Roach’s hands, the messy genealogy of Native American, European, and African performative traditions becomes a reworking of what has been lost in a manner that at once both recalls the past and looks ahead to a new hybrid future.

Yet, if “performance stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace,” the “elusive” and impossible aspects of surrogation also give rise to anxieties over the maintenance of fictive racial and national homogeneity. The impossible dream of complete reparation necessarily provokes worrisome thoughts about broken connections and imperfect substitutions that speak to larger concerns over the necessarily hybrid, heterogeneous, and contingent qualities of all identity and community formation.

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European and European American racism suggests as much. A culture cannot avoid surrogation, according to Roach, but neither it can avoid the dread that outsiders – particularly racial or ethnic others – will somehow assume the role of surrogate and undermine a putatively pure and coherent community.

Roach's important book is equally concerned with transatlantic and hemispheric connections, but I will limit myself here to a brief account of his work on the latter, particularly his discussion of the New Orleans and "the Caribbean frontier." Long known as a border city – a contact zone at once within and without the United States – the Big Easy provides Roach with a rich tableau of performances that testify both to hegemonic fantasies of surrogation and their powerful undoing in the hands of African Americans. Perhaps the most vivid example of the latter process emerges in Roach's analysis of the Mardi Gras Indians, "'gangs' of African Americans who identify with Native Americans and parade . . . costumed in . . . beautiful hand-sewn suits" along unannounced routes in New Orleans (14). What draws Roach to the Mardi Gras Indians, arguably the most compelling example of surrogation and embodied memory in his volume, isn't so much their allure, although the sheer beauty of the parades proves powerful indeed, but rather the messy relationship of routes to roots evident in both the history and practice of these quintessentially American performers. Many of the ostensibly African American Mardi Gras Indians claim an authentic family connection to Native Americans and see themselves as acting "exactly as Indians in days long by" (194–6). Yet this invocation of blood ties between black and red hardly eliminates the many alternative genealogies that proliferate around the performers, among them the idea that the 1884 visit of Buffalo Bill's Wild West may have inspired the practice of "playing Indian." And these alternatives are for Roach a rich reminder of how this American theater signifies. In his view, the inevitable contradictions that emerge from such competing origin narratives do not so much undermine the meaning of Mardi Gras Indians as "provide a crux for the construction of collective memory out of genealogies of performance" (194). That construction of collective memory breaks down the domestic distinction between black and red and at the same time subverts the non-contiguous geopolitical border that separates the Southern US from such Caribbean island communities as Jamaica, Bermuda, Trinidad, and Cuba. Surrogation in the New Orleans context links both to the restaging of circum-Atlantic encounter and to the rehearsal of hemispheric connections of color that white authorities throughout the Americas have long attempted to deny.

The emphasis on the Caribbean border in Roach's work may recall for some readers what is arguably the single most important, if unconventional, geographic formation central to Hemispheric Performance Studies: the contemporary US–Mexico border zone. Of the handful of important scholars who have taken up the question of border performance – among them, Claire Fox, Laura G. Gutiérrez, and David Roman – José David Saldívar stands out.¹⁴ Not only is Saldívar a major Hemispheric Studies scholar whose first major work *The Dialectics of Our*

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America (1991) helped establish this nascent field, he is also a critic whose various books and articles track a growing investment in the question of performance – if an investment that tends to derive from Literary and Cultural, not Theater, Studies. Unusual among hemispheric scholarship in its interest in a wide range of genres and forms, *The Dialectics of Our America* includes a substantial chapter that surveys New Historicist and Cultural Materialist approaches to *The Tempest*, and then examines in detail the various ways in which Lamming, Césaire, Fernández Retamar, and, more surprisingly, literary critics Robert Rodriguez and Houston Baker have used Caliban as a touchstone for their commentary on race and colonialism in the Americas. For the most part, Saldivar reads this extended trope of Caliban in distinctly non-performative terms, thus echoing the strategy of most scholarly commentators on American appropriations of *The Tempest*. Caliban represents for this hemisphericist critic a way of organizing a range of oppositional responses to white rapacity, not a synecdoche for a play or for theater.¹⁵ Yet the shadow of performance still shapes the volume. *The Dialectics of Our America* includes brief riffs on artist-activist Guillermo Gómez-Peña and musician Rubén Blades – commentaries that suggest Saldivar’s impulse to take seriously the theatrical dimensions of border culture.

His next volume, *Border Matters*, makes this interest more explicit. *Border Matters* offers extended readings of work by musicians Los Illegals and Los Tigres del Norte and such performance artists as Guillermo Gómez Peña in order to identify “alternative border cultures, histories, and contexts” to those represented “in mainline postmodernist studies.”¹⁶ The penultimate word is crucial here. Saldivar finds postmodernism an important point of departure for conceptualizing hemispheric performance. That emphasis emerges most clearly in readings of Gómez-Peña’s video *Border Brujo* (border shaman) and of rock performance artist El Vez. I will look at both examples briefly, for they speak to how Saldivar parses the relationship between Performance and Postmodernist Studies.

For Saldivar, Gómez-Peña’s work may be profitably read as an embodied transmission of knowledge in a manner that should recall the work of Taylor and Roach. Saldivar thus stresses how Gómez-Peña “often rehearses his life history over and over again” and cites the performance artist’s lyrical affirmation of bodily trauma and hemispheric American memories. “I’m a child of border crisis/a product of a cultural cesarean . . . born from . . . a howling wound,” confesses Gómez-Peña at one point in *Border Brujo*. Yet Saldivar also sees in Gómez-Peña’s work a widespread “interest in postmodernist ‘identity panic,’” particularly as evidenced by the artist’s decision to use 15 alter egos in the video, all of them drawn from the clichés and stereotypes of border culture. The 15 performances within a performance are indeed bewildering. Including, as Saldivar puts it, such “ethno-racial stereotypes of Latinos/as” as “an urban mestizo, a Mexico City street vendor,” and “an upper-class Latino from Miami,” not to mention Anglo racist stereotypes, *Border Brujo* challenges the viewer “to sort the flowing electronic material into thematic blocks and rhythms” (117). The point here is to generate

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“a calculated assault on the Alto Californians’ act of gazing through North American eyes” (155). Saldivar sympathizes with this avant-garde shock tactic, but he has some difficulties with what he understands as Gómez-Peña’s schizo-postmodernism.

Even as Saldivar emphasizes that Gómez-Peña has in a sense rendered his televisual body a medium for a host of past and present border knowledge, the critic also wants to stress that the point of *Border Brujo* is not connection across time and space, but rather a recognition of “the alienation” that affects “a whole hemisphere” (158). That this is an emphasis Saldivar finds “unfortunate” renders the commentary on Gómez-Peña less enthusiastic than one would expect; one wonders what this hemisphericist critic would make of Walter Mercado’s television show (158).

If Saldivar expresses some frustration with what we might call border post-modernism, he finds in El Vez’s musical appropriations a performance far more to his liking. Saldivar devotes the end of *Border Matters* to a discussion of El Vez and then returns to this figure in his recent article “In Search of the ‘Mexican Elvis’” (2003). El Vez (Robert Lopez) is a performance artist who uses “swagger, attitude, and groove” and a voice “tight as a fist” to signify upon the King and in the process produces new transnational cultural and political meaning. Saldivar recognizes full well that from one angle this Elvis simulation recalls “the post-modern cultural dominant of spectacle and pastiche” (191). Yet, in his analysis of El Vez’s revisions of North American pop music, Saldivar makes evident that this border performance also conveys “subaltern knowledge” in a manner not unlike that of the Mardi Gras Indians analyzed by Joseph Roach (214). Thus Saldivar underscores the fact that El Vez reinvents Chuck Berry’s “Johnny Be Good” as “Go Zapata Go,” a move that both demands a border crossing – “way down past Louisiana, down in Mexico” – and a historical transgression: the evocation of Mexico revolutionary, Emiliano Zapata. “Aztlán,” another El Vez song from the album *Graciasland*, offers an even bolder example of how this performance artist succeeds in pushing beyond the pastiche of the postmodern to a new transmission of grass-roots social memory. In this moving tribute, Saldivar argues, El Vez takes up the transnational space of Aztlán and explores its historical meanings via a pointed commentary on Paul Simon’s *Graceland*. Rather than allowing this citation of the popular to frame his cultural intervention as an example of post-modern irony, El Vez inverts the process and has the mythic mnemonics of Aztlán remake the meaning of contemporary pop music. “El Vez’s ‘borderization’ of North America’s pop icon[s] . . . serves as a concrete site where social relations are not only constructed but envisioned,” but that process of envisioning depends in no small part on the power of memory (191).

Like many Hemispheric Performance Studies scholars, and particularly those who focus on the contemporary culture of the border, Saldivar tends to express little interest in what Joseph Roach dubs “the so-called legitimate theater” (198). The repressed genre of drama that arguably haunts every hemispheric citation of Caliban and his complex legacy does not make much of a return. This is due in part to the fact that, as Peggy Phelan has noted, “only a tiny portion of the

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world's cultures [equate] theatre with scripts" and thus any postnational version of Performance Studies worthy of the name will of necessity require a less text-based conception of "its fundamental term" (3). Yet, to push aside text-based theater is, as W. B. Worthen has argued, to overlook an enormous archive that functions in many cases *as a repertoire* inasmuch as texts are persistently revised and transformed through performance and through publication.¹⁷ The occlusion of these theatrical texts is particularly noteworthy when we consider that historical drama, one important subgenre of "the so-called legitimate theater," has for centuries offered performers and audiences alike a vital means of wrestling with the meaning of memory and history in self-consciously embodied terms.¹⁸ How should we respond to the myriad hemispheric dramas that represent conquest, genocide, slavery, revolution, dictatorship, and other "limit cases" in which history takes shape as a document written in flesh and blood? How should we read those dramas of the Americas that locate embodied practice in their textual and performative revisions of the historical record itself?

We can begin to ponder these questions by reconsidering the history play's relationship to dominant racial and national formations in the United States. Curtis Marez provides us with a valuable starting point in his work on *Los Comanches* – a historical drama about the Spanish suppression of Comanche insurrection performed regularly in New Mexico from the late nineteenth century onward.¹⁹ For Marez, this play is part of an attempt by contemporary "elite Spanish Americans" to claim through performance a white European ancestry (and its colonial legacy) that distinguishes them both from First Peoples, Mexicans, and Chicana/os (290). Yet, if Marez tends to confirm our suspicions about such an official historical drama, he also reminds us that the performance of and response to such dramas can make available far less predictable political meanings. The *mestizos* who perform in *Los Comanches* may fall prey to historicist fantasies of white colonial genealogy, but they also stage the drama in a manner that demonstrates a desire to "disidentify with 'Spanishness' and the accommodation to Anglo-American power that it increasingly represented" (290). Thus one performance of the play from the 1930s parodied the "vain and buffoonish Spaniards" (294). Furthermore, as Marez brilliantly argues, in performing Comanche identity, the *mestizo* actors at times managed to express a surprising identification with First Peoples that reflected "historical links to Comanches and Pueblo Indians" (291). In this case, the historical drama isn't so much a predictable quantity as an occasion for struggle over the meaning of the past.

One can find in productions of such ostensibly hegemonic historical dramas any number of discordant elements that subvert the master narrative of the elite. Yet, as a number of our greatest modern playwrights have demonstrated, the very text of the history play can be rewritten and redefined in a manner that doesn't so much affirm as undermine an official, not to say oppressive, historical record. At times the interrogation of the dominant narrative might occur through a Brechtian montage or an Artaudian theater of cruelty, but it can also emerge through

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more predictable melodramatic or realistic dramatic modes. The archive of hemispheric historical drama offers us a rich genealogy of texts that reaches far back into the nineteenth century with the work of such writers as Haitian Pierre Faubert (e.g., *Ogé ou Le préjugé de couleur* (1856)) and white US Southerner William Gilmore Simms (e.g., *Michael Bonham* (1852)). But perhaps the best place to begin tracing such a genealogy is with the one figure that features so prominently in many hemispheric projects, Cuban intellectual and revolutionary José Martí. We tend to associate Martí with the extraordinary essay “Our America” and, to a lesser extent, his translation of Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*. Yet this construction of Martí as a man of prose does his variegated oeuvre an injustice. Renowned for his oratorical skills, Martí was sensitive to the power of drama and performance. One of his earliest publications, *Abdala* (1869), is a verse drama about the Haitian Revolution – and a potential black Cuban revolution – in which a mythic Nubia stands in for a Caribbean locale. In the play, the warrior Abdala accepts the task of defending his homeland against foreign invaders, evidence of the young Martí’s anti-imperialism. Sacrifice for the nation proves central here; as the drama’s hero proclaims: “If Abdala knew that by his blood Nubia will be saved/ from the terrible foreign claws,/ I would stain those robes your wear,/ my mother, with drops of my own blood.”²⁰ One senses that Martí fully appreciates the degree to which embodied performance allowed for the transmission of counter-hegemonic sentiments. The role of theater in consolidating subaltern nationhood against a foreign colonial force continues in Martí’s next plays, *Morazan* (1877), a drama about the struggle for Guatemalan independence, and *Fatherland and Liberty* (*Patria y Libertad*) (1895), a work that focuses on the violent relationship of Native Americans and Spanish colonialists in Central America. Sensitive to intercultural relations and the vexed relation of nation and empire, these plays reflect Martí’s lifelong investment in the liberation of all American peoples.

Martí’s rich understanding of the history play as a potentially transgressive form is hardly unusual among the twentieth century’s most celebrated playwrights and performers. If we shift from the Cuban intellectual to the Provincetown Theater, we see how a transnational historical imperative played an equally important role in the emergence of modern US drama. John Reed, Sophie Treadwell, and other Provincetown mainstays developed an important investment in the Mexican Revolution (1910–20), but it was Eugene O’Neill, the theater’s most famous figure, who crafted the richest range of dramatic responses to transnational American history. O’Neill began his career with *A Wife for Life* (1914), a play about two American miners with Peruvian experience that commented on the exploitative relationship between the Monster – Martí’s name for the United States – and Latin American natural resources. O’Neill then went on to write *The Movie Man* (1914), a one-act drama about US film-makers who want to film Pancho Villa’s exploits, *The Emperor Jones* (1920), a play that engages through expressionist style with the US invasion and occupation of Haiti (1915–34) and, most important for our purposes, the lesser-known historical drama *The Fountain* (1922). Set at the

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turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the latter play represents a fascinating series of border-crossings and intercultural confrontations, among them clashes between Moors and Spaniards in Europe and battles between Spaniards and Native Americans in what is now Puerto Rico, Cuba, and southern Florida. A drama about Juan Ponce de Leon's search for the fabled spring of youth, *The Fountain* offers a steady critique of European colonial greed and, more surprisingly, an ecumenical valuation of spiritual uplift. Ponce de Leon may be a conquistador blessed by the Church, but he recognizes that colonialism can only breed destruction for all concerned. As he puts it, "God pity this land until all looters perish from the earth."²¹ In O'Neill's hands, Ponce de Leon's quixotic quest for the mythic spring leads to near-fatal violence at the hands of Native Americans and an eventual rapture with all living things.

The Mexican Revolution that helped spark the political and creative imaginations of the Provincetown writers also proved inspiring to those a bit closer to the site of its inception. Of the various playwrights, songwriters, and performers who engaged with this pivotal event, Mexican playwright and fiction writer Josefina Niggli proves noteworthy thanks to the sheer number of historical dramas she produced – and the intriguing fact that she generated most of them in North Carolina, first as a drama student and then as a drama professor. From the late 1920s into the early 1940s, Niggli created a host of such plays, among them such works as *Soldadera* (1936) and *This is Villa!* (1939). Written during the era of the Good Neighbor policy, these dramas seem intended to give US audiences a sense of how *La Revolucion* impacted everyday life in Mexico. Niggli's plays are particularly sensitive to the impact of historical events on working-class women. *Soldadera* is a case in point. As its title suggests, this play focuses not on revolutionary men, but on women who are assigned distinctly pedestrian military tasks – guarding prisoners and caretaking ammunition. Women may continue to have a figural function for the movement – at one point Adelita admits that for some men she is "the symbol of the revolution" – but Niggli stresses that they still endure the burdens of patriarchy even as they are willing to sacrifice themselves for anti-imperialist political change.²² The grand revolution persists, but the domestic revolution must wait for another day.

Niggli's plays of the Mexican Revolution found their hemispheric analogue in the extraordinary array of Haitian Revolution dramas and spectacles that appeared during the 1930s and 1940s. The list includes some fairly well-known plays: C. L. R. James's *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1936), Langston Hughes's *Emperor of Haiti* (1936), William Du Bois's *Haiti: A Drama of the Black Napoleon* (1938), Orson Welles's Shakespearean riff on the Haitian question, *Voodoo Macbeth* (1936), and Derek Walcott's *Henri Christophe* (1949). Some of these dramas are better than others, but they are all worthy of our attention, not least because they suggest how the peculiar combination of US imperialism in the Caribbean and black internationalism underwrote a bold efflorescence of the history play. Walcott's *Henri Christophe*, one of his earliest dramas, provides an important illustration of this

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revitalization of the genre. In this verse play, Walcott focuses on the struggle between two revolutionary generals, Christophe and Jean Jacques Dessalines, in the wake of Toussaint L'Ouverture's exile and death. In many respects a historical drama that engages with the potential dictatorship that always threatens to follow revolution, *Henry Christophe* focuses explicitly on how pivotal figures imagine themselves beyond change. In the words of Dessalines, "I am a King; Argue with history./ Ask history and the white cruelties . . ." ²³ The would-be Haitian dictator identifies history as nothing more than the record of "the white cruelties" – a claim that licenses his attempt to seize power in the name of something that exceeds colonial modernity and its archive. That his outrageous pronouncement precedes his murder at the hands of Henri Christophe who, in turn, kills himself during the play's final scene, suggests that Walcott knows all too well that history always has the last laugh. "History, breaking the stalk she grew herself,/ Kills us like flies," states Christophe toward the end of the play, a fitting comment indeed on both the frailty of the human condition and the need for embodied memory (106).

Walcott's meta-historical take on the history play takes on particular importance given that *Henri Christophe* stands in dynamic relation to the many other Haitian Revolution dramas and performances that proliferated throughout the hemisphere during the late 1930s and 1940s. Rarely considered as a hemispheric unit or, better, a hemispheric genre, this cluster of Haitian Revolution dramas contributed to the formation of a transnational public sphere in which the meaning of American identity was contested and reimagined. Such a claim might seem counterintuitive given that we tend to privilege the textual, if not the archival, when analyzing the public sphere. The primary role of the newspaper and the novel in the construction of such a civil space of discourse has been a crucial element in public sphere scholarship from Jurgen Habermas to Michael Warner. Yet, as Christopher Looby, Loren Kruger, and critics have pointed out, various modes of performance from oratory to street theater have proven equally integral to the debate and dissension typical of a vital public sphere. Indeed, we might speculate that the very mobility of performance, within and without the nation, might have rendered it more important than certain textual artifacts to the construction of a transnational public sphere.

In the case of the Haitian Revolution plays, disparate writers, performers, and audiences found in this legendary event a powerful means of meditating in a historical fashion on hemispheric politics. One can imagine how the US audiences cheering Toussaint L'Ouverture and other Haitian heroes, as they defeat European colonialists in the 1938 New York production of William DuBois's *Haiti*, may well have understood the pride with which Haitian theatergoers responded to the African-Caribbean attack on French General Leclerc's forces in the 1940 staging of Placide David and Dominique Hippolyte's *Le Torrent*. This isn't to claim that each audience was aware of the other, but rather that there existed in the late 1930s a hemispheric investment in the Haitian Revolution and its dramatic

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representations that may have exceeded geopolitical differences. The temporal near-coincidence of these two successful productions well suggests how different Americans might have engaged in a shared political and aesthetic response to dramatic rehearsals of the same historical event. That the various plays of the Haitian Revolution began to emerge during and shortly after the US occupation (1915–34) no doubt made these theatrical contributions all the more compelling. Confronted by a US imperium that attempted to censor Dominique Hippolyte, Felix Morriseau-Leroy, and other Haitian playwrights who wrote of liberation, transnational American intellectuals sought in drama a new way of reiterating the oppressed island nation's fabled insurrection (1791–1804).²⁴

To rehearse the Haitian Revolution in print and on stage was not so much to eulogize a famous event as it was to call forth that event for new political duty. The public sphere that emerged from these efforts did not stand alone – it overlapped with Popular Front and black internationalist initiatives – but its importance to a new way of imagining color and democracy cannot be overstated. One can locate in these transnational exchanges and connections a sprawling left public sphere that found in the theatricalization of history a new way to imagine community beyond the nation form. In the end, perhaps, the goal of hemispheric drama and performance is not to reject the historical for the mnemonic, the archive for the repertoire, the text for the body, even the nation for the hemisphere, but rather to challenge the very forces that compel such politicized distinctions. Surely that is a valuable lesson for American Studies as well.

Notes and References

- 1 See Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Ubu Repertory Theater, 1992); George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1991 [1960]); Fernández Retamar's *Caliban and Other Essays*, trans. Edward Baker (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989 [1971]); and José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel*, trans. Margaret Peden (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1988 [1900]).
- 2 See Loren Kruger's *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
- 3 For an important history of this Anglo-American bias, see Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1985).
- 4 S. E. Wilmer, *Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 176.
- 5 See Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 271. All other citations will be included in the body of the text.
- 6 See *Blackface Cuba, 1840–1895* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 9.
- 7 See "Introduction: The Ends of Performance," in Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, eds, *The Ends of Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 10.
- 8 See "Of Caravans and Carnivals: Performance Studies in Motion," *TDR* 39/4 (autumn 1995): 138.
- 9 Luisa Josefina Hernandez has suggested as much in an important personal commentary on the first Mexican production of *Streetcar*. For a summary of Hernandez's response, see Felicia Hardison Londre and Daniel J. Watermeier, *The History of North American Theater* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 445.

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- 10 See, for example, Gillman's important "Afterword," in Caroline Levander and Robert Levine, eds, *Hemispheric American Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008). John Carlos Rowe has drawn attention to the historical dimensions of transnational studies in many fine works. For one example, consider his sustained engagement with the themes of modernity and modernization in *Literary Culture and US Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- 11 The passage from Nora is quoted in Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (Columbia University Press, 1996), 26. All further citations to the Roach volume will be included in the body of the text.
- 12 See "The Other History of Intercultural Performance" *TDR* 38/1 (spring, 1994): 143–67. All further citations will be included in the body of the text.
- 13 As Roach explained in an interview with Cuban studies scholar Ned Sublette, "There's a process that I call surrogation, or substitution, where one generation will stand up and stand in for another, and honor the preceding generation by quoting it, but also develop their own ideas and put in their own inventions." See: <<http://www.afropop.org/multi/interview/ID/68/Joseph+Roach+talks+to+Ned+Sublette>>.
- 14 See Claire Fox, *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the US–Mexico Border* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1999); Laura G. Gutiérrez, "Deconstructing the Mythical Homeland: Mexico in Contemporary Chicana Performance," in Alicia Gaspar de Alba, ed., *Velvet Barrios: Popular Culture and Chicana/o Sexualities* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 63–74; David Roman, "Teatro Viva! Latino Performance and the Politics of AIDS in Los Angeles," in Emilie L. Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith, eds, *Entiender? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 346–69.
- 15 See José David Saldívar, *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 123–48.
- 16 See José David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 9. All further citations will be included in the body of the text.
- 17 See W. B. Worthen, "Antigone's Bones," *TDR* 52/3 (fall 2008) (T199): 10–33.
- 18 Herbert Lindenberger argues that historical drama makes "a great[er] pretense at engaging in reality than does writing whose fictiveness we accept from the start." See *Historical Drama: The Relationship of Literature and Reality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975), x.
- 19 See "Signifying Spain, Becoming Comanche, Making Mexicans: Indian Captivity and the History of Chicana/o Popular Performance" *American Quarterly* 53/2 (June 2001): 267–307. All future citations will be included in the body of the text. For another more famous example of such a play one might cite the enormous popularity of John Steven McGroarty's *The Mission Play* (1911), a historical drama that appealed to Anglo Californians eager to understand the conquest of California as natural and inevitable.
- 20 See *José Martí: Selected Writings*, ed. Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria (New York: Penguin Classics, 2002), 5.
- 21 See "The Fountain," in *Eugene O'Neill: Complete Plays, 1920–1931* (New York: Library of America, 1988), 185. All further citations will be included in the body of the text.
- 22 Josefina Niggli, *Mexican Village and Other Works* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 51.
- 23 See Walcott, "Henri Christophe," in *The Haitian Trilogy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002 [1949]), 39. All other citations will be included in the body of the text.
- 24 For an important commentary on these playwrights, see V. A. Clark "Haiti's Tragic Overture: (Mis)representations of the Haitian Revolution in World Drama (1796–1975)," in James Heffernan, ed., *Representing the French Revolution* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), 237–60.

Postnational and Postcolonial Reconfigurations of American Studies in the Postmodern Condition

Donald Pease

Inaugurating American Studies in the Postmodern Condition

In her 1998 presidential address to the American Studies Association, “What’s in a Name”, Janice Radway invited the disparate international and transnational, as well as sub-national research communities out of which the American Studies Association was comprised to reconceptualize the nature of their undertakings.¹ The interrogative “What’s in a Name?” gave expression to the discontent of the members of the American Studies Association who either felt their work had been misrepresented within that categorization, or who found it too restrictive, or insufficiently accommodating. If “American” would not secure for the association a name to which all of its members would want to answer, perhaps a crisis in the name could.

Insofar as Radway’s question “What’s in a Name?” undermined “America’s” power to totalize the field and unify the membership, it also brought into visibility and invited collective reflection upon the differences in the “studies” to which the organization’s disparate members had devoted themselves. After citing the impact of a wide range of discourse formations and emergent sub-fields – British Cultural Studies, the discourse of the borderlands and the critique of US imperialism – on the field of American Studies, Radway articulated her question to the challenges posed to a monolithic conceptualization of the field by Americanist scholars whose projects intersected with critical race theory, Black Atlantic studies, women’s studies, subaltern studies, and transnational feminist and queer studies. These scholars did not conceptualize their field identities as separate essences sheltered within an encompassing national territory, but as

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cross-cutting, insurgent, often oppositional identifications that empowered coalitions within but also across national borders. The fact that these Americanists were committed to political goals that traversed national boundaries severely undermined the idea of a bounded national territory and a coherent national identity to which the American Studies Association had formerly adhered.²

“What’s in a Name?” invoked these changes in the orientation of the association’s members to ask whether, in naming itself the American Studies Association, the organization had compounded the imperial gesture whereby the United States had appropriated to itself synecdochally the name “America.” Radway wondered in particular whether the American Studies Association, in its restriction of the descriptive “American” to the cultures of the United States, had not comparably suppressed the United States’s location within a hemisphere also known as “America” and thereby eradicated the fact that other nations had also staked their distinctive claims to the name.

Radway’s question “What’s in a Name?” opened up spaces within the field of American Studies for the members to undertake a collective stocktaking of the transformative changes that had taken place since the termination of the Cold War in 1989. Her address resulted in association-wide conversations on the significance of these changes for the members of the American Studies Association. These conversations resulted in declarations of programmatic shifts in orientation in which the terms “postmodernity,” “postnationality,” and “postcoloniality” supplied needed explanatory frameworks. To indicate the pertinence of each of these explanatory terms to the transformations that have taken place within the field, I have organized the following account of American Studies in the postmodern condition by establishing the macro-political context for the emergence of the postnational and postcolonial reorientation of the field of American Studies and by proceeding to analysis of the different processes and projects embedded within these paradigmatic terms.

The Dismantling of the Meta-Narrative of American Exceptionalism

Jean-François Lyotard has elaborated the significance of the postmodern condition in terms of the dismantling of the Enlightenment’s grand narratives.³ The project of modernity emerged out of the aspiration of Enlightenment thinkers to replace the superstitions and idolatries supervised by theological constraints with the emancipatory powers they associated with analytic reason. But postmodern thinkers like Lyotard have given up on modernity’s belief in universal reason. They have characterized the modernist attempt to replace religious superstition with the panoptical viewpoint of universal reason as the willful imposition of a regulatory design over highly contingent processes which refuse such universalizations, Lyotard has given expression to a deep suspicion of what he calls the

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grand meta-narratives of modernity, which he defines as the outcome modernist thinkers' attempts to encompass the heterogeneous forms of cultural life and to subsume multiple histories and temporalities within a single, unified teleology.

Jean-François Lyotard explained the emergence of the postmodern condition in terms of the dismantling of these grand modernist narratives. The field of American Studies entered the postmodern condition in the wake of the dismantling of the meta-narratives of American exceptionalism and Marxian socialism, out of whose antagonism the modern world order had been regulated for the preceding half-century. The grand meta-narratives that the US and the USSR had fashioned out of them constituted the historically effective mechanisms whereby the Enlightenment's ideals of freedom and equality were transmuted into utterly incompatible representations of universal human "rights." As the surfaces on which those modern meta-narratives were inscribed, these imperial nations named the spaces, in the aftermath of the Cold War, in which the postmodern condition became pervasive.

The imperializing dominance of the ideology of American democracy was sustained throughout the Cold War through the supplementary effects of the meta-narrative of American Exceptionalism, which declared the United States exempt from the rules through which it regulated the rest of the global order. The meta-narrative of American exceptionalism supplied a supplement to the metaphysical mediation between the imperial US state and the lifeworlds of its subjects. The meta-narrative of American exceptionalism recast the reason of state as a teleology (a horizon of narrative expectations emanating from a national origin and organized by a national purpose), that was exempt from the historical laws to which other nations were subject insofar as it was endowed with the power to enforce those laws. This exceptionalist meta-narrative situated its addressees within positions that presupposed their desire to recover a lost national origin whose projection onto an international imperializing future organized the national subject's quest in the form of a sequence of purposive events.

American exceptionalism's representations of the US as an exception to norms regulating other national orders also promoted an understanding of the US as the standard for the future of democracy that nations across the globe should emulate. In representing the US as an exception to the rule of European normalization, the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism sustained an image of Europe as that which could not find reflection in the US mirror. What the US was described as lacking rendered it not merely different from but also qualitatively better than the European nation-states whose social orders were described as having been devastated by Marxian socialism. Exceptionalism represented a Soviet Empire that threatened to overthrow the world order through the spread of revolutionary socialism, and it represented Europe as especially susceptible to this threat.⁴

Overall, US exceptionalism was a modern meta-narrative as well as the regulatory ideal assigned responsibility for defining, supporting, and developing US

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hegemony. US exceptionalism structured its assertion of US sovereignty upon representations of a divisive, fragmented world order that justified its power to rule. The continued dominance of that meta-narrative required the US to sustain the representation of itself as an exception to the rules through which it regulated the rest of the global order. But with the dismantling of the Soviet Union, and the formation of the European Union, the US lost its threatening socialist totalitarian Russian Other as well as its destabilized and dependent European and “third world” Others.

Following the unprecedented changes in the global landscape since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the frames of intelligibility that were underpinned by the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism could no longer supply the contours for understanding world events. After the US lost the geopolitical rationale for the representation of itself as an exception to the laws of nations, the US lost the putative authority to establish the rules for the global order. In the wake of the geopolitical conditions that had lent the exceptionalist frame its plausibility, the disremembered underside of American exceptionalism surged back up into visibility. With the elimination of relations that were grounded in such macro-political dichotomies as the insuperable antagonism between the US and the USSR, representations of multiple, interconnected and heterogeneous developments emerged into view that were not reducible to such stabilized dichotomizations.

The discrediting of the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism resulted in a fundamental reshaping of accounts of the US place in world history that became especially audible in the ASA’s response to Jan Radway’s “What’s in a Name?” Radway had designed her broad-gauged survey of the changes that had transpired within American Studies to draw the organization away from its exceptionalist proclivities. Because she refused descriptions of the field of American studies as the research correlative of an imperializing state, Radway also undermined the construction of an exceptionalist meta-narrative that had formerly regulated scholarship within the association. Radway invoked the multiple research agendas connoted within American Studies to assert that the American Studies Association was inherently differentiated and always changing in the active response of its members to discourses that were cross-cultural and international. Insofar as their pluralized scholarly practices lacked an encompassing discourse with which they might be unified or linked to a consensus, the members of the American Studies Association understood themselves as governed in the last instance by reference to the diversity of their practices.

When she asked the American Studies Association’s members to challenge the reification of the American Studies Association as a single unitary culture, Radway intended to align the organization with a range of post-exceptionalist alternatives. Indeed, the interrogative power of “What’s in a Name?” presupposed the declining power of the nation-state. By convoking the convention around the question of the name its members wished to be called, Radway laid claim to the

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radical democratic energies mobilized by challenges to United States imperial nationalism and resituated them in an understanding of what Radway called the “intricate interdependency” of matters of race, gender, identity, and sexualities outside the framework supplied by the nationalizing narrative. The post-exceptionalist aspect of Radway’s address drew upon this description of American Studies as itself the product of a range of such complex yet intertwined processes.

Scholars within the emergent fields of postnational and postcolonial American Studies differed from establishment American Studies scholars in that they presupposed globalization rather than American exceptionalism as the horizon of intelligibility for their scholarship. Globalization involved the linkage of localized activities within global economic, cultural, and political processes. Globalization emerged out of the compression of the world, which resulted from communications technology and which also effected the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole. In the era of globalization, the once hegemonic narrative of the nation was unseated by economic and political processes that disembedded social interactions from their local contexts and facilitated their generalized extension across vast global expanses.⁵ The globalization of American Studies involved scholars in the work of recovering the memory of America’s disavowed imperial past so as to erect anti-imperialist norms into newly forged interpretive frameworks. In retrieving its disavowed imperial past, post-Cold War Americanist scholars also aspired to subject the unilateralism of the American state to the multilateral norms of global civil society. These initiatives have resulted in incalculable advances in knowledge about America’s global interconnections.

American Studies scholars deployed these anti-imperialist norms to demand rights for migrants, refugees, minoritized, and stateless peoples who had formerly been denied them by the American imperial state. Aztlan, the Pacific Rim, the Afro-Caribbean, and the emergent field of Transatlantic Studies became the chief beneficiaries of the dismantling of Cold War American exceptionalism. These regions from the disavowed underside of exceptionalism brought the interconnections between the state’s formerly disavowed imperial formations and the peoples, spaces, and regions affected by these states of exception into stark visibility.

Postnational and postcolonial accounts of American Studies replaced the core-periphery paradigm that American exceptionalism buttressed with a model of the transverse relations of power that criss-crossed the globe. Global tribes with widespread diaspora networks, epistemic communities with transnational allegiances, migrant labor forces, and radically pluralist groups now construe nation-building as a provisional and highly unreliable linkage between universalism and territorial exclusion.⁶ Once believed crucial for membership in the world system, the nation-state has been recast as a tolerated anachronism in a global economy requiring a borderless world for its effective operation.

American Studies scholars who had organized their field identities out of exceptionalist norms had deployed the myths of the Frontier and the Melting Pot to

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authorize immigration policies in which the state's assimilationist paradigm overrode questions of diaspora and multiculturalism. But in the wake of the Cold War, practitioners of American Cultural Studies have supplanted the Frontier and the Melting Pot with the Borderlands and the Contact Zone as the mythological tropes that informed their scholarship.

One of the chief appeals of the embrace of globalization as a horizon of intelligibility for Americanist scholars was that, in its displacing of the centrality of the American nation-state, globalization appeared to solicit the wholesale reconfiguration of the terrain of the object of study. Rather than construing the territorial nation-state as the instrument for evaluating and representing America's global interrelationships, these postnational and postcolonial models called for the reconceptualization of social movements and models of cultural transmission as passing back and forth between disparate cultural systems through the retrieval of the forgotten histories and imagining of new geographies.

Postnational and Postcolonial Narratives of Globalization

The globalization of American studies, as we might summarize these observations concerning its effects, has resulted in disparate interdisciplinary formations that would change the epistemological objects and would introduce an alternative politics of power and knowledge for the field. Although postnationalist and postcolonialist projects both emerged at the site of globalization of American Studies, they differ radically in the significance they associate with "America's" change in status as well as in the grid of intelligibility whereby they would calculate it. These asymmetrical but interdependent socio-economic processes share responsibility for the demotion of the nation-state to the status of a residual unit of economic exchange in the global economy. Both postnationalism and postcolonialism begin with the assumption that, while the nation-state may not be dead exactly, it has undergone a drastic change in role. The world economy requires socially and territorially more complex organizations than nation-states, which have subsequently become splintered rather than developmental in form. The time-bound and enclosed nation-state whose institutional form once foreclosed other possibilities has given way to more complex patterns of interdependence grounded in the consciousness of the ways in which the local and the global have become inextricably intertwined.

Were they to be construed as narratives, these formations might be differentiated from one another with the observation that, while postcolonialism "narrates" the processes whereby anti-imperial nationalisms speak back to global capital in the name of disparate "peoples," postnational projects narrativize the processes whereby global capital manages national populations in the name of the state. As this antithetical formulation would suggest, the postnational designates the complex site wherein postcolonial resistance to global capital intersects with the

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questions the global economy addresses to the state concerning the nation's continued role in its management.

When it is emplotted within a postcolonialist narrative, the nation undergoes a dramatic change in historical orientation. Postcolonialism emerged, in part, through postcolonial scholars conducting immanent critiques of the nation as an ideological mystification of state power. Postcolonial critics of American exceptionalism have recharacterized US nationalism as the fictive invention of a civi-territorial complex that did not in fact exist. These critiques drew upon analyses of the narrative elements – the national meta-narrative, narrativity, and intentionality – that conveyed this nationalist fiction.⁷ Postcolonial critics have sorted national narratives into at least three separate but overlapping categories: national, anti-national, and post-national. In establishing interlinkages between proletarian anti-capitalism and nationalist anti-imperialism, postcolonial scholars deploy national narratives strategically as forms of local resistance to the encroachment of global capital.⁸

Postcolonial critics like Malini Schueller and Laura Lomas have described the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism as the work of an imperial state formation that narrated the state's collective representations to a national people who aspired to realize them.⁹ Narrativizing a relationship between a "people" and a civi-territorial complex thereafter construed as "natural," the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism effected imaginary relations between national peoples and an imperial state that secured them to its apparatuses.¹⁰

But the contradictory relationship between difference and sameness out of which the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism and the American national identity were fashioned could only be resolved into a unity through the state's intervention. When it exercised the power to make a unity out of difference, the state also threatened its individual subjects' relation to this unity with disruption at the paradoxical space wherein this unification was accomplished. If state power was required to constitute (and enforce) the national unity that the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism presupposed as a property intrinsic to the nation, that accomplished unity would always lack at least one part.

Since it required the intervention of the state's power as a force external to the (not yet united) nation, the unified American nation would always lack the part played by the imperial state in constituting its integrity. The imperial state exercised its powers of unification through the forcible exclusion of knowledge of the history of internal – the extermination and forcible resettlement of first peoples, the ghettoization of migrant laborers and African American, the internment of Japanese citizens, and external – the annexation of the territories of Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands – colonialism. The "American" people, in turn, misrecognized their subjection to the state's imperial designs by finding it restricted to the exceptionalist state's relationship to these excepted colonial peoples and places.

But the "American" people did not – as had been their practice in their relations to racialized others within the national order – abject the colonized. In

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their colonial relations, the “American” people instead (re)performed the subjection that (they could not acknowledge) the state had exercised in the national order. In order to maintain this ignorance, Americanist scholars abjected the discourse of colonialism (recasting it as a subjugated knowledge) in which the knowledge of US imperial state power was inscribed, and thereby effectively disavowed as well the knowledge of US imperialism.

As the bearers of the knowledge of the power of the US imperial state out of whose disavowal the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism was constituted, postcolonialist scholars could not represent colonial subjects’ emancipation from the state within either the American exceptionalist meta-narrative or a newly forged national narrative. These postcolonial scholars instead hollowed out a place of between-ness, an unsurpassable interstitiality, that could neither be assimilated by national narratives nor remain absolutely opposed to nationalism.

As figures who had been either wholly excluded or hierarchically minoritized through the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism, postcolonial peoples could not be narrativized in its terms. Unlike the exceptional national people, “America’s” postcolonial subject recognized state force (rather than the integral nation) as the “real” historical agency of American exceptionalism. Insofar as colonialist abjection constituted their official status, however, postcolonials could not remain utterly opposed to nationalism either. Because postcolonial subjects knew, beyond the possibility of disavowal, of the imperial state practices (abjecting/ subjection) that the American exceptionalist meta-narrative had disavowed, they could neither become assimilated within preconstituted national categories nor withdraw their demand for a non-exclusivist nationalism (a nationalism, in other words, that was not one). Postcolonial peoples might, as a consequence, be described as having “subjectivized” this non-integratable knowledge.

In *Nation and Narration*, Homi Bhabha has usefully complicated this description of the relation between national narratives and the discourse of colonialism by describing them as doubles whose relation is not calculable as a similitude. In the following passage, Bhabha designates the colonial state apparatus as the disavowed agent of national narrativity, and postcoloniality as the limit internal to (post)national narration:

It is precisely between these borderlines of the nation space that we can see how the “people” come to be constructed within a range of discourses as a double narrative movement. In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through the this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation.¹¹

Bhabha’s reading establishes an intimate distance between national narratives and the colonial state apparatus and proposes that the rhetorical strategies

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postcolonials developed in their resistance to the colonial state be understood as effective resources in the enunciative sites proper to the performance of post-national narration. What Bhabha names the “pedagogical” in this passage has a double referent – to the subjects structured within national narratives as well as to those subject to the colonial state. In subjugating persons and events to its preconstituted categories, the colonial state did not innovate but simply reproduced, Bhabha suggests, those “continuist,” “accumulative,” “pedagogical” movements supportive of national narrativity (whose “subjects” can be numbered among the colonial pedagogues). The “repetitious and recursive strategy” of the “people’s” acts of (postcolonial) narration performatively opens up that split space in between the colonial (national) narrative and the people that also (recursively) reveals the site of the postnational.

In his construal of them as doubles, Bhabha effects a slippage in his identification of postcolonial and postnational peoples, which refuses the description of the “national people” as self-identical, identifying them as victims as well as agents of the conjoined practices of abjection and subjection. When the “people” under Bhabha’s dispensation assume their preconstituted subject positions within national narratives, their enunciations always split in two incompatible positions. The “pedagogical” subject who, in enunciating the pre-existing statements of the national narrative, discovers in the state’s integrating of the nation an event for which there are no preconstituted categories with which to enunciate it, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the “performative” subject who, in enunciating postnational narrations that lack any pre-existing place within the narrative order apart from the self-fading act of enunciating them as such, can only reiterate what the national narrative always is lacking.

The subversive strategies whereby postcolonial narrations de-link insurgent nationalisms from the colonial state apparatuses have also enabled, as we might conclude from Bhabha’s pedagogical narration, a retroactive reading of the meta-narrative of American exceptionalism that is capable of resituating postcolonial “knowledge” in the place of its former abjection and of thereby exposing the subject of the national narrative as the effect of the paradoxical logic – of the whole plus or minus one – that we earlier described as the signifier of postnationality.

In their oppositional stance directed against US imperial nationalism, post-colonial scholars have deployed a counter-hegemonic literary hybrid – anti-American nationalism – as a strategic weapon in the struggle against US cultural imperialism. When linked with postcolonialism, the various literary nationalisms that have emerged in the wake of colonialism – no matter how nationalistic their forms of address – share a postnational orientation that has redirected this released power against the state.¹² The external border in between the imperial US state formation and this postcolonial anti-nationalism might be understood to inhere as a postnational limit internal to the American peoples constructed out of its national narrative.

The Postnational as an Essentially Contested Categorization

Although postcolonial acts of narration are possessed of the power to subvert postnational narratives, the term “postnational,” insofar as it can include both postnational and postcolonial processes, is the more encompassing categorization. But postcoloniality was not the only postnational response to the effects of globalization on the field of American Studies. A growing number of Americanist critics have taken up the term “postnational” as a banner under which to give expression to their allegiance to transnational formations – the Black Atlantic, transnational feminism, Aztlan, the Pacific Rim – that do not depend upon the territorial state as the most effective way to combat injustices in the global economy. Postnationalism has also fostered chauvinistic reactions from Americanists who have invoked the term to describe the United States as the superstate empowered to inscribe the foundational terms in the US political vocabulary – capitalism, free enterprise, freedoms of expression and access, competitive individualism – within the newly globalized economic order. These intensely felt yet contradictory responses have rendered the term “postnational” ideological in the Gramscian sense, in that it has become an essentially contested category.

As a thoroughly relational term, the “postnational” does not operate on its own. It is a construction that is internally differentiated out of its intersection with other unfolding relations. Postnational American Studies can serve the interests of corporatist elites as the progenitor of the neoliberal values propagating a global marketplace. Postnational American Studies can also animate the sub-national grassroots organizations mounted in opposition to these forces. If construed as participating in more pervasive struggles over the future dispensation of the global economy, American globalism would describe a contest between, on the one hand, the supranational state that serves the transnational corporations and facilitates its needs for exploitable labor, and, on the other hand, the transnational social movements and sub-national collective practices that seek to reorganize gendered and racialized capitalist relations around more equitable social and economic standards.

Radway’s efforts to promote work in postnational American Studies led her to ask whether it would not make sense to think about renaming the association. In her response to this question, Radway proposed that the field might be renamed “Inter-American Studies” or “International Studies of the United States” or the “Society of Intercultural Studies,” so as to encourage alternatives to models of American Studies that moved from the US center.

While each iteration of the association’s name performed a summons to the discrete communities whose research it most clearly resembled, all of these nominations drew upon widely published internal debates over the future of the association and of the field. Individually and collectively, these proposed names reimaged the American Studies Association as the outcome of complex social formations profoundly linked up with the exercise of power, and thereby

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authorized the study of non-national and postnational negotiations of identity that cut across national borders.

But if Radway's primary object was to advance a postnational self-understanding for the American Studies Association within the era of globalization, she did not find in any of these proposed names a designation adequate to the accomplishment of this goal. It is because it goes above the nation-state and goes below it at the same time that globalization has resulted in intractably contradictory manifestations of the postnational. When it is articulated to the conceptual needs of global relationships caused by shifts in the world economy, the term "postnational" describes the effect on the nation-state of the new global economic order which no longer finds in it a vehicle appropriate for the accumulation of capital or the regulation of labor. But when it describes the translocal solidarities of transnational advocacy networks like Oxfam, or Amnesty International, or of the international projects of feminism, Act-Up, and the Green Party, that exist outside and work across territorial borders, the postnational signifies processes of resistance that keep globalization in check even as they simultaneously produce a very different sense of it. The one model demonstrates how a single planetary system tightens its grip on the most distant of global backwaters; the other model brings a more complex system into view that is at once decentered and interactive. The former depends on transnational capitalism and the global economy; the latter on peoplehood and imagined diasporic communities.

The differences between the postnational of the international left and the postnational of the transnational managerial class depends upon where the "post" in the postnational comes from and through which conceptual relays the postnational gets transmitted. A distinction between national and postnational American Studies might be provisionally drawn at the line demarcating the temporal from the critical inflection of "aftering." The temporal dimension of the postnational sits in uneasy tension with a critical dimension that promotes the disengagement from the whole nationalist syndrome. The latter aspect comes into existence through a critique of nationalism in all of its articulations. The tension between its temporal and critical aspects results in ambivalent significations for the postnational that become discernible in the following series of questions. Does the "post" in the postnational describe a definitive epistemological rupture or does it indicate a chronological deviation? Is the concept intended to be critical of or complicitous with the globalist economy? Is the postnational the time after nationalism or is it a different way of experiencing nationalism? And what are the implications of the postnational for contemporary geopolitics and the politics of subject formation?

Crisis in the Postnational Field

In raising the question of the organization's name, Radway had neither called for the dismantling of the American Studies Association nor advocated for the

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formation of a specific alternative. Radway's questions had instead opened up a postnational space within the association wherein the future direction of the organization and of research in the field of American Studies became the subjects of collective deliberation. "What's in a Name?" and the responses it provoked throughout the field inhabited the space in between the present arrangements of the field and the possible emergence of a different order.

The responses to Radway's address ranged from thoughtful criticism of its perceived limitations to heated denunciation of its putative intentions. "What's in a Name?" was interpreted in some quarters as a call to bring the American Studies Association to an end or to suppress methodologies that did not conform with the imperatives of the redescribed field. Other members of the American Studies Association found that in raising these questions Radway had been disrespectful of a field whose members were committed to diversity and who had already fostered many of the changes in orientation she recommended. Still others questioned whether the newly named field was supposed to describe their work or merely facilitate the outcomes Radway had aspired to achieve.

As had Radway, the constituencies who responded to "What's in a Name?" cited essays and arguments already in circulation within the field of American Studies. In advancing "Inter-American Studies" as an appropriate redescription of the organization, Radway had followed the lead of Carolyn Porter. In "What We Know That We Do Not Know, Remapping American Literary Studies," Porter placed "America" in relation to the Europeans who first attempted to define it.¹³ Like Porter, Radway had represented her comparativist projects in hemispheric and transnational terms so as to imagine a field that would offer cross-cultural perspectives on the peoples and cultures of the Americas. Inter-American Studies would comparatively study the economic, cultural, and social processes that produced the various American societies in the New World. It called for transnational frameworks for comparativist analysis that would relate the study of US history and culture with social formations in North, Central, and South America and the countries and cultures of the Caribbean.

Members of the American Studies Association who were opposed to the new appellation found a rationale for their resistance to inter-American Studies in the previously published work of the US-based Chicano scholar, José David Saldívar. Saldívar had criticized advocates of inter-American Studies for their tendency to conflate the divergent histories of nation formation and to homogenize the specific geopolitical histories of different racial and ethnic groups. Saldívar tellingly described the notion of the postnational as a category that threatened to become at least as totalizing as the category it would supplant.¹⁴

The Argentinian scholar Walter D. Mignolo had discerned in comparativist studies of the Americas tendencies toward categorical overgeneralization and ideological vagueness, which would further contribute to the depoliticization of the field. Remarking a correlation between this comparativist hemispheric model and the US imperialism to which it was putatively opposed, Mignolo warned that

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Postnational American Studies would thereby authorize a scholarly archive which would continue US dominance through the very mechanisms whereby it was declared over.¹⁵

According to Saldívar and Mignolo, the discourse of US imperialism had depended upon an archival apparatus that the field of American Studies legitimated and that “Inter-American Studies” reproduced. The apparatus, which was comprised of a relay of mutually constitutive terms, recognizable signs, metaphors, and master narratives pre-existed cultural contact and permitted of the reallocation of these categories onto other cultures. With this apparatus as warrant, Saldívar and Mignolo warned that comparativist models might simply translate what Radway called “intricate interdependency” into the pre-existing identity categories mandated by Inter-American Studies.

Whereas Americanist scholars from the southern hemisphere castigated US-based models of Inter-American Studies for their reduction of the contradictory aspects of disjunctive cultures to a US nationalist mode of understanding, Winfried Fluck, the Chair of American Culture at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies of the Free University of Berlin, criticized the hemispheric focus of Inter-American Studies for its tacit recovery of an exceptionalist paradigm. In an article entitled “Internationalizing American Studies: Do We Need an International American Studies Association and What Should Be its Goals?” which he published in the *European Journal of American Culture*, Fluck carefully analyzed Porter’s remapping of the field upon which models of Inter-American Studies depended for their conceptual rigor. Finding Porter’s model specifically at fault for its having excluded transatlantic perspectives, Fluck remarked that “an association that redefines the object of study as a hemispheric system risks losing the rationale for the existence of American Studies, the specific relevance of the United States as a paradigm-setting modern society.”¹⁶

“International Studies of the United States” fared even less well than “Inter-American Studies.” Despite the fact that Radway situated Postnational American Studies within a global analytic frame and insisted that programs in American Studies would be reshaped anew in different institutional sites out of their specific interactions with global processes, her remarks were interpreted in international sectors of the American Studies Association as yet one more example of the domination of the field by Americanists based in the metropolitan centers of the US. International scholars denounced in particular Radway’s celebration of the coordination of knowledges across national borders as an extremely misleading account of how knowledge about “America” was produced, authorized, and circulated either within or beyond United States’ borders. “The reterritorialization of American Studies”, as Liam Kennedy has cannily described this uneven mode of knowledge production, “is not yet commensurate with the deterritorialization of America as an object of knowledge.”¹⁷

In “Dislocations: Transatlantic Perspectives on Postnational American Studies,” Kennedy outlined an alternative explanatory model of Postnational America Studies

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which was unlike Radway's in that it would begin with a scrupulous analysis of the ways in which US culture gets generated in other cultural contexts and that simply could not be recuperated in US Americanist terms. Rather than looking for similarities, Kennedy recommended that Americanists trained in US universities turn their experience of cross-cultural understandings of American Studies into the occasion to enter the otherwise occulted zone in between their established field identities and the processes of disidentification such encounters would invariably materialize. In reimagining themselves as Irish (or German or British or Spanish or Mexican or African or Indian) Americanists saw them, US Americanists would be required to decenter their scholarly identities so as to understand "American" things from a truly international perspective.

In her office as the Chair of the International Committee of American Studies Association, Maureen Montgomery elaborated upon the inequality in the relations of knowledge production in the following comments that she addressed to the committee at the 1998 Seattle Conference of the American Studies Association:

The internationalization of American Studies has had a somewhat stunted growth. The flow of ideas has been, for the most part, one way only – radiating out from the United States. US-based scholars and their scholarship dominate the field and cross-cultural studies have mostly been the province of Americanists outside the US. There are few links between Americanists from different countries outside the US – The US functions as the center of activity, the axis of the enterprise known as American Studies.¹⁸

Perhaps it was because Radway had aspired to reinstitute the American Studies Association outside a nationalist denominative that her presidential address communicated the crisis of the nation-state that it also described. Raising the question of its name had evoked future directions for the organization, but it also threatened to divest the American Studies Association of its fundamental presuppositions. When she refused to reiterate the foundational statements correlating the scholarly prerogatives of the American Studies Association with the formative values of US society, Radway had delegitimated one of the consensual fictions that had previously organized the American Studies community, and she had put into operation a conceptual machinery which was capable of dissolving the membership's ideological ties to the previously constituted association. The powerful emotional investments of desire and of fear that it elicited among US Americanists in particular turned her address into a site in which questions of patriotic belonging were subsequently played out.

The US Americanists who shared Radway's commitment to thinking beyond inherited models of sovereignty and nationalism cited John Carlos Rowe's work on Postnational American Studies in which he represented the postnational orientation of the field as the means whereby Americanist scholarship had been coordinated internationally. Indeed, according to Rowe, the field's engagement

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with diasporic peoples and its invention of models of political and cultural accommodation for all citizens had already resulted in the transformation of American Studies into a postnational space. Americanist scholars were no longer separated by national borders but moved from a postnationalized periphery to a postnationalized core. They communicated more interactively along multiple, dialogic, and increasingly multi-lingual channels.¹⁹

But the US Americanist scholars who reacted most vociferously to the address had associated the crisis in affiliation, which Radway's talk effected, with anxieties over national belonging. These scholars responded to Radway's postnational imperatives with expressions of fear and outrage. They found these sentiments, which were anchored in their belief in the centrality of American Studies to the formation of US citizens, authorized and elaborated upon in Arthur Schlesinger's ultra-nationalist fantasies that characterized advocates of postnationalism as political subversives.

Schlesinger's inability to tolerate difference was particularly evident in the rhetoric he deployed in *The Disuniting of America* (1992), an ideological tract that represented multiculturalism and the politics of difference as indicative of disloyalty to the nation's foundational beliefs.²⁰ Schlesinger grounded this rhetoric in his belief that American Studies should inculcate a civic Americanness that was capable of regulating cultural differences through their assimilation within a common patriotic culture. When evaluated in terms of Schlesinger's understanding of the field's role, Postnational American Studies would appear to have reneged on its patriotic duties.

Whereas Rowe construed multiculturalism and the politics of difference as postnationalist strategies intended to discredit the foundational belief in US exceptionalism, the party of Schlesinger had struggled to endow the core tenets of the national narrative with renewed credibility. The differences in the outlooks of Rowe and Schlesinger on the postnational question appeared to be irreconcilable. In an article which he published in the 1998 volume of *American Quarterly* and entitled "Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture," however, Frederick Buell purported to have found the means to resolve the dispute between these two factions out of a revaluation of the debates over insurgent postnationalism like the one "What's in a Name?" had precipitated within the American Studies Association.²¹

When reset within a global context, as Buell maintained, the contradictions between Rowe's postnational and Schlesinger's ultra-nationalist positions resulted in the formation of a composite discourse through which the national culture adapted to the otherwise disorganizing forces of the global economy. In Buell's estimation, postnationalism named a project which empowered US culture externally through the global cosmopolitans who functioned as its symbolic analysts, while it also supplied the means to obtain accelerated consensus internally. After the the postnational imaginary transmuted multiculturalism into a mainstream cultural discourse, it dissolved the debates concerning the threats to the nation's

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foundations posed by multiculturalism and the new ethnicities – and it materialized a site for conjoining right with left, and for the reinvention of a national culture to accommodate new global realities. “By the time of President Clinton’s 1992 campaign,” Buell remarked of the architect of this political mutation,

the phrase “the global economy” had entered mainstream conversation. After which the term “global” meant less the nightmare that haunted Americans than a term to conjure with – the key term for restructuring the political discourse of national crisis and internal division into a new kind of recovery narrative, one that seemed to bend conservative nationalist and radical postnationalist positions into a new kind of nationalism for a global era.²²

But passages like the one I have just cited make it clear that Buell has not so much resolved the conflict between postnationalists and ultra-nationalists as assumed an active role in rewriting Schlesinger’s narrative of national recovery. Buell’s retelling of this narrative describes US nationalism as having merely taken a detour through multiculturalism and the new ethnicities in order to reappropriate these postnational formations as resources for the global remapping of US national culture.²³ “National postnationalism,” the key term in Buell’s narrative, has refurbished the symbolic value of US national culture and US identity that “What’s in a Name?” had undermined in their unitary and essentialist forms. More significantly, the postnational dimension of his recovery narrative has enabled Buell to redescribe an economically exploited migrant labor force in strictly symbolic terms and to effect thereby the depoliticizing isolation of economic from cultural concerns:

Though the jobs they fill in the United States may be at the bottom, they bring global realities and polycultural experiences to a United States that is still suffering from its old postcolonial cultural inferiority complex and that, having suppressed its own legacy of actual multiculturalism by an oppressive and also parochial official multiculturalism, is in dire need of these things. In a globalist/postnational world system, they can help enhance the US cultural stance and power.²⁴

From Postmodern to Transmodern American Studies

Postnational Americanists have encouraged the development of forms of allegiance that do not depend upon the territorial state as the most effective way to contest injustices in the global economy. But postnationalism has also fostered the supranationalist stance of Americanists who have reinscribed the foundational terms of the US political vocabulary – democracy, capitalism, free enterprise, human rights – within the newly globalized discourse of neoliberalism. While such antithetical projects apparently render the relationship between globalization and postnationalist initiatives transparently intelligible, however, it is not clear to me

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that such settled political binaries can stabilize the political antagonisms at work in Postnational American Studies, which, as was discernible from the contradictory reactions to President Radway's inaugural address, is not a field from which it would be possible to remove the qualities of complexity and ambiguity.

The hegemonic discourse of nationalism was composed out of the intertwined logics of developmental history and core-periphery topology. These logics produced the matrix for a global disposition of power which universal history mapped onto the teleological narratives out of which Euro-American nationalisms obtained their legitimating self-evidence. But such representations of nationalism as the end toward which "archaic" social formations tended substantially reduced the heterogeneous varieties and contexts of nationalism to the dimensions of an overarching evolutionary paradigm. This binaristic model set the "atavistic" traditions of peoples represented as without history in opposition to "modernist" discourses which established the master terms through which historical progress could be calculated.

But the conception of progress that informed end-directed historicism had displaced forms of history written by the colonial victims of Euro-American nationalism. Cognitively degraded as its residua, these subaltern histories were construed as unassimilable to the historicisms which culminated in exclusivizing history. In writing the histories that globalization from above had excluded from the archive, these subaltern accounts reactivated the structures of difference that exclusivist models had sought to suppress, and thereby challenged the colonial powers that derived their authority from these founding myths. It was precisely because they recorded grassroots experiences of globalization that took place outside a nationalist matrix that subaltern accounts of coloniality proved capable of discrediting the evolutionary model through which universal history represented global events.

Subaltern accounts of the various forms of colonial domination – from the Portuguese entry into the Indian Ocean and the British and Spanish and French conquest of the New World to the US internationalization of financial markets and information flow – drastically ruptured the progressivist assumptions of the Euro-American narratives which had consigned colonialism to a marginal role in universal history. As the repository of unofficial historical knowledges, this alternative archive has supplied the resources for the production of a materialist historiography that has brushed the universal history of nations against its progressivist grain and has introduced a different order of relations between global processes and the peoples they affected. This radical historiography has reconfigured historical spatiality along global axes of power rather than time and in doing so it has also transformed the geography of knowledge which was inscribed on the cognitive map underpinning Eurocentric power. Despite their having been consigned to the realm of historical contingency, these radical historiographies have nevertheless continued to exert a retroactive temporal force capable of interrupting and calling into question every one of the past and present triumphs of the progressive national history.

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In "When Was the Postcolonial," Stuart Hall (1996) has drawn upon this alternative archive to articulate a postcolonial rephrasing of the genealogy of post-nationalism.²⁵ Hall describes "colonization as part of an essentially transnational and transcultural global process [which] produces a decentered, diasporic, or 'global' rewriting of nation-centered, imperial grand narratives."²⁶ This account leads Hall to criticize the settled binarisms (of the core and the periphery, of then and now, of domination and resistance) inscribed within nationalist historiographies as inadequate descriptions of the complex and multiply constituted identities resulting from the interplay of colonial power. Postcolonial ways of living and of retelling the story of globalization would replace the core-periphery paradigm with a model of the transverse relations of power that criss-cross the globe.

This postcolonial model would explain how colonial relations produced identities which were always displaced and decentered by linkages between and across national frontiers, and by localizations of global processes that would have remained unintelligible if read against a nation-state template. It is after the postnational discourse is relayed in terms of these postcolonial periodizations that American Studies can become attuned to the needs of those global communities that are economically and culturally at risk from globalization from above.

The addition of the hermeneutic and political frameworks forged by opposition to the colonial structures of power has led Americanist scholars to expose the continuation of that colonial mentality within the postcolonial metropolitan enclaves. In his 2008 essay, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," Walter D. Mignolo has argued that the belief that we live in a post-colonial world is one of the most recalcitrant of the myths of Enlightenment modernity.²⁷ Postcolonial scholars define coloniality restrictively as the presence of colonial administrations. But Mignolo has observed that a colonial imaginary can inhabit the most cosmopolitan centers of the postmodern metropolis, where it reproduces colonial knowledges by way of racial and taxonomies whose hierarchical structures were forged in the late nineteenth-century heyday of the US empire. This metropolitan colonial imaginary includes racial and ethnic hierarchies that are inscribed within discourses that are constructed in relation to these colonial subjects.

With his formulation of the notion of "coloniality of power," Anibal Quijano has produced the analytic perspective necessary to promote the understanding that migrants do not take up neutral spaces when they enter the United States. After they arrive in metropolitan spaces, migrants are incorporated within categorizations and move through spaces that are already saturated with the traces of colonial history.²⁸ The coloniality of power can serve as an interpretive framework with which to expose the complex ways in which race and ethnicity combine with colonization and migration to produce a neocolonial situation within the US. The application of the notion of a coloniality of power model to the state apparatuses through which migrants are classified would reveal the neocolonial mentality that affects Spanish-speaking peoples and Muslims in particular.

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Indeed, the state of exception that George W. Bush installed in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, made it clear that we still live in a colonial world. Consequently, we need to revise the narrow ways of thinking about colonial relations in order to complete the work of decolonization. The unfinished project of decolonization refers to the legacies of critical responses to coloniality by colonized subjects and others from the inception of modernity and coloniality. Mignolo and Quijano have invoked the work of Enrique Dussel to advocate on behalf of an alternative democratic formation that could decolonize structures of power in the country.²⁹

According to Dussel, the coloniality of power makes it impossible to recognize Latin American, African, indigenous, or Islamic democratic formations. Eurocentered modernity defines a unilateral and unidimensional form of democratic citizenship, which associates democracy with liberal individualism, property-ownership, and the neoliberal market economy. But a transmodern model would be open to a diverse array of definitions of citizenship, liberty, human rights, authority, and economy. Transmodernity offers an alternative to Eurocentered modernity in that transmodernity would not continue postmodern alterations of Euro-American modernities. Transmodernity would redefine the entire field of struggle. If the norms and aspirations of US democracy were reconceptualized within a transmodern frame, its postnational and postcolonial iterations could be decolonized of the residual traces of racialized modernity.

With his conceptualization of transmodern democracy, Dussel has aspired to replace the unfinished project of modernity with the commitment to strengthen the unfulfilled project of decolonization.³⁰ This transmodern task also describes the unfinished work of American Studies.

Notes and References

- 1 "What's in a Name?" Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 20, 1998, *American Quarterly* 51 (March 1999): 1–32.
- 2 When she spoke in the name of the groups that the field had formerly peripheralized, Radway repositioned their previously marginalized viewpoints as the newly superior. But the groups' shared condition of postnationality could not be elevated into the metadiscourse organizing these different challenges to the field without reinvoking the paradigm of consensus which Radway had disavowed.
- 3 See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- 4 Of the several important arguments on the need to forge a post-exceptionalist American Studies, I found those of Ian Tyrrell and Daniel Rodgers especially compelling. Ian Tyrrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History," *American Historical Review* 96 (1991): 1031–55; Daniel T. Rodgers, "Exceptionalism," *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), and Daniel T. Rodgers, "American Exceptionalism Revisited," *Raritan* 24/2 (2004): 21–47.

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- 5 The *locus classicus* for this description is Kenichi Ohmae's *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy* (New York: Harper Collins 1990). For criticism of Ohmae's claims, see, Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Political Economy and the Possibilities of Governance* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) and Robert Boyers and Daniel Drache, eds, *States Against Markets: The Limits of Globalization* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996). See also Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992).
- 6 In Ash Amin, ed., *Post-Fordism: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), Ash Amin has gathered essays which interrelate these emergent social formations to matters of their adequate narration, See Ash Amin's essay "Post-Fordism: Models, Fantasies and Phantoms of Transition," 1–39 in particular.
- 7 William E. Connolly explains the civi-territorial complex in relationship to nationalist self-representation in "Tocqueville, Territory and Violence," in Michael J. Shapiro and Hayward R. Alker, eds, *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 141–64. Partha Chatterjee provides a useful account of nationalizing self-representations in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (London: Zed Books, 1986). Timothy Brennan clarifies the relationship between desire and national narrativity in Homi Bhabha, ed., "The National Longing for Form," *Nation and Narration* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 44–70. For a recapitulation of the Anderson argument, see Jean Franco, "The Nation as Imagined Community," in H. Aaram Veesser, ed., *The New Historicism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 204–12.
- 8 For a more expansive account of this dynamic, see Homi Bhabha's "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 1–7.
- 9 See Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790–1890* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), and Laura Lomas, *Translating Empire: Jose Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects and American Modernities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
- 10 I elaborate this explanation in Donald E. Pease, "National Narratives, Postnational Narration," *Modern Fiction Studies* 43/1 (spring 1997): 1–23.
- 11 Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 7.
- 12 Partha Chatterjee provides a useful account of the process in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (London: Zed Books, 1986). For a stern critique of this position, see Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" *Social Text* 17 (1987): 3–25.
- 13 "What We Know That We Do Not Know, Remapping American Literary Studies," *American Literary History* 6 (fall 1994): 467–526. Specifically, Porter recommended that American Studies be relocated "broadly within a hemispheric geopolitical framework, but one whose multi-ethnic as well as multicultural locus is defined by the Caribbean, with its center in post-revolutionary Havana," 504.
- 14 José David Saldívar, *The Dialectics of Our America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991). In "Does the Project of the Left Have a Future?" *boundary* 2/24 (1997), John Beverly has underscored the continued importance of the nation-state as a vehicle for expressing resistance to global inequities: "Who is in a better position to mediate between the local and the international power structures than the nation-state?" 47–8.
- 15 Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1995), and Walter Mignolo, "Canons and Corpus: Alternative Views of Comparative Literature in Colonial Situations," *Dedalus: Revista Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada* 1 (fall 1992): 219–44. For an elaboration of this critique, see Mino Moallem and Iain A. Boal, "Multicultural Nationalism and the Poetics of Inauguration," in Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcon, Mino Moallem, eds, *Between Woman and*

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- Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms and the State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 243–63.
- 16 Winfried Fluck, “Internationalizing American Studies: Do We Need an International American Studies Association and What Should Be its Goals?” *European Journal of American Culture* 19/3 (2000): 152.
 - 17 Liam Kennedy, “Dislocations: Transatlantic Perspectives on Postnational American Studies. An Introduction,” *49th Parallel: An Interdisciplinary Journal of North American Studies* 8 (summer, 2001). Available at: <http://www.artsweb.bham.ac.uk/49thparallel/backissues/issue8/coll_intro.htm>.
 - 18 Maureen Montgomery, “Introduction: The Construction of an International American Studies Community,” *American Studies International* XXXVII (June, 1999): 5.
 - 19 See, in particular, John Carlos Rowe, ed., *Postnational American Studies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).
 - 20 Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: Norton, 1992).
 - 21 Frederick Buell “Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture,” *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 548–92. Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant have interpreted what Buell calls the new narrative of US recovery as a revivification of US cultural imperialism, in “On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 16/1 (1999): 41–58.
 - 22 Frederick Buell, “Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture,” *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 553.
 - 23 In “Reconstructing American Studies’ Transnational Paradoxes, Comparative Perspectives,” *Journal of American Studies* 28 (1994): 335–58, Paul Giles has underscored the lingering transcendentalism in postnational gestures like Buell’s. “A question arises whether American Studies might not become a redundant tautology; the remains of a patriotic age of empire building that bears little relevance to the transnational networks of the 1990’s . . . For all the talk about post-national narratives and comparatist perspectives, it remains very difficult to dislodge many of the primary foundational assumptions about American studies because such assumptions are bound unconsciously to a residual transcendentalism that fails to acknowledge the national specificity of its own discourse” (337 and 344).
 - 24 Frederick Buell, “Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture,” *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 559.
 - 25 Stuart Hall, “When Was the Post-Colonial? Thinking at the Limit,” *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (Routledge : New York and London 1996), 242–60.
 - 26 Ibid.
 - 27 See Walter Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference,” in Mabel Morana, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jauregui, eds, *Coloniality at Large* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 225–58.
 - 28 See Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Social Classification,” in Mabel Morana, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jauregui, eds, *Coloniality at Large* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 181–224 .
 - 29 See Enrique Dussel, “Philosophy of Liberation, The Postmodern Debate and Latin American Studies,” in Mabel Morana, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jauregui, eds, *Coloniality at Large*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 335–49.
 - 30 Ibid., 345–7.

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John Carlos Rowe

The return of what was once termed gunboat diplomacy in the first decade of the twenty-first century as part of the “new global order,” endorsed repeatedly and abstractly by George H. W. and then George W. Bush’s regimes, could not have occurred without the prior work of culture. In what follows, I make a simple, important point: US cultural production, the work of what Horkheimer and Adorno termed “the culture industry,” conditioned American citizens to accept the undisguised militarism and jingoistic nationalism now driving US foreign policy (Horkheimer 1988: 122). In its inevitably globalized forms, the US culture industry continues to produce the deep divisions between local resistance and subaltern imitation so characteristic of colonial conflicts from the age of traditional imperialism to the neo-imperialisms of our postindustrial era. And the culture industry today does its work in ways that encompass a wide range of nominally different political positions, so that in many respects left, liberal, and conservative cultural works often achieve complementary, rather than contested, ends. In this respect, little has changed since Horkheimer and Adorno argued in 1944: “Even the aesthetic activities of political opposites are one in their enthusiastic obedience to the rhythm of the iron system” (Horkheimer 1988: 120).

As the US military raced toward Baghdad, there was considerable criticism of the “embedded reporters” allowed to report the war under the special conditions imposed by the Pentagon and Department of Defense. Most of the criticism assumed that such reporting was biased or censored. When a *Newsweek* photographer was caught doctoring on his laptop a photograph of an encounter between Iraqi civilians and US military personnel, his firing seemed to vindicate the news magazine of prejudice. Anti-war activists circulated two photographs of Iraqi demonstrators tearing down a monumental statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdos Square, Baghdad: the first was a familiar photograph in the news of demonstrators beating on the sculpture’s foundation and then, with the help of an Abrams tank, toppling the hieratic image of the defeated dictator. In the second photograph, not displayed in the popular press or evening news, the camera provides a wide-angle

view of the scene at the square, where access roads have been blocked by the US military and the “populist” demolition of the statue has been theatrically staged by US forces. In a third photograph circulated on the Internet, the same Iraqis actively involved in attacking the Baghdad statue are shown “one day earlier” in Basra, where they are preparing to board US military aircraft for transport to Baghdad – identified in this photograph as members of the “Iraqi Free Forces.”¹

Such exposures of US military propaganda during the war have continued in news coverage of the putative “rebuilding” of the political and economic infrastructure in Iraq. The current debate regarding who was actually responsible for the disinformation regarding “Weapons of Mass Destruction,” used as the principal justification for the invasion of Iraq, is the most obvious example of public concern regarding the federal government’s veracity. For such propaganda to be successful, there must be a willing audience, already prepared for certain cultural semantics adaptable to new political circumstances and yet with sufficient “regional” relevance as to make possible the very widespread confusion between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, between a secular Iraqi state tyranny and an Islamic fundamentalist guerilla organization. How was it possible that such a preposterous war could be permitted by Congress and by the US population? The answer is not simply that the Bush administration ignored the numerous international protests of the preparations for war and its eventual conduct. Nor is the answer simply that when the war began, the Bush administration controlled the news and staged symbolic events to fool the public, although there is plenty of evidence to support these claims. The cultural preparations for a “just war” and for the US as global “policeman” did not occur overnight; they are our cultural legacy from the Vietnam War and integral parts of our emergence as a neo-imperial nation since 1945. Central to this legacy is the conception of the United States as a discrete nation that nonetheless has a global identity and mission. Although traditional imperialism works by way of expansion from a national center, US imperialism since Vietnam has worked steadily to “import” the world and to render global differences aspects of the US nation – in short, to internalize and “hyper-nationalize” transnational issues.

It is commonplace, of course, to criticize the United States as one of the several first-world nations to employ cultural media to market its products around the world. Neocolonialism generally connotes some complicity between a “multi-national corporation covertly supported by an imperialist power,” to borrow Chalmers Johnson’s definition, and thus implies some entanglement of economic, political, and military motives (Johnson 2004: 30). The globalization of consumer capitalism and the commodities of first-world economies (often manufactured elsewhere) are identified as specific targets by political movements as different as “Slow Food” in France, Earth First!, and al-Qaeda. Although the arcades and other defined shopping areas were developed in nineteenth-century Europe – Paris, Milan, Berlin, and other metropolises – the shopping mall is an American spin-off. With its emphasis on the “city-within-a-city,” the linkage of entertainment and

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consumption, the faux cosmopolitanism of its “international” and regionally specific shops (Cartier, Mont Blanc, Nieman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, “Texas Souvenirs”), and its ubiquitous, often international “Food Courts,” the American shopping mall was developed in the 1960s and refined over the past 40 years. Such mega-malls as Minneapolis’s Mall of America, Houston’s Galleria, and Southern California’s South Coast Plaza have redefined the public sphere as the site of consumption and commodification both of products and consumers.

Whether directly exported by US business interests or developed by multinational corporations to look like its US prototypes, the international mall is often traceable back to US funding, design, and marketing sources or models. A PBS *Frontline* report, “In Search of Al Qaeda,” which aired on November 21, 2002, includes footage of a shopping mall in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which is physically indistinguishable from European and American malls, and includes many of the same stores. Of course, the reporter calls attention to the presence of the Mu’tawah or religious police, who stroll through this mall looking for unveiled women or illicit liaisons between unmarried men and women. “In Search of Al Qaeda” is a fine attempt by *Frontline* to explain the animosity felt by many different groups in the Arab world toward the United States. The mall in Riyadh represents quite clearly one common source of resentment: the rapid Americanization of Saudi Arabia and the tacit demand that everyday Muslim practices be adapted to the demands of the global market. From one perspective, the Mu’tawah operate comfortably within this typical mall, with its long, open corridors and the insistent appeal of its transnational commodities. In another view, the religious police seem already defeated by the cultural rhetoric of the mall, which encourages romance and consumption in the same freewheeling space. As Anne Friedberg has argued, the mall links consumer and psychic desires in ways that depend crucially on “the fluid subjectivity of the spectator-shopper” (Friedberg 1993: 120).

Commodities are neither passive nor politically innocent; they are perpetually active in the specific kinds of desires they produce in consumers, and work by means of the social psychologies of commodity fetishism analyzed by Marx in *Capital* and reification elaborated by Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* (Marx 1977: 125–77; Lukács 1971: 83–222). Specific consumer desires can also be traced back to hierarchies of specific kinds of capitalist labor. In modern, industrial economies, stores displaying high fashion and leisure-class products, such as designer clothing for women and luxury products for successful men, were central. The traditional display windows with their mannequins of elegantly dressed and sexually alluring women belong to the era of the large department stores and, while still a part of the postmodern mall, are challenged by stores displaying the most elaborate array of computerized bodily extensions and miniaturizations, labor-saving devices, and high-tech tools promising greater access to the primary source of wealth and power: the control and manipulation of information and its assorted hermeneutic and representational protocols. In the crush of the crowds

defining the public space of the mall, the consumer is promised some individuality apart from just what forces him/her through the doors of his/her local “Circuit City.” Such identity depends, of course, on its promise of communication, but not so much *with* other people, especially those who may be different from this consumer, but *apart* from others in the notable privacy of postmodern life. The new laptops and; Phones are prized for allowing us to negotiate the crowd as we travel through it, but then saving from this mob our informational work, which can be stored, sifted, and processed in the privacy of our own homes. Of course, the peculiar desire for representational power and authority fetishized in computer hardware and software is rapidly displacing the public sphere created by the late-modern desire for more traditional commodities, such as fashion and luxury items. The mall is “morphing” into the Internet, an imaginary space so rapidly commercialized as to terrify even the most recalcitrant critic and sometime defender of consumer capitalism.

In spite of the admirable efforts of intellectuals to find emancipatory possibilities in the new technologies – alternatives to traditional social forms and practices certainly do exist today – the speed with which the Internet has been commercialized and hierarchized is symptomatic of the huge inequities dividing corporations that can afford access, individuals who merely use the technology (and are thereby used by it), and the majority of the world’s population left entirely out of the new communicative practices. In *What’s the Matter with the Internet?*, Mark Poster recognizes most of these problems while stressing the “underdetermined” character of new digital technologies and thus their availability for new transnational politics: “The Internet affords an opportunity for a contribution to a new politics [and] . . . may play a significant role in diminishing the hierarchies prevalent in modern society and in clearing a path for new directions of cultural practice” (Poster 2001: 20). In *Ambient Television*, Anna McCarthy acknowledges the ideological consequences of television’s portability and publicity in achieving a culture of surveillance such as Foucault predicted, but she also imagines critical alternatives and interventions capable of disrupting and in some cases even transforming unidirectional television (McCarthy 2001: 226–51). Such alternatives, however, are pushed increasingly to the margins of the Internet and television. Most television scholars agree that the “post-network era” has reconfigured the industry only by allowing more corporate giants to share the wealth of television programming. “Niche” television and “target audiences” have led to a wider variety of television only within certain limits of the liberal-to-conservative political spectrum. Radical television, such as Dee Dee Halleck’s Paper Tiger Television, goes virtually unwatched, is financially marginal, and supported primarily by extramural grants. The networks long ago succeeded in defeating “public access cable” as a populist alternative to one-way television, and the short-term future of “interactive” television, especially when integrated with computers and the Internet, is likely to be little more than an extension of the enormously profitable video-game market.

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We yearn for each new electronic device, but the vast majority are finally useless to most consumers either because they do not know *how* to use them or have *no use* for them in the first place. What lures consumers to new digital technologies is the general promise of *social communication*, ironically just the ideal offered by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* (1988), but it is a false promise that substitutes complex programming and upgrades for socially meaningful communication (47). Designed to serve business and commercial needs, predicated on the increasing privatization of the public sphere, whereby the illusion of sociability is simulated in the radical alienation and paradoxical exclusivity of the home office, commuter vehicle, or commercial airline's reserved seat, such devices produce specific desires structured by their ideological motivations. The imperial imaginary thrives upon these desires, which once initiated are difficult to reverse or purge. Cultural apologists for the "Americanization" of the globe, such as Francis Fukuyama, imagine that such homogenization will take us to that "end of history" fantastically dreamt of by Hegel and other proto-moderns, because such conditions will produce a political consensus (Fukuyama 1998: 127). Fukuyama is certainly right that one-way globalization is likely to result in an international consensus, even if it is one we can hardly condone, which we know will be not only excruciatingly tedious but finally "inhuman," and will require periods of incredible, unpredictable violence.

Such criticism of what may generally be termed a "postmodern economy" focused on information, communications, and entertainment products, including their integrated research and development components, may seem strangely anachronistic when applied to the contemporary global situation. Today, we confront the revival of traditional imperialism as the United States towers over all other human communities and exerts its unchallenged power in the most flagrantly militaristic manner. Not since the British Empire ruled the world by force and fear in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has there been such undisguised rule by military power. While recognizing important differences between contemporary US global rule in the twenty-first century and that of the British in the nineteenth century, Chalmers Johnson traces a historical genealogy from British to US imperial policies, especially in such critical regions as the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Johnson 2004: 138–9, 217–18). In Somalia and most of Africa, Kosovo, Serbia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Salvador, Colombia, the Philippines, North and South Korea, Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, Iraq, and Iran, the United States works by open military action or threats. Such situations hardly appear to have much to do with the postmodern economics analyzed by theorists of postindustrial or late capitalist practices, such as Ernest Mandel, Fredric Jameson, and David Harvey.

But there is an important relationship between the emergence of US military power, along with the complementary threats of inequitable and repressive policies toward peoples (especially but not exclusively non-US citizens) at home and abroad, and the capitalization of "cultural exports" ranging from Hollywood

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entertainment and television programming to digital technologies and their protocols for communication and work. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson's theory of "free-trade imperialism" is now half a century old and was formulated long before the postmodern economy came to dominate global relations by restructuring other forms of economic production and trade (especially devastating for the "industrialized" developing nations, now cast in the shadow of new, privileged forms of capitalization) (Gallagher and Robinson 1953: 1–25). The thesis of "free-trade imperialism" still explains a good deal about how traditional imperial military power should emerge with such prominence and frequency as a "foreign policy" at the very moment when globalization seems the nearly inevitable consequence of US economic triumphalism. Contemporary critics of US foreign policy such as Chalmers Johnson have also recognized that "free trade" is often used as a rationalization for the conduct of multinational corporations and for the US government's development of "client states," like Israel and, until recently, South Korea (Johnson 2004: 31).

Gallagher and Robinson refute traditional theories that imperialism – their principal example was British imperialism in Africa – proceeded historically from military conquest to consolidation of colonial rule only to be legitimated and transformed slowly through economic development. Gallagher and Robinson argue that "free-trade" policies generally *preceded* historically the militarization of colonies and that such military force was required only by the failure to negotiate trade agreements between metropolitan and colonial centers. Military force is thus held in reserve, not out of humane considerations, of course, but primarily for reasons of practicality and economy, while the imperial power promotes trade agreements – either for raw materials or finished products – with the appearance of favorable and equitable terms to colonizer and colonized. It is only when this illusion of "free-trade" is shattered that military force is required to reimpose imperial "order," when the appearance of free trade can be resumed, under whose guise what in fact usually occurs is demonstrably inequitable exploitation of natural or human resources of the colony. As they write: "The usual summing up of the policy of the free trade empire as 'trade, not rule' should read 'trade with informal control if possible; trade with rule when necessary'" (as quoted in Rowe 2000: 132).

Is this not the situation we are witnessing today in the Gulf and in other strategic locations around the world? At present, the relationship between the United States and the Peoples Republic of China can be described accurately as one operating according to the logic of "free-trade imperialism," as China's economy booms in large part thanks to the exploited labor required to manufacture products for the US export market.² One of the assumptions of Fukuyama's approach to globalization is that the "end of history" will bring an end of warfare and national struggle, that the "global village" and world peace are inextricably linked. From this perspective, whatever the cost of globalization in the mediocrity and uniformity of personal lives is more than compensated by the security achieved.

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In view of the everyday fear experienced by the majority of humankind, the sacrifices are well worth the enormous gains achieved by US global hegemony. In his neoliberal defense of the US exercising power around the world in its own “defense,” Robert Kagan reaches a similar conclusion, albeit one that involves his condemnation of both the European Union and the United Nations – the closest competitors for US global hegemony at the present moment (Kagan 2003: 157–8).

Late capitalism thrives on fear, even employing fear as a principal marketing strategy. In the depressed US economy of the past few years, one of the rare bright spots has been the booming market for self-defense goods, especially hi-tech gadgets, in response to 9/11 and the assorted xenophobic anxieties, such as the mailing of Anthrax, it prompted. In his documentary, *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), Michael Moore attributes violence in the US primarily to a culture of fear propagated by the news media and federal government. If we accept the general outlines of his argument, then the globalization of US cultural capital will involve the exportation of precisely this “culture of fear,” a phenomenon we witnessed as complementary with the increase in US military actions as the Bush administration took seriously its role as global policeman of the new world order. I want to propose then a dialectical relationship between cultural or free-trade imperialism and military imperialism that is mediated by way of a “culture of fear” that helps market late-capitalist products and encourages, rather than diminishes, military conflicts in the place of international diplomacy.

The history of this dialectic is understandably as long as that of modernity itself, especially if we trace modernity back to the voyages of exploration and conquest of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Modernization begins not so much with the technologies used to achieve such conquests – no new technology was, in fact, invented just for the voyages of exploration – but with the imagining of other worlds and peoples. It is commonplace to speak of how easily the early explorers substituted one people for another, as Columbus mistook Caribs and Arawaks for “Indians” of the Far East (and the name continues to this day, albeit often contested by Native Americans and First Peoples). But there is a shorter history that tells us a good deal about this dialectic, especially in its present deployment in world politics, and that history begins with the military failure of the United States in Vietnam in the early 1970s. Beginning in that moment, US culture attempted to explain and rationalize the war in a wide range of media and from virtually every possible political perspective. Sorting out these diverse outlooks on the Vietnam War remains crucial work for cultural and political critics, but the general impression this cultural work offers is that of the re-narrativization of a military and colonial failure into a foundation for subsequent military ventures in the Caribbean, Central America, the Persian Gulf, Africa, and the warring republics of former Yugoslavia.

What appeared in the mid- to late 1970s to be a series of critical interpretations of US involvement in Vietnam – such films as *Coming Home* (1978), *The Deer*

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Hunter (1979), and *Apocalypse Now* (1980) – were replaced by films and television programs that appropriated the liberal rhetoric of these predecessors but incorporated it into compensatory narratives intent on imaginatively fighting the war again and winning. Sylvester Stallone’s “Rambo” character is the *locus classicus* of just such heroic conventions. John Rambo fights the Vietnamese, the Russians, and other foreign enemies in the Rambo films, but he also combats *Americans* in ways that clearly anticipate the contemporary “nationalization” of global issues in US mass media. The opening scene of the first film, Ted Kotcheff’s *Rambo, First Blood* (1982), establishes John Rambo’s motivation for fighting the local police department and eventually the National Guard who are called in to hunt him down. As the opening credits roll, John Rambo walks down a charming Northwest dirt road to a modest house on the edge of a lake. The African-American woman who is hanging her washing on a clothes line, and who centers a sublime prospect of natural beauty, is the mother of Rambo’s best friend in Vietnam, Delmar Berry. In the opening dialogue of the film, Rambo learns from Delmar’s mother that his friend has died of cancer, a victim of the Agent Orange sprayed as a defoliant in Vietnam. I have elsewhere interpreted how Rambo consequently appropriates the civil rights, anti-war, and intercultural movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s to legitimate the militarism he represents in *Rambo: First Blood* (Rowe 2002: 180–6).

In the second film, George P. Cosmatos’s *Rambo, First Blood, Part II* (1985), Rambo’s rage is directed at the CIA’s reliance on high technology rather than human agency. In the concluding scene of the film, John Rambo fires the large automatic weapons he has used on his mission into Vietnam to destroy the computer command center of the CIA in Thailand, and then he releases a primal scream to accompany this ritualized destruction of the new automated warfare he clearly condemns as inhuman. Ironically, the Emersonian self-reliance and natural identity of John Rambo in both films is set in explicit contrast with the automated militarism employed by the Department of Defense and Pentagon in the first and second Gulf Wars, which for many people were culturally justified by the revival of militaristic values exemplified by the character of John Rambo. There is a direct line from the fictional John Rambo to Brigadier General Vincent Brooks, “the six-foot-plus, Hollywood-handsome African American spokesman for Central Command” during the second Gulf War, who at Camp as-Sayliyah’s state of the art, “\$ 1.5 million, made-for-TV ‘Coalition Media Center,’ . . . gave hundreds of journalists his daily edited presentations” (Johnson 2004: 249).

Never very precisely defined as a culture, geopolitical region, history, or people, “Vietnam” became a flexible term, so that the war refought in cultural fantasy could take place at home in such films as Louis Malle’s *Alamo Bay* and Walter Hill’s *Southern Comfort* (1981), or in other global hot spots, such as the Grenada in Clint Eastwood’s *Heartbreak Ridge* (1986) or Central America in Mark Lester’s *Commando* (1985) or Afghanistan in Peter McDonald’s *Rambo III* (1988), where John Rambo fights valiantly with the Afghani *mujahideen* against

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the Soviets. Of course, the anti-colonial resistance movement in Afghanistan, supported by CIA advisors and US funds and weapons, would in the mid-1990s align itself with the Taliban (Students of Islam), which in turn would host Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda (Johnson 2004: 177). Screening *Rambo III* today in the US is a bizarre experience, as the viewer watches John Rambo learning and even participating in folk rituals, such as horse racing, of Afghani “freedom fighters” who by 2001 would be our unequivocal enemies in that now nearly forgotten US colonial enterprise in the oil-rich regions southeast of the Caspian Sea, including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan.

Contemporary with these films and such fiction television programs as *China Beach* and *Miami Vice* or documentary series, such as HBO’s *Soldiers in Hiding*, were military “tie-ins,” which traded official sites as movie sets and insider information about military procedures for films that promoted military heroism and honor, such as *An Officer and a Gentleman* (1982), *Top Gun* (1986), and the many spin-offs, which have by now helped establish a cinematic and televisual genre (see, for example, the popular *JAG* [*Judge Adjutants’ General*]). What came to be termed “the Vietnam-Effect” extended its aura to draw parasitically upon other wars, so that the recent revival of World War II as a topic in films, television docudramas, and print narratives (fiction, biography, and oral histories) had as much to do with the large-scale revision of the Vietnam War (and US imperialism in Southeast Asia) as it did with such nominal historical markers as the 50th anniversary of D-Day or memorials for the end of World War II. Billed as “anti-war films,” often because of their graphic and thus alienating violence, films like Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan*, Terrence Malick’s *Thin Red Line* (1998), and John Woo’s *Wind Talkers* (2002) helped remilitarize the United States, not only because they drew on the conventions of World War II heroism and military success but also because each in its own way borrowed liberal, often explicitly pacifist, sentiments for its purposes. Thus, the Lieutenant (Tom Hanks) leading the soldiers assigned to rescue Private Ryan is a school teacher unwilling to risk human lives unnecessarily and obliged merely to do the unpleasant but necessary job of civilian soldier. Officers in *Thin Red Line* disobey orders from above when they put their troops at unreasonable risk, and the Navajo “wind talkers” in John Woo’s film challenge the racism of their fellows soldiers. All end up fighting, however, thereby linking a “just war” thesis with liberal and anti-war sentiments. My point that combat films with radically different political perspectives often contribute equally to pro-military sentiments is confirmed by Anthony Swofford in his recent memoir of the Gulf War, *Jarhead*. Describing US soldiers’ fascination with anti-war films about the Vietnam War, Swofford concludes: “But actually Vietnam War films are all pro-war, no matter what the supposed message, what Kubrick or Coppola or Stone intended . . . The magic brutality of the films celebrates the terrible and despicable beauty of their fighting skills. Fight, rape, war, pillage, burn. Filmic images of death and carnage are pornography for the military man” (Swofford 2003: 210).

Criticized by intellectuals for a variety of reasons – direct efforts to relegitimate US military force, part of a general return to “masculine” values in reaction to the women’s rights movement, more complex efforts to co-opt and thus defuse the sort of anti-war dissent that did contribute significantly to ending the Vietnam War – mass media rarely addressed these questions directly. Populist media and documentary film-makers, including the surprisingly popular Michael Moore and less visible producers of “alternative” television, such as Paper Tiger Television’s Dee Dee Halleck, rarely addressed the subtlety with which the mass media employed the rhetoric of its political opponents. In Moore’s *Roger and Me*, the CEO of General Motors is a classic capitalist hypocrite and thief; in *Bowling for Columbine*, the President of the National Rifle Association is the senile, foolish, and contradictory Charlton Heston. Only demystify!

There are important exceptions, of course, such as Barry Levinson’s *Wag the Dog* (1998) and David O. Russell’s *Three Kings* (1997), both of which criticized the nationalist propaganda and media control that allowed the George H. W. Bush Administration to wage the Persian Gulf War with little public scrutiny and the illusion of an “international coalition” of allied forces. The film is based on the premise that a “war” we are waging against Albania is entirely fabricated by a Washington spin-doctor (Conrad Bream, played by Robert De Niro) with the help of a Hollywood producer (Sidney Motss, played by Dustin Hoffman) to distract public attention from a sexual harassment charge against the incumbent president two weeks from his re-election. *Wag the Dog* brilliantly satirizes the increasing control the US Federal Government has exercised over news reporting of its foreign military ventures. In many respects, *Wag the Dog* seems merely to elaborate in Hollywood film satire the claims made by Jean Baudrillard in his deliberately iconoclastic *La Guerre du Golfe n’a pas eu lieu* (1991).³

In a very different fashion, *Three Kings* attempted to peel away the mask of patriotic dedication in the Gulf War by exposing the greed of the US soldiers for Kuwaiti gold looted by the invading Iraqi army as a metaphor for US self-interest in controlling the oil-rich Gulf. I admit that the pacifist and populist sentiments of *Three Kings* are noteworthy, especially in a period when Hollywood films were targeted increasingly at 12–17-year-old moviegoers, who pay the most dollars per person of any age group in the US. The grisly scene of an M-16 bullet penetrating human intestines in slow motion and producing the green bile that will slowly and painfully kill the victim is far more effective than the slow-motion melodrama of US troops dying on the beaches of Normandy during the D-Day invasion in *Saving Private Ryan*.

Nevertheless, both *Wag the Dog* and *Three Kings* rely on a narrative of Americanization that plays a significant role in the general public’s understanding of globalization and anticipates how post-9/11 film and television would rely on similar processes of nationalizing international problems to “channel the nation back to normalcy – or at least [to] the normal flows of television and consumer culture,” as Lynn Spigel puts it (Spigel 2004: 239). *Wag the Dog* does this cultural

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work in an obvious manner by locating all of the action of the film in the United States; the imprisoned soldier (Denis Leary), who is picked to simulate an actual US soldier “downed” by hostile gunfire in Albania and miraculously “rescued,” has to be picked up by the media team from his maximum-security military prison in Texas. The liberal politics of *Wag the Dog* make what I have termed “hyper-nationalization” an explicit theme in the film, so that we are expected to understand immediately the irony of the Hollywood producer Motss and the Washington insider Bream inventing an international crisis to cover a domestic sexual scandal. The film satirizes Americans’ chronic ignorance of world events, thanks to news structured around entertainment and commercialism, but it also reinforces the assumption that the United States is the center of the world and that even a “fictional” war can have meaning and value, as long as it is waged by the United States. Carefully structured news stories about the second Gulf War seem to have followed the example of *Wag the Dog*, despite its satiric and counter-cultural intentions. The “saving” of Jessica Lynch, the US soldier wounded and captured by Iraqi troops during the US-British invasion, follows just such a narrative of Americanization, from her heroic rescue by US Special Forces through her medical treatment and debriefing at a US military base near Frankfurt, to her triumphant return to her hometown in Palestine, West Virginia. Rather than *Wag the Dog*’s satire overwhelming and thus neutralizing the “Jessica Lynch” story on the evening news, Jessica Lynch’s narrative, now made into a television biopic, has undone the irony of Barry Levinson’s film, especially its “rescued soldier” device.

More conventionally, *Three Kings* challenges self-interested US militarism and foreign policy in the Gulf by condemning the command-structure of the US military and countering it with the populist pacifism and humanitarianism of the “three kings,” who finally live up to their biblical titles by guiding dissident Iraqis and their families to their “promised land” across the border in Iran. The familiar imperial narrative of US paternalism, of the “white-man’s burden,” plays itself out once again in terms almost identical with those criticized so thoroughly in nineteenth-century imperial narratives. The dissident Iraqis who save Archie Gates (George Clooney), Troy Barlow (Mark Wahlberg), Chief Elgin (Ice Cube), and Conrad Vig (Spike Jonze) from attack by the Republic Guard turn out to be primarily intent on “get[ting] rid of Saddam,” in order to “live life and do business,” as their leader Amir Abdullah (Cliff Curtis) says.

The film criticizes consumer capitalism and its globalization, but advocates on the other hand the value of small businesses. When Troy Barlow is captured and tortured by Republic Guards, he is made to drink crude oil poured into his mouth propped open with a CD case. The consumer goods stolen from Kuwait and heaped in poorly guarded Iraqi bunkers exemplify the meretriciousness of multinational globalization – tape and CD players in their unopened boxes, tangled skeins of jewelry, heaps of cell phones, and other consumer “junk” are visually effective, but the political dissidents these three kings will eventually save are committed to modest but meaningful businesses, such as hairstyling. Following a nearly

schematic narrative of “education,” the three remaining kings (Conrad Vig dies and is prepared for a Muslim burial) use the gold they have stolen from the Iraqis (who have stolen it from the Kuwaitis) to “buy” safe passage for the political dissidents into the relative safety of Iran. The final scene of the film in which the border crossing is enacted, replete with sentimental waves and sympathetic looks between the dissidents and the enlightened US soldiers, is difficult to watch today, with the memory of the Bush administration’s clamors to expand its invasion and occupation of Iraq to include Iran.

The sympathy these US soldiers establish with the Iraqi dissidents is certainly intended by David O. Russell to counter the Orientalist demonization of Arab peoples so common in US mass culture since the nineteenth century, intensified as part of the build-up for the first Gulf War, and driven to near cultural hysteria in the months following the attacks on 9/11.⁴ Yet the Iraqi dissidents are represented in what seem to be deliberately ambiguous regional, ethnic, and religious terms. The mercenary US soldiers enter southern Iraq in quest of the stolen Kuwaiti gold, so the political dissidents they encounter in the aftermath of the first Gulf War would most likely be Shi’ite dissidents, similar to those who appealed to George H. W. Bush for military assistance and staged an unsuccessful rebellion against Saddam Hussein in the weeks following the conclusion of that war. Yet there is considerable cinematic evidence to conclude that the Iraqi dissidents are Kurds. Hairdressing, for example, is traditionally a respected profession among the Kurds, so that one of the dissidents’ plans to return to that profession hints at Kurdish affiliations, displaced of course from the main Kurdish population centers in northern Iraq to the film’s setting in southern Iraq. Saddam Hussein’s government did forcibly “resettle” Kurds in the south (including many who were murdered and buried in mass graves there) during the Anfal, the genocidal “ethnic cleansing” that the Iraqi dictator conducted prior to the first Gulf War.⁵

The deliberate confusion of different dissident groups in Iraq seems intended not only to achieve cinematic economy, but also to make these dissidents more accessible to the four US soldiers. These soldiers represented in the film offer a sample of US multiculturalism: Chief Elgin is a devout Christian African-American, Conrad Vig is an uneducated Southern white racist, Archie Gates is a white career soldier taking early retirement, and Troy Barlow a model WASP. To be sure, the representativeness of this group is very narrow, but their respective sympathies with the Iraqi dissidents perform a narrative of cultural hybridity that unmistakably argues for greater understanding of other peoples as an alternative to unilateral globalization and to US militarism. Chief Elgin appears to abandon Christianity for Islam, and he dons the traditional Arab male *kaffiyyeh* (“head covering”) to announce his conversion. Conrad Vig learns about Islamic burial practices, overcomes his racism toward Chief Elgin by way of their shared interest in Islam, and is eventually prepared for an Islamic burial of his own. In fact, when the dissidents cross the border into Iran, they are carrying his body with them for a proper burial on the other side. The protagonists learn to sympathize

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with and understand not historically and regionally specific groups of Iraqis, but with generalized “Arab” and “Muslim” types. In this way, the four Americans act out liberal multiculturalism, which is often criticized for what Lisa Lowe terms its contribution to the “ideological representation of the liberal imperialist state” (Lowe 1996: 420). Thus, the cinematic experience of viewing in 2004 the concluding scene of Iraqi dissidents crossing the border into the relative freedom of Iran is not a prophecy from 1997 of how the Bush administration would turn to military power again in 2003 because it failed to follow the humane and politically liberal advice of *Three Kings*. Instead, the liberal ideology, itself deeply invested in US nationalism, helped produce the circumstances that would make the Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq a military and colonial reality and the “logical next step” of this foreign policy covert or military efforts at “regime change” in Iran.

What has been particularly noteworthy in US mass media since the terrorists’ attacks of September 11, and during the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq, has been a new twist on these old themes, but a turn that is compatible with them and readable as part of a history stretching from the Vietnam era to the present in the gradual, ineluctable control of the news and entertainment media by the US government. Fiction and non-fiction television has understandably paid great attention to the related events of 9/11 and the justification of US military intervention in Iraq. Lynn Spigel describes in some detail how “traditional forms of entertainment” reinvented “their place in U.S. life and culture” after 9/11, initially by reducing the number of violent films released and replacing them on television with “family fare” (Spigel 2004: 235). Spigel goes on to argue that very quickly after this period of self-censorship, Hollywood and television turned instead to familiar historical narratives to stabilize the myths of national cohesion and reaffirm a teleological narrative about the American experience (Spigel 2004: 240–1). Spigel’s fine study confirms my own sense that Hollywood and television quickly recycled old mythic narratives about America, rather than drawing the opposite conclusion: that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 indicate that Americans need to know far more about the world they are so intent upon “globalizing.” As if in direct response to this promise of greater attention to the other peoples of the world, the media began to incorporate “terrorism” into the United States and strip it of its international threat. Like President Bush’s continuing efforts to link Iraq directly with al-Qaeda, the nationalizing of terror helped defuse its transnational, inchoate, and thus truly terrifying power. The containment of terror on contemporary US television follows the logic of the cultural imperialism I have been tracing thus far, but now with the claim that the best weapons against such “terror” are those of traditional US democracy: the fairness of the law and the populism of an American people that exceeds party politics.

Since the 1987–8 television season, NBC’s *Law and Order*, which became the main title for three separate television programs, has worked out fictional solutions to much-publicized cases in criminal law in the United States.⁶ Starring Sam

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Waterston as the lead prosecutor of the District Attorney's office in New York, the program has made moral claims specific to the medium of television, distinguishing itself thereby from the continuing spate of police and crime shows which rely primarily on the urban public's anxieties about living in an increasingly dangerous America and world, with a program structured in two parts: in the first half-hour, police detectives investigate a crime, arrest a suspect, and present their case to the District Attorney's Office; in the second half-hour, the Chief Prosecutor, Jack McCoy (Sam Waterston) and his attractive Assistant DA, Serena, bring the case to trial and judgment. Although the detective and legal work do not always coincide, the errors in the system seem to confirm the overall checks and balances built into the police-judicial system, as it is referred to in the voice-over prologue to the program.

Here I want to digress for a moment to anticipate my larger argument. I disagree with Michael Moore's repeated claim in *Bowling for Columbine* that it is primarily the news media, rather than entertainment television and film, that have shaped the atmosphere of fear in the US, resulting in more than 11,000 gun deaths per year. Citing how other societies, such as Canada and Japan, where gun deaths are less than 1,000 per year, still generate large audiences for violent films, television programs, and video games, Moore contends that in such societies even adolescent viewers can suspend their disbelief in fiction programs and understand the difference between fantasy and reality. But, in the United States, there is a long tradition of confusing fiction and reality in the mass media, primarily for the purposes of maximizing the commercial advantages of each mode. We hardly need the examples of recent "reality television" to remind us that television thrives on what Baudrillard long ago defined as the "hyperreal," a phenomenon seemingly explained best by the way television gives us the illusion of heightened knowledge and authority over an otherwise baffling real. *Law and Order* certainly has had this effect on its viewers, which may account for its huge success on network television otherwise challenged significantly by cable channels, such as Lifetime and Oxygen, targeting specific market shares and trying to break up network hegemony in the so-called "post-network era."

I have argued elsewhere that the socially conscious television of the early 1970s, such as that pioneered by Norman Lear in *All in the Family*, was transformed in the 1980s into much more conventional "moral problem-solving" within the existing legal and social boundaries of US democracy (Rowe 2002: 170–1). *All in the Family* argued that racial and ethnic bigotry could not be overcome entirely by the law, but required changes in personal values. *Sanford and Son* joined that argument to claims that class and racial antipathies were inextricably bound together in psychological habits that were difficult but still possible to change. But *Law and Order* imagines that equality under the law, despite notable aberrations in US legal history, is our best defense against injustices tied to class, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality. The cultural shift is clearly from television committed to political and social reform to television concerned with defending existing institutions, as

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indeed the title of the program – a slogan of conservative republican campaigns for the past 35 years – suggests.

The episode of *Law and Order* I want to analyze focuses on the murder of a popular professor of anthropology, Louise Murdoch, who is also the head of a community advocacy center for Muslim women, and the eventual arrest and trial of a young American male, Greg Landen, who has converted to Islam. Of course, the most infamous American convert to Islam on October 2, 2002, the date this episode was first broadcast, was John Walker Lindh, the so-called “American Taliban,” who had left his upper-middle-class home in Marin, California, to study Arabic and thus the Qu’ran in Yemen and Pakistan, and then to join the Taliban in Afghanistan. Two days after this episode aired, Lindh was sentenced to a 20-year prison term in a “plea bargain” that reduced the charges against him to “one count of providing services to the Taliban and one count of carrying explosives during a felony” (*Washington Post*, October 5, 2002). In his sentencing hearing, Lindh was tearful and apologetic, denying he had any intention of taking up arms against the US, and his divorced parents stood by him throughout his arrest and trial.

Lindh is certainly the historical model on which the character of Greg Landen in *Law and Order* is based, but very important changes are made in his character and history. First, the young man in *Law and Order* despises his parents, the legal system, and America in general, so that his courtroom tirades as he takes over his own legal defense for purposes of political propaganda remind the viewer of news accounts of Zacarias Moussaoui, the accused “twentieth” hijacker in the 9/11 attacks, who also insisted on serving as his own legal counsel and used the courtroom as a “bully-pulpit.” Testifying in his own defense, Landen makes some very reasonable connections between al-Qaeda’s possible motivations and the historical motivations of oppressed minorities in the United States to resist domination:

Since 1990, [the US] has occupied our holy lands . . . America doesn’t respect any culture but its own . . . America is a country that was born out of the mass murder of native Americans and built on the backs of Africans. If the native Americans could have defended themselves by flying planes into buildings, don’t you think they would have? If the slaves could have freed themselves by becoming martyrs, don’t you think they would have? And it wouldn’t have been terrorism; it would have been self-defense.

In Muslim male dress and beard, Greg Landen is exoticized and Orientalized, even though his testimony echoes reasonable arguments made by many intellectuals in response to 9/11. In addition to his physical appearance, Landen is also alienated by his father, who is shown in the courtroom shaking his head from side to side and mouthing the unheard word, “No,” as his son testifies.

The young man’s target in *Law and Order* is not the capitalist authority symbolized by the World Trade Towers in New York City or the military authority

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of the Pentagon, but a woman professor of anthropology, who has devoted her life to liberal social change and exemplifies that work in her diversification of the American university. Equating global terrorist attacks, such as al-Qaeda's on the US (or Israel, France, or Indonesia), with "domestic terrorism" within the United States, such as Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, is a common response not only in the United States but in Islamic societies. But this episode of *Law and Order* constructs the plot in such a way as to swerve widely from such a conclusion. Instead, we learn that the young man believed his girlfriend, who worked at the professor's center for Muslim women, was being drawn away from her responsibilities as a submissive Islamic woman by her feminist work with the professor. In a jealous, but also religiously motivated rage, he "smote" his enemy.

Cautious to protect itself against charges of insensitivity to Islamic Americans, *Law and Order* carefully disengages the young man from "true" Islam, but in much the same fashion al-Qaeda has been distinguished in the popular US news from "true" Islam: by condemning the "fundamentalist" irrationality of both, rather than making any substantive claims about the role of women in Islamic societies. In a decisive consultation between the prosecutors and a woman psychologist whom the prosecution will call as an "expert witness," the psychologist concludes that Landen's primary motivation for murder was his sexual insecurity, reinforced by his difficult relationship with his parents, and his desperate need to maintain absolute control over his girlfriend. I need hardly comment on how such a conclusion reduces to triviality all of the important ethical questions raised by this episode. To be sure, *Law and Order* does not argue that this young man represents all American Muslims, but it reinforces virtually every convention the West has used to distinguish its "civilization" from Islamic "barbarism" since Romantic Idealist philosophers, like Hegel.

Talal Asad has argued in *Genealogies of Religion* that the "West" begins with the "project of modernization (Westernization)" that is inherently colonial and "defines itself, in opposition to all non-Western cultures, by its modern historicity. Despite the disjunctions of modernity (its break with tradition), 'the West' therefore includes within itself its past as an organic continuity: from 'the Greeks and Romans' and 'the Hebrews and Early Christians,' through 'Latin Christendom,' 'the Renaissance,' and 'the Reformation,' to the 'universal civilization' of modern Europeans." (Asad 1993: 18). Western imperialism, then, is a story that is told in countless different ways, media, and genres, but with surprisingly few variations when looked at in this light, which allows "otherness" to be internalized and rationalized, historicized, and civilized.

It perhaps should not surprise or even shock us that popular American television contributes to this narrative teleology in such transparently reductive ways. "Islam" is for a young American, like John Walker Lindh or the fictional character in this episode, merely "acting out" childish rebellion, a confirmation of the "undeveloped" features of those "backward cultures," which like Hegel's Africa

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are “without history.” In a similar fashion, conservative politicians and the general public accepted anti-war activism in the Vietnam War era as “college hi-jinks,” “adolescent rebellion,” a “rejection of their fathers’ America.” What each of these historical moments – the Vietnam War and the current inchoate “war on terrorism” – have in common is a desperate desire to reaffirm national values by repressing utterly the history and reality of supposed “enemies” in Southeast Asia and the Islamic world. Few today would disagree, including such stubborn old Hawks as General William Westmoreland, that the Vietnam War marked a historic moment in which the United States needed to change its foreign and domestic policies, its ties between government and corporation, its neglect of public opinion, and the changing political economies affecting these historical crises. If we are to learn the lesson of the Vietnam era, then we must learn to recognize, rather than repress, the complex, intertwined histories of Islam, its influence on the development of US and other Western societies, and our dependence on the economic means it has provided to “modernize” and thus “Westernize,” often at its own peril, the world. Before we can even begin to learn this lesson, however, we will have to read critically that other narrative of Western historicity Talal Asad has so cogently interpreted as dependent on a constant “assumption”:

To make history, the agent must create the future, remake herself, and help others to do so, where the criteria of successful remaking are seen to be universal. Old universes must be subverted and a new universe created. To that extent, history can be made only on the back of a universal teleology. Actions seeking to maintain the “local” status quo, or to follow local models of social life, do not qualify as history making. From the Cargo Cults of Melanesia to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, they merely attempt (hopelessly) “to resist the future” or “to turn back the clock of history.” (Asad 1993: 19)

It is time for us to think differently about how “history” is and has been made, to count the “local” as well as the “global,” and to develop new institutions, not simply interpretive methods, to negotiate the inevitable conflicts of such histories. Without such critical knowledge, there is likely to be unending terror from all sides in a new era of global warfare, only one stage of which is being enacted in the US occupation of Iraq and its ongoing war in Afghanistan.

Notes

- 1 See the website: <<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article2842.htm>>.
- 2 Today China is the source of the greatest imbalance of trade in US trade relations globally.
- 3 The English translation by Paul Patton, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, was published in 1995.
- 4 One of my points in this essay and in *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism* is that when we view US imperialism in its full historical scope, rather than as a recent “neo-imperialism”

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dating either from World War II or from the Spanish–American War, we see such features as US Orientalism as relatively unchanged, except for the specific peoples employed. From the Barbary pirates of nineteenth-century Tripoli to the Philippine revolutionaries led by Aguinaldo in the Philippine–American War (1898–1902) who resisted US annexation, to the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army regulars, and more recently to the Libyans, Palestinians, Iraqis, Iranians, and transnational al-Qaeda style revolutionaries, diverse groups around the globe have been consistently Orientalized by the US. For an interesting discussion of US Orientalism in these contexts, see Klein 2003: 1–19.

- 5 I am indebted to Thomas LeClair of the University of Cincinnati for this interpretation of the Kurdish elements in the dissident group represented in *Three Kings*.
- 6 The other two programs are *Law and Order: SVU (Special Victims Unit)* and *Law and Order: CI (Criminal Intent)*.

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Sugar, Sex, and Empire: Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Foreigner" and the Spanish–American War

Rebecca Walsh

Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Foreigner" first appeared in the *Atlantic* in 1900, revisiting in that short story the same fictional Maine community of Dunnet Landing that she had written about four years earlier in her popular novel, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. While it is debatable whether we should consider "The Foreigner" as an extension of Jewett's novel, as a rewriting of it, or as a tenuously related afterthought, what seems clear is that the story takes a concerted interest in "foreignness," particularly the intersections of various forms of difference: gender, sexuality, race, religion, national origin. As the title suggests, "The Foreigner" puts multiple kinds of alterity into play through its story-within-a-story framework: an unnamed narrator, herself a "foreigner" to Dunnet Landing, hears a story from her landlady, Mrs Todd, about the mysterious Mrs Tolland (whose first name and maiden name Mrs Todd cannot recall or never knew), who was French, lived much of her life in Martinique, and became stranded in Jamaica until her rescue by Captain Tolland, a Dunnet Landing lumber and sugar trader. Returning home with him to become "Mrs Tolland," she lives a life of only marginal integration in Dunnet Landing society until Captain Tolland dies and she herself dies shortly thereafter. Mrs Todd concludes the tale by recalling the moment just before Mrs Tolland's death in which the apparition of the woman's mother suddenly appeared in the room, visible to both women.

Significantly, this ghostly tale that Mrs Todd tells distracts herself and the narrator from worry as the two weather the "first cold northeasterly storm of the season," which was "blowing hard outside" with such force that Mrs Todd

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proclaims “You know those tidal waves occur sometimes down to the West Indies” (Jewett 1971: 307). Jewett’s own text was composed as America waited out another kind of storm affecting the Caribbean, the Spanish–American War. The United States entered the conflict in April of 1898, galvanized by the sinking of the USS *Maine* in Havana Harbor and with the ostensible aim of aiding Cuba and the Philippines in throwing off irresponsible Spanish rule. During the height of the brief US military engagement – the “Splendid Little War,” as Secretary of State John Hay called it (Secunda and Moran 2007: 18) – and just days before the anti-war efforts of the American Anti-Imperialist League organized their public protests against American intervention, Jewett conceived of this conflict as storm that needed to unleash itself and run its course. She wrote on June 10, 1898, to her friend Sara Norton, the daughter of family friend, public intellectual, and anti-imperialist agitator Charles Eliot Norton: “Spain has shown herself perfectly incompetent to maintain any sort of civilization in Cuba, and things are like some sultry summer days, when there is nothing for it but to let a thunder-shower do its best and worst, and drown the new hay, and put everything out of gear while it lasts.” (qtd in Fields 1911: 150). Jewett’s own writing about Cuba, as well as the political discourse and popular fiction of the time that narrated the Spanish–American War, open up new interpretive possibilities for reading “The Foreigner” that embody the “transnational turn” characterizing both recent feminist criticism and the “New American Studies.” My argument is that the narrative elements surrounding Mrs Tolland in Jewett’s story have as much to do with US economic, neo-imperialist participation in the exploitation of British and French Caribbean colonies of the past, as many readings have suggested, as they do with America’s efforts in Jewett’s own writing moment to become a new and better sort of empire all of its own. Certainly, Jewett’s story records the Caribbean rescue of Mrs Tolland as a part of a narrated past, but she constructs this plot precisely at the moment when the national script characterized US intervention in Cuba and the Philippines as an act of heroic chivalry. Remarkably, Jewett’s text openly wonders whether Mrs Tolland, “the foreigner,” should in fact have been brought to America at all, posing questions about the dynamics of rescue and incorporation that speak to the transnational politics of military intervention and annexation on a hemispheric scale.

These extra-territorial dimensions of American imperialism in Jewett’s “The Foreigner” have not been discussed previously in any sustained way, though attention to them builds on the increased sensitivity in feminist scholarship on Jewett’s work and in the field of women’s regionalist writing more broadly to the intersections of gender with race, class, and sexuality, as well as with the category of nation. Transformed by work in critical race theory and postcolonial studies, this body of third-wave feminist scholarship that has re-evaluated women’s regionalist writing over the last two decades reflects recent global reorientations within US feminist criticism, what some call “transnational feminism” (Grewal and Kaplan 1994), and others “locational feminism” (Friedman 1998). Rejecting

earlier emphases on essentialist definitions of female identity and experience which inevitably ranked various sorts of oppressions and divided various feminist projects from one another, these recent feminist projects call for tracking the intersecting nature of identity's inevitably multiple forms within a geopolitical context. Such transformations came about at the same time that the field imaginary of the "New American Studies" came to recognize transnational or postnational flows of people, goods, culture, language, and capital as a way to think beyond the logic of American exceptionalism that had given rise to the formation of American Studies in the 1940s and 1950s. Of central concern to both fields are the problems of the dynamics of imperialism and the uneven developments of global capitalism (Smith 1984) that impact American geopolitics and that structure how America and its citizens are defined in relation to various global others. For American Studies in particular, the Spanish–American War of 1898 has become increasingly visible as a significant marker punctuating America's own empire-building project (Kaplan 1991, 2002). To link these facets of American imperialism to Jewett's woman-centered regionalist fiction indicates just how far this event penetrated into various aspects of American literature and culture. "The Foreigner" thus exposes the ways that feminist and American Studies methodologies profitably align, while serving as a flashpoint for the ongoing challenges of addressing complex transnational issues without letting gender drop out of the equation. The first task is how to ensure that discourses of nation and empire do not remain disconnected from women's experiences and women's writing, particularly when these discourses are not always directly engaged explicitly with broader, public political arenas, as is often the case in literature produced before the advances of twentieth-century suffragist and second-wave feminist movements. The second is the continued need for historicized scholarship working across archival registers that considers both governmental public documents and popular media – artifacts of central importance to American Studies specialists – as well as more traditional kinds of biographical archival materials that have been important to feminist recovery projects and that hold a valuable, but perhaps underutilized, place in American Studies in understanding the contested nature of culture as a field of study. This latter issue is central for producing grounded, bottom-up claims about how forms of representation function as gendered, national allegory, not to mention for reconstituting the cultural politics of the past in a more fully pluralized form.

The ability to examine Jewett's story in the context of transnational politics, and what it means for the relationship between gender and discourses of imperialism, rests upon several decades of feminist scholarship responsible for gradually transforming the field of women's literature and women's regionalist fiction in particular. Though "The Foreigner" was not republished after its original appearance in the *Atlantic* until 1962 (Blanchard 1994: 315), it has steadily approached the centrality of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in recent discussions of women's regionalist fiction thanks to these feminist critical advances. The

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dynamics between the female characters in the story provide some of the terrain through which two major forms of second-wave feminist analysis re-evaluated women's writing: gynocriticism, the recognition of the tradition of women writers as a category of analysis, and gynesis, the recognition of the ways that the feminine jams the machinery of patriarchal, Western discourse, independent of the sex/gender of the writer (Showalter 1987; Friedman 1998). When Mrs Todd visits the room of the narrator, her lodger, at the beginning of Jewett's story, the familiarity and mutual regard between the two women is recognized by the narrator as "the harmony of our fellowship" (Jewett 1971: 307), exemplifying for many feminist critics the celebration of a woman-focused community as an alternative to the traditional marginalizations of female culture under the sign of patriarchy (Ammons 1983). Within a patriarchal arena, the elements of mothering in the story Mrs Todd shares with the narrator could not seem more "foreign" and "unAmerican," as Judith Fetterley has claimed (1998: 30), given what the traditional canon of American literature looked like. Mrs Todd identifies with Mrs Tolland by seeing, along with her, the apparition of Mrs Tolland's mother, who visits Mrs Tolland on her deathbed; sharing this vision of female reunion with the narrator allows both women to identify with Mrs Tolland while solidifying their bonds to one another. As Fetterley argues, Mrs Todd's ability to witness this becomes the fulfillment of her regard for her own mother, who was Mrs Tolland's only friend in Dunnet Landing. Mrs Todd also fulfills this commitment to the mother through the medicinal herbs she grows in her garden and dispenses to her community, acts which allow her to nurture her community at large. The nature of her botanical knowledge has a complex relationship to Mrs Tolland's origins that I will discuss below, but, as second-wave feminist readings of Jewett have suggested, it can be traced to a marginalized but powerful matrilineage of pagan healers and witches from Old Europe (Ammons 1984, 1994). On these kinds of terms, women's regionalist writing was liberated by feminist critics during the 1980s from being categorized as a provincial decorative, sub-national project – "the women's domestic branch" of realism (Brodhead 1993: 109), or "regional realism" (Fetterley and Pryse 2003: 4) – and was seen as providing counter-sites that critiqued and provided an alternative to the patriarchal operations of nation. At stake in this scholarly moment was the recognition of the ways in which women's regionalist writing could actually participate in the literary project of realism itself. As Michael Bell has discussed, the realist mode "prohibited women from full participation in the realism program" because of the way that writers and tastemakers such as William Dean Howells "valued the world of *men's* activities, and he dismisses the care for style" typically associated with women regionalists such as Jewett "as a species of 'preening and prettifying . . .' as, in short, effeminate" (Bell 1984: 64).

More recent reassessments of the involvement of race, culture, religion, and national origin in gender relations have focused on the racial, cultural, and national complexities of Mrs Tolland's experiences in "The Foreigner." These readings

acknowledge, in various ways, that regionalism or regionalization is not organic, innocent, or natural, but is rather a discourse that solidifies and distributes power; it is more useful, as Fetterley and Pryse point out, to consider the ways that women regionalist writers resist the naturalness of the “regionalizing premise” that aims to consolidate white patriarchal national culture, while recognizing there are some writers who internalize that logic (2003: 7). Such scholarship recognizes the mutually constitutive nature of the local and the national as well as the ways in which national myths that long for a utopian, homogenous ideal of the body politic exert themselves and are also contested (for instance, McCullough 1999; Pryse 2004). Regions like Dunnet Landing, in other words, carry multivalent functions as both a utopian, homogeneous rewriting of a necessarily heterogeneous national sphere and as a critical counterpoint to national fictions invested in repressing racial, cultural, and national difference.

Indeed, Mrs Tolland’s narrated foreignness could be said to facilitate the bond between Mrs Todd and the ostensibly Anglo-American narrator as one of reassuring racial sameness, metonymically representing the nation as racially homogenous at a time when it was struggling with the lasting divisions of the Civil War and the perceived threat of immigration. But rather than reify those aspects of the story that may participate in constructing what Lauren Berlant (1991) calls a utopian, compensatory “National Symbolic,” the critical focus has shifted to what Mrs Tolland’s foreignness itself has to say about gender, race, culture, nation, and forms of community belonging. Mrs Tolland’s cipher-like qualities have generated a plurality of rich readings, all of which demonstrate the presence of multiple racial, cultural, and national genealogies that are active within the borders of American community formation. When the narrator asks Mrs Todd who Mrs Tolland was, she admits “‘I never knew her maiden name if I ever heard it, I’ve gone an’ forgot; ’t would mean nothing to me’” (Jewett 1971: 309). As much as Mrs Todd herself cannot recall or keep straight many of the particulars regarding Mrs Tolland, she does remember that she is “French-born” (Jewett 1971: 309) and spent much of her life in Martinique. The text surrounds Mrs Tolland with two traditional hallmarks of Frenchness, beauty and an appreciation of good food, which Jewett delightfully compresses when Mrs Todd describes Mrs Tolland as a “beautiful cook” (Jewett 1971: 315). Ironically, her Frenchness would not have coded as all that foreign to Jewett, given her own trips to France and long-standing friendship with Marie Therese Blanc, and to readers living in this region of the country, of whom a considerable portion were French-Canadian factory workers who settled in Maine (Foote 2001: 30).

To the inhabitants of Dunnet Landing, these aspects of cultural and national alterity are unsettling, perhaps due to the potential that Mrs Tolland is of mixed race and/or is entirely of Caribbean heritage (Schrag 1999; Zagarell 1994; Foote 2001). The ghost of Mrs Tolland’s mother who appears at her daughter’s deathbed was, as Mrs Todd describes it, “a woman’s dark face lookin’ right at us” (Jewett 1971: 322), while Mrs Tolland herself is also described as “dark,”

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evoking the intimate interactions between the French imperial center and its colonial outpost, Martinique, that produced cultural and racial mixing. In referring to her several times as “strange” (Jewett 1971: 315), a non-specific kind of foreignness, Mrs Todd’s language thematizes the messy racial borders between Euro-Frenchness and creole Frenchness, whose uncertain markers may themselves threaten the social fabric of Dunnet Landing. In this light, the French print of a statue of Empress Josephine at “old Fort Royal, in Martinique” (Jewett 1971: 321) that Mrs Tolland brings with her to Dunnet Landing, a print that Mrs Todd eventually inherits, could indicate her endorsement of French Empire as a patriotic French citizen or signify that she is the epitome of the obedient colonial subject who believes wholeheartedly in what Empress Josephine represents. Mrs Todd herself tends to fix Mrs Tolland’s identity as West Indian and as not essentially or only French in its spatial and cultural formation. Contemplating her funeral, Mrs Todd wonders “how it ever come to the Lord’s mind to let her *begin* down among them gay islands all heat and sun, and end up here among the rocks with a north wind blowin” (italics mine; Jewett 1971: 318). From this perspective, the time Mrs Tolland spent in the Caribbean makes her functionally creole, independent of her genetic and phenotypic racial make-up.

The community’s exclusion of Mrs Tolland’s racial, cultural, and national foreignness, and its potential to commodify and absorb that difference, appears in the figure of Mrs Todd’s garden. While Mrs Tolland’s presence may have an unsettling effect on the Dunnet Landing community, her knowledge and experience transform Mrs Todd’s garden and secure her position as community herbalist. While she teaches Mrs Todd the ostensibly French skill of how to “discern mushrooms” (Jewett 1971: 315), she passes on healing knowledge that seems as rooted in Martiniquan quimbois, a variant of Jamaican Obeah, as it is in European folklore traditions. Mrs Todd reports:

“She taught me a sight o’ things about herbs I never knew before nor since; she was well acquainted with the virtues o’ plants. She’d act awful secret about some things too, an’ used to work charms for herself sometimes, an’ some o’ the neighbors told to an fro after she died that they knew enough not to provoke her, but ’t was all nonsen; ’t is the believin’ in such things that causes em’ to be any harm, an’ so I told ’em,” confided Mrs Todd contemptuously. (Jewett 1971: 314)

As Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert explain, quimbois “is not a religion, but a set of practices related to magic and sorcery with roots in African religiosity . . . Herbalists by training, quimboiseurs are primarily healers and counselors with powers to call upon the supernatural, for good or evil, to help the living” (2003: 150). Mrs Tolland manifests this supernatural ability in foreseeing that her husband’s ship will not be coming back from sea (Jewett 1971: 315), and in the secrecy and charms that frighten the neighbors. Given the syncretic nature of quimbois itself, the fact that Mrs Tolland also carries around

Catholic rosary beads does not seem out of place. As Raphaël Confiant explains in *Aimé Césaire: Une traverse paradoxale du siècle*, the quintessential Martinique sensibility as “intrinsically multicultural” appears in the emblem of “the illiterate cane cutter who, to cure a malady, goes to Catholic mass in the morning, participates in a Hindu ceremony in the afternoon, and consults a black *quimboiseur* in the evening” (qtd in Price and Price 1997: 12). With this, Confiant views the three practices, Catholic, Hindu, and quimbois healer, as equivalent if not complementary. The accrued markers of a creole identity displayed by Mrs Tolland suggest Jewett’s rejection of a more fixed sense of racial and ethnic chromosomes and her assumption instead of the fluid and dynamic features of identity. Mrs Tolland’s fluidly creole identity, however, works against her, resulting in her marginalization by the Dunnet Landing community. Despite her efforts to integrate, Mrs Tolland “‘come a foreigner and she went a foreigner, and never was anything but a stranger among our folks’” (Jewett 1971: 314).

If Mrs Todd appeared as a medicinal herbalist in Jewett’s 1896 *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, in “The Foreigner” her contact with Mrs Tolland retroactively transforms her into quimboiseur healer figure herself. In Jewett’s earlier text, Mrs Todd is an “ardent lover of herbs, both wild and tame” (Jewett 1994: 378). The “queer little garden” (Jewett 1994: 378) that she tends in the soil of Dunnet Landing supports her thriving practice as a herbalist healer and her dispensing of remedies allows her to get the latest news from her chatty clients, not to mention secure the family remedies they share with her. These healing concoctions come to life in the “small cauldron” on her stove, the pungent odors of which the narrator associates with “sacred and mystic rites” and “occult knowledge” (Jewett 1994: 378). There is nothing in “The Foreigner” to suggest that Mrs Todd does not continue to enjoy the regard she had enjoyed in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, which records that “The village doctor and this learned herbalist were upon the best of terms. The good man may have counted upon the unfavorable effect of certain potions which he should find his opportunity in counteracting; at any rate, he now and then stopped and exchanged greetings with Mrs Todd over the picket fence. The conversations became at once professional after the briefest preliminaries” (Jewett 1994: 379). Supplying Mrs Tolland as the back history for much of Mrs Todd’s socially valuable and “professionally” respected healing practices, the logic of “The Foreigner” reveals the community-sustaining functions of Anglo-American performances of *créolité* knowledge.

By transmuting the knowledge of communities that have been displaced or marginalized into communally accepted palliatives for present-day Dunnet Landing, Mrs Tolland’s creolized identity functions to “under[write] Dunnet Landing,” as Stephanie Foote has argued, “paradoxically activating the region’s conversion of strangers into natives” (2001: 31). In this way, regionalism as a genre functions as a form of textual negotiation of difference, in which “region” navigates “various kinds or orders of cultural difference” that exist inside and outside of itself (Foote 2001: 32). The porousness of the boundaries differentiating region

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and nation thus serve as interpretive cruxes for broader nineteenth-century debates surrounding racial and cultural difference. If we read “The Foreigner” as an act of “re-narration” of Jewett’s past work, as several critics do (Fetterley and Pryse 2003: 376; Foote 2001: 29), in which Jewett comes to a deeper understanding of her own characters, then the Caribbean genealogy of Mrs Todd’s garden exposes the multiple and mutually tangled histories that are embedded in Dunnet Landing – the history of imperialism and the slave trade; the Caribbean sugar trade’s dependence upon New England for money and lumber; the vulnerability of female bodies within those circuits. Tracing the circulation of the timber and sugar trade that brought “the foreigner” to Dunnet Landing helps us recognize Jewett’s exposure of the “regionalist trick” of much if not all of regionalist fiction, the manufacture of region as seemingly insular, removed, and operating only at the smallest scale of locality, when in fact “region” is integrally connected to the goings on of the national body politic.

To focus exclusively on the Martiniquan and Jamaican associations of Mrs Tolland as some previous scholarship has done, however, is to focus exclusively on what was anachronistic during Jewett’s own moment of writing. While Mrs Todd’s narration in “The Foreigner” occurs in the “present” of 1900, the content of her tale of Mrs Tolland’s rescue in Jamaica takes place approximately 30 or 40 years earlier. Jewett’s focus on sugar trade-related British and French presence in the Caribbean is out of date and possibly nostalgic, since in the 1890s beet sugar produced in Europe had captured almost 60 percent of the world’s market (Bethell 1986: 194). By the 1860s, sugar plantation economies like Martinique’s and Jamaica’s were significantly weakened by the abolition of slavery in England in 1834, and France in 1848 (Allahar 2004: 112). By the century’s mid-point, Cuba, where slavery was illegal but where infractions were rarely pursued by authorities (Allahar 131, n.7), had in fact become the biggest sugar producer and exporter in the West Indies; the United States imported over 60 percent of its sugar from there, getting the rest from Puerto Rico, Brazil, and Santo Domingo (Bethell 1986: 195). And, although contemporary historiographic accounts of New England often neglect the impact of Spanish culture and industry on New England, the region enjoyed vibrant trade of lumber, ice, and bricks for molasses, and sugar products from Spanish-controlled producers (D. Carey 2005). In the political arena, Spain of course occupied a primary place in the imaginary of the United States during the time Jewett wrote and published “The Foreigner.” Long-simmering American military, political, and economic interest in Cuba peaked when Cuba began agitating in the 1890s to throw off Spanish control. The declaration of war between the United States and Spain on Cuba’s behalf in April of 1898 resulted, after a brief military conflict, in the US annexation of Cuba and the Philippines. Debates raged in journalistic media and in Jewett’s own intellectual circle first about whether the US should intervene in Cuba, and later what that intervention meant for the American promotion of democratic ideals. It is these questions of intervention that form the narrative architecture of “The Foreigner.”

The success of the US in the Spanish–American War provoked heated opposition to American imperialism from those in Jewett’s inner circle. Jewett regularly visited Shady Hill, the Cambridge home of prominent scholar and public intellectual Charles Eliot Norton and his daughters (R. Cary 1967: 101, n.2). Norton, among those most vocally opposed to American territorial expansionism abroad, claimed in his public address “True Patriotism” that “independence secured for Cuba by forcible overthrow of the Spanish rule means either practical anarchy or the substitution of the authority of the United States for that of Spain. Either alternative might well give us pause. As for the relief of suffering, surely it is a strange procedure to begin by inflicting worse suffering still” (Norton and Howe 1913: 266). Other close friends such as William James (Blanchard 1994: 311) and *Atlantic Monthly* editor Thomas Bailey Aldrich spoke out against the militarism of the war and against America’s attempts after the war to quash Filipino attempts to gain independence. James served as Vice President of the Anti-Imperialist League and, in a series of letters he published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* and the *New York Evening Post* throughout the year of 1899, warned that this was a harbinger of a new American imperialism that was sweeping the country (Myers 1986: 429, 438). Although Aldrich displayed racist, anti-immigration sentiment regarding American society at home, he shared James’s objections about the US violation of a people’s rights abroad. Writing to his friend R. W. Gilder on April 27, 1899, from Paris about his imminent return to the US, Aldrich displays sympathy for the Philippines largely through likening it to colonial America:

My Dear Gilder, – If you are meditating a threnody on a certain contemporary of yours who disappeared nearly a year ago and has not been heard of, stay your hand, for in ten days or so from now he will return to the land of the brave and the home of the oppressors of an unoffending people fighting for freedom and self-government – as we did in 1776. Suppose England had sold us to Germany, how would we have liked that? When I think that we have bought the Filipinos, just as they were so many slaves, I am not proud of my country. I will not vote for McKinley again. I would sooner vote for Bryan. To be ruined financially is not so bad as to be ruined morally. (qtd in Greenslet 1928: 204; ellipses in original)

Aldrich’s concern, like that of other anti-imperialists, was that President McKinley’s actions in annexing Cuba and the Philippines had strayed from America’s founding democratic logic.

Though little exists in the archival record that directly indicates Jewett’s views on American intervention in Cuba and the Philippines, she unequivocally recognized the mistreatment of Cuba under Spanish rule and initially saw US intervention as a necessary and inevitable stage in the march toward progress and civilization. Jewett declares in her June 10, 1898, letter to Sara Norton that “Spain has made Cuba suffer in those ways far too long” (qtd in Fields 1911: 151). But, while Jewett objects to Spain’s rule over Cuba and the Philippines, it is not

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necessarily out of the principles of freedom, democracy, and self-determination for Cubans and Filipinos raised by Aldrich and James, but more based on her belief in the competent rule that America would bring to the region. The problem as she sees it is rooted in Spain's inability to sustain "civilization" in its overseas empires. To quote more fully from Jewett's letter discussed in the opening of this essay:

Spain has shown herself perfectly incompetent to maintain any sort of civilization in Cuba, and things are like some sultry summer days, when there is nothing for it but to let a thunder-shower do its best and worst, and drown the new hay, and put everything out of gear while it lasts. The condition is larger than petty politics or mercenary hopes, or naval desires for promotion, or any of those things to which at one time or another I have indignantly "laid it." I feel more than ever that such a war is to be laid at the door of progress, and not at any backward steps toward what we had begun to feel was out of date, the liking for a fight. (letter dated June 10, 1898, qtd in Fields 1911: 150)

Jewett enfoldes the territorial conflict in the temporality of the inevitable march of modern progression that the United States is uniquely fit to lead. Properly equipped and fully mandated, the task of intervention seems less boosterish militarism and masculine aggression and more a clinical, curative procedure as she goes on to say: "It seems like a question of surgery, this cure of Cuba – we must not mind the things that disgust and frighten us, if only the surgery is in good hands" (qtd in Fields 1911: 150). Like the storm that Mrs Todd and the narrator expect will pass, so will the unpleasantness of war when exercised by the right national power. Undergirding Jewett's faith in America's intercession is, of course, dominant racial discourse of the period, which saw Cuban and Filipino citizens as racially inferior and in need of external (and ostensibly American) guidance of the properly administered sort. Cubans and Filipinos were considered incapable of self-rule, a view Amy Kaplan partly attributes to public associations that tended to identify them with African Americans within the United States. Thus, as the public imaginary rallied around US intervention in Cuba and the Philippines, the nation "could be reimagined as Anglo-Saxon in contrast to the inferior races of Cubans and Filipinos" (Kaplan 1991: 248).

The ostensible need for American intervention in Cuba and the Philippines was shaped by a trip Jewett took to British and French colonies in the Caribbean in the year 1896, providing one reason why she narrated action in "The Foreigner" uses one set of geographical and historical coordinates to work through issues of another. Jewett, accompanied by her friends Mrs Annie Adams Fields and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, headed to the Caribbean in 1896 for an extended cruise aboard the *Hermione*, a yacht owned by their friend and former Boston mayor Henry L. Pierce (Gollin 2002: 19, 247). The pictures that emerge of the Caribbean from the journal that Annie Adams Fields kept and the letters Jewett sent during their trip reflect the variety of European influences on Caribbean island

communities. One of Jewett's observations hints at the correlations between "The Foreigner's" own Caribbean geographies and Cuba. Despite British colonial rule in the Bahamas, Jewett writes to her friend Mrs Sarah Whitman that Nassau "is a little like Italy, but I suppose it is really more like Spain" (January 16, 1899 [1896], Fields 1911: 161).¹ While it is easy to assume that this trip gave Jewett the source material primarily for her fictional treatment of Jamaica, this cruise was formative in shaping Jewett's perceptions of the Cuban question. At Santo Domingo on February 14, 1896, Louis Mondestin Florvil Hyppolite, President of Haiti, dined aboard the *Hermione* with Jewett, Fields, and Aldrich. The last topic of discussion before he disembarked for the evening was his view of Cuba's growing agitation for liberation from Spain, which, as Fields writes in her diary from this trip, could not have been a more fascinating topic to the group (Howe 1922: 290). According to Howe, Fields's diary claims that Hyppolite "is inclined to believe that the day of Spain is over. The people are already conquerors in the interior and are approaching Havana. Spain will soon be compelled to retire her coast defenses and she is sure to be driven thence in two years or sooner. Of course, if the Cubans are recognized by the great powers they will triumph all the sooner" (1922: 290). But when asked if various island republics in the Caribbean support Cuba's cause, Hyppolite shared a parable of sorts about a camel who struggles under the heavy burdens heaped upon its back. A flea seated on top of the pack decides to jump down to relieve the camel of the burden. Hyppolite relays the camel's response with this observation: "'Thank you, Mr. Elephant,' said the camel, as he glanced at the flea hopping away. 'The recognition of these islands would help Cuba about as much,' he added laughingly" (Howe 1922: 291). The parable suggests the immense colonial weight with which Cuba must contend and the powerlessness of it and other Caribbean island republics to effect this kind of change in the global arena.

Benevolent and capable American intervention in Cuba is a notion that Jewett tests out in allegorical terms in "The Foreigner," a story written with a good portion of American military action in Cuba and the Philippines, as well as American debates about it, under her belt. Her focus on examining the consequences of "responsibly" exercised liberation motivates her representation of the rescue of Mrs Tolland and the conditions surrounding her death. The diction that Mrs Todd uses to describe an ostensibly heroic and romantic rescue of Mrs Tolland allows the story to flirt with registers of meaning that exceed the scale of the interpersonal. Captain Tolland and several other Dunnet Landing sea captains save Mrs Tolland from the public house in Jamaica where she has been singing to support herself, and where they find her about to be swallowed up in a bar-room scuffle. After drawing straws, Captain Tolland is elected to bring her back to Dunnet Landing with him, prompting him to move some of the excess sugar he is transporting to Maine from his spare cabins to make room for her. She is thus not only his "prize" (Jewett 1971: 311) but figuratively becomes the sugar cargo itself, his other "sugar." The passage emphasizes her commodification by

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continually raising and deflating traditional (though far from ideal) romantic conventions, robbing Mrs Tolland of even the passive subject position of a romanced and happy bride. Moreover, it disrupts reader expectations of the high romance of conventional “rescue plots.” First, Captain Tolland “wins” her but only by default. Jonathan Bowden draws the winning lot but he “did act discouraged” and “threw himself on the mercy o’ Cap’n Tolland” (Jewett 1971: 311). Second, Captain Tolland sails off with her in the “bright moonlight,” with the other sea captains thinking they can hear the sounds of love in the dulcet strumming of Mrs Tolland’s guitar. But, Mrs Todd goes on to qualify, this sound “may have come from another source” (Jewett 1971: 311) entirely unrelated to the couple. The final proclamation about this scene that Mrs Todd makes seems to offer, but ultimately undercuts, a familiar romantic image of Captain Tolland sailing into his home harbor with his new bride. “Lord bless you! he come sailing into Portland *with his sugar*, all in good time, *an’ they stepped right afore a justice o’ the peace* and Cap’n John Tolland come paradin’ home to Dunnet Landin’ a married man” (italics mine; Jewett 1971: 311–12). The language in the passage forecloses romance and proleptically funnels it into the proclamation that Captain Tolland arrives in Maine with his sugar. Certainly, the passage underscores the material realities of empire under which female bodies, particularly “raced” female bodies, were commodified. But the flattened, elliptical suggestion that Captain Tolland and his sugar were married and lived happily ever after allows the story to reflect upon what it means to domesticate the foreign out of economic interests and bring it inside US boundaries, and upon what constitutes the nature of US relations with the global South in general.

Gender and heterosexual romance for Jewett become powerful sites through which questions of national self-determination and international responsibility can undergo interrogation. Most women, after all, lacked outlets during this period that would allow them direct commentary on international politics. To her reflections upon Cuba recorded in her letter to Sara Norton, Jewett appended this apology: “But how long I am writing these small thoughts about great things! You will say as the Queen did once in old times about Gladstone, – ‘He speaks to me as if I were a public meeting.’ Forgive me, dear Sally, and remember that I shall not be writing about the war again!” (Fields 1911: 151). The arrogance that Queen Victoria reportedly found in Prime Minister William Gladstone is something Jewett locates in herself for speaking on such subjects. Consistent with her own efforts to censor, even in her correspondence, political commentary about Cuba is the oblique format that “The Foreigner” provides to work through the logic of intervention. But perhaps the function of Captain Tolland and Mrs Tolland’s romance as a drama of international relations is not actually all that oblique, considering the longstanding historical associations that link women and nation, and considering the language of affection adopted by the United States government to structure its relationship to its new colonies Cuba and the Philippines. President William McKinley’s rhetoric offered the Philippines the

loving embrace of the United States, as Vincente Rafael has discussed, with McKinley's explicit aim "win[ing] the confidence, respect, and affection" of Filipino hearts (Rafael 1993: 185).

Seen in this light, we can situate "The Foreigner" within the context of other modes of writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that linked American imperialist intervention in Cuba and the Philippines to domestic national ideals. Despite the perceived dominance of literary realism during this period, Americans thirsted for historical imperial romance fiction, which topped the lists of best-selling fiction between 1895 and 1902 (Kaplan 2002: 94). Like the British forms of imperial romance, discussed by Patrick Brantlinger and others, the plots of these novels offered readers tales of damsels in distress and of triumphant heroes that were set in mythical, exotic lands existing in the past. In her discussion of these textual dynamics, Amy Kaplan argues that by consuming these narrative plots, readers became habituated to "rescue missions" of a sort that paralleled governmental rhetoric portraying American intervention in Cuba and the Philippines as an opportunity for the exertion of masculine virility (2002: 93). Popular journalism about Cuba and the Philippines, Kaplan goes on to record, echoed the plots of historical romance in portraying America "as a manly hero rescuing a foreign princess and her land from a tyrannical master" (2002: 94). Foreign lands were coded as barbaric and in need of a firm American, ordering hand, which becomes the crucible in which the importance of masculine virility to the nation could be solidified.

Jewett, whose *The Tory Lover* is itself an example of historical romance, borrows some of these features in "The Foreigner" only to redeploy them for more critical ends. The rescue in Jewett's "The Foreigner" projects similar barbarity and lack of order onto the Caribbean that invites American intervention in the shape of Captain Tolland's rescue. However, the damsel in distress in this case herself embodies forms of racial, cultural, and national difference that are then brought into the community of Dunnet Landing only to prevent Mrs Tolland's integration into the Maine community. Indeed, in ways that echo Filipino resistance to American rule that required additional American military intervention, Mrs Tolland decides to wage war in response to the women in Dunnet Landing who reject her colorful and "unrestrained" musical performance in their church social gathering. "'Whether she'd expected somethin' different, or misunderstood some o' the pastor's remarks, or what 't was, I don't really feel able to explain, but she kind o' declared war, at least folks thought so, an' war 't was from that time'" (Jewett 1971: 313). In writing beyond the moment of rescue, Jewett's consideration of the persistent, socially resistant reality of Mrs Tolland's presence in Dunnet Landing reflects upon the unstable dynamics of communal cohesion that can result from any act of extra-territorial domestication or incorporation. Although Jewett's correspondence during the Spanish-American War may seem to view American intervention as a necessary step, the interventionist logic in "The Foreigner" explores the lasting economic and

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cultural disenfranchisement of America's international others. In other words, if Jewett conditions American readers to accept the premise of American imperialist intervention and appropriation, she exposes the unstable afterlives of such gestures.

In fact, Jewett's story hinges upon the issue of repatriation and return if not on the very question of self-determination itself, a feature that has received no comment from feminist critics and scholars of American literature. Mrs Todd breaks off from describing the circumstances of Mrs Tolland's rescue to question the Dunnet Landing captains' wisdom in bringing her back with them: "I always thought they'd have done better, and more reasonable, to give her some money to pay her passage home to France, or wherever she may have wanted to go" (Jewett 1971: 311). Most obvious is the potential agency she lends Mrs Tolland in imagining her choosing the cultural and geographical coordinates of her own deliverance. In challenging the sea captains' chivalrous desire to bring her back to Dunnet Landing with them, Mrs Todd's opinion exposes an underlying self-absorption that allows them to assume that the only safe, utopian space suitable for her is the United States. Instead, she focuses on the variety of solutions for Mrs Tolland's distress, predicated upon the idea of returning her to her culture of origin, while opening up, rather than closing down, exactly where Mrs Tolland might want to go. The text thus captures the ways that multicultural and transnational cultural histories due to the historical legacies of imperialism forever complicate easy ideas of origin or return.

Jewett thus examines both the complex dynamics of foreignness produced by discourses of racial difference and the dynamics of empire and annexation bound to "new" American colonial dynamics as much as they are to "established" European ones. The quasi-ghost story shared by Mrs Todd reflects not only on the fictions that the nation tells itself about its citizens at home but also ways of confronting what the nation does to "other" national subjects abroad at the moment of their incorporation into America's benign imperialist embrace and beyond. Exposing some of these underlying mechanics of imperialism, "The Foreigner" makes legible the "structure of attitude and reference" to empire that Edward Said discusses in relation to the British realist novel (1994: 62). "The facts of empire," he explains, "are associated with sustained possession, with far-flung and sometimes unknown spaces, with eccentric or unacceptable human beings, with fortune-enhancing or fantasized activities like emigration, money-making, and sexual adventure . . . The colonial territories are realms of possibility, and they have always been associated with the realistic novel" (Said 1994: 64). The events of 1898 haunt Jewett's text and her readers with structures of feeling that are ultimately more suspicious of American exceptionalist ideals than they are supportive of them, indicating the participation of New England and of women's regionalist writing in the transnational dynamics of American statescraft and its production of a new empire.

To trace in the story's own historical moment the nation's own direct bids for power and cultural ascendancy in an international arena is to re-imagine "place,"

as cultural geographer Doreen Massey does, as “not self-enclosing and defensive but outward-looking,” in which the power structures of economics, politics, and culture are “stretched out over the planet at every different level, from the household to the local area to the international” (1994: 147, 154). A centrifugal reading of “The Foreigner” that stretches the spatial and geopolitical scope of the story reflects the transnational, global sensitivities important to contemporary feminist methodologies. In the case of the “locational feminist theory” articulated by Susan Stanford Friedman, the aim is to recognize the complex, fluid, and often contradictory relationships to gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation that are not simply activated by context but that also require “geopolitical literacy” that is attuned to “the geopolitics of identity within differing communal spaces of being and becoming” (1998: 5, 3). This kind of attention to Jewett, significantly, helps to redress the inconsistent focus on gender in some recent New American Studies work which moves from nationalist to transnational, multi-ethnic models but which marginalizes the participation of women and the arenas in which they have lived, worked, thought, and written (for instance Siemerling 2005, which focuses on key male figures such as W. E. B. DuBois and Gerald Vizenor). Indeed, by using heterosexual coupling and the domestic experiences of (non-community) to reflect upon imperialist, interventionist logic, Jewett’s story focuses attention on the existence of what Ann Stoler (2006), following Foucault, calls the “transfer points” of the intimate in which state power and state ideologies exercise their power in the micro-histories of women’s lives, as well as the ability of women writers to harness those histories of the past to create different political futures. Especially when their lives and work do not seem to obviously participate in the workings of the national and international spheres or to have had a hand in shaping the ideologies that inform them, the challenge facing the field of a feminist New American Studies is how to excavate those micro-histories of women within the context of empire and the uneven development of global capitalism.

Note

- 1 Gollin (2002: 352, n.17) explains Annie Adams Fields’s error in attributing these letters to 1899 instead of 1896.

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The Rapprochement of Technology Studies and American Studies

David E. Nye

Early American Studies scholars had little interest in modernization theories of the sort propagated in the 1950s and 1960s. These used European and American history to justify a progressive view of development from local, largely oral cultures toward literate societies organized into democratic, industrialized nation-states. Such approaches – then popular in the social sciences and informing the practices of international development organizations – have since been discredited as Eurocentric and historically unfounded. American Studies’ lack of interest in early modernization theory can be partly explained by the fact that its practitioners came primarily from the humanities rather than from economics and political science. Americanists also early understood both the complexities of technological change and the perils of Whig history, in part due to their interest in the pastoral resistance to progress. American Studies and Technology Studies would only converge with revised (post-1990) theories of modernization that were critical of colonialism and that discarded progressive historical models. This essay will return briefly to that convergence only after surveying the place of technology in American culture and American Studies.

Early references to “technology” stemmed from Harvard professor Jacob Bigelow’s *Elements of Technology* (1829), which brought the term into American English. During the antebellum period, “the practical arts” was more commonly used to describe not only manufacturing but also handicrafts and artisan work. By mid-century some engineering schools were known as Colleges of Technology, and the word gradually began to be used more widely, notably by Thorstein Veblen (Schatzberg 2006). Yet, even a century after Bigelow, Lewis Mumford’s seminal *Technics and Civilization* (1934) promoted “technics” as a preferable term, before “technology” became common usage. In the same years the anthropological term “culture” became fashionable, and in 1959 the two concepts were conjoined in a new journal, *Technology and Culture*, heralding a specialty that overlapped somewhat with American Studies.

For more than a century before either of these fields emerged, many understood the United States in terms of technology and (what would eventually be called) modernization. The rapid expansion of the US from coast to coast, the immensity of its railroad system, the scale of its bridges, and the productivity of its factories, all became sublime tropes for the new nation (Nye 1994). As early as the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, the English observed that American machines were generally easier to use and more rapid in their operation than their own. The love of speed also seemed American: “Who is this celebrated individual, whom nobody can overtake? . . . the Fast Man shows nothing but his back, as he is outstripping all pursuers. He is undoubtedly an American, who can run through ten miles of fortune quicker than anybody else. Certainly he sails the fleetest ships . . .” American machines became part of a narrative of rapid national development, based on particular characteristics that were usually male and implicitly white – “The Fast Man must certainly be an American . . . he has been obliged to apply steam to navigation and invent the telegraph” – and included a host of devices, such as the mechanical reaper and Colt’s revolver (Rodgers 1852: 99).

The United States thus seemed a nation of practical tinkerers who had improved European devices, ranging from the axe to the plow to the textile loom. By the 1880s, many referred to “an American system” of manufacturing by using interchangeable parts, particularly in the production of weapons, sewing machines, and other metal goods where precision was paramount. US inventors created entire new industries based on inventions such as Eli Whitney’s cotton gin, McCormick’s reaper, Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone, and Edison’s electrical lighting system. The use of interchangeable parts in a fully electrified plant made possible Henry Ford’s innovative assembly line (1913), which quickly spread to many other factories. By 1920, the United States had the largest industrial plant in the world. It had more bathrooms, telephones, and electric lights per capita than any other nation. In the 1920s, there was only one automobile for every 100 Germans in contrast to one for every six Americans. Europeans viewed the United States as a technological society that on a material level had vaulted ahead of them. Germans acknowledged the United States to be an industrial colossus, but felt it was not a *kultur*nation. American expatriate writers seeking high culture in Paris often found French intellectuals fascinated with skyscrapers, jazz, and assembly lines (Cowley 1934).

Europeans often complained that the United States had used technology to standardize all aspects of its cultural life. A distinguished Dutch historian wrote of the United States that “The progress of technology compels the economic process to move toward concentration and general uniformity at an ever faster tempo. The more human inventiveness and exact science become locked into the organization of business, the more the active man, as the embodiment of an enterprise and its master, seems to disappear.” He concluded that the American “only feels spiritually safe in what has been standardized” (Huizinga [1918] 1972:

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234, 237). The uniformity had become so great that some travelers to the United States detected little variation from one city to another.

Lewis Mumford (1895–1990) discarded such transatlantic oppositions in *Technics and Civilization* (1934), a sweeping assessment of Western technology from the Middle Ages to the modern era. He defined three epochs that transcended national boundaries. In the eotechnic period (c. AD 1000–1750), wind and water were the prime movers, and wood was the basic material. In the paleotechnic phase (c. 1750–1890), coal was the central fuel, steam engines were the prime movers, and iron largely replaced wood. Finally, during the neotechnic period (c. 1890–), electricity became the main prime mover, while steel, aluminum, and plastics became central materials. In each of these broad periods, Mumford analyzed the social effects of new machines and technologies. Two generations of research have created a more nuanced chronology but retained Mumford's view that American technological developments are inseparable from Europe. Nor did Mumford's later writings waver on this point. *The Myth of the Machine* traced the origins of standardization, prefabrication, and mass production to Venetian arsenals in the thirteenth century and to the British navy (1970: 149).

This perspective was shared by the founding scholars of American Studies, which emerged in the shadow of powerful technological systems, notably the concentration camps, atomic weapons, intercontinental bombers and missiles, and the first satellites. Many early PhDs in the field had served in the armed forces. These postwar scholars enriched and complicated Mumford's history as they explored the culture of technology. Louis Hunter, for example, grew up in a small town on the Ohio River and spent his teen years along the Mississippi, arousing a curiosity that led to his magisterial *Steamboats on the Western Rivers* (1949). He treated the steamboat not as a narrow technical matter, but as an engine of political and social change, and as a setting for class and racial differentiation and conflict. Later, his 2,000-page trilogy on power in American society (1979, 1985, 1991) examined a succession of water wheels, steam engines, and power transmission systems, focusing not only on the machines themselves, but on their social history, relying on travelers' accounts, local histories, and regional newspapers as well as patents and technical journals. Hunter's machines were always presented within a specific social context, as he explained why both transportation and manufacturing developed differently in the United States than they had in Britain. He showed that until mid-century coastal cities had few factories, as waterpower was located in inland communities along the fall line. Indeed, waterpower remained more important than steam-based manufacturing until after 1880 (Nye 1998: 82). Hunter understood that technologies were socially constructed within the limits set by resources, skills, and physical materials.

He argued: "The western steamboat, like the American ax, the revolver, and barbed wire, was a typical mechanical expression of a fluid and expanding frontier society which was ingenious in attaining ends but careless in the choice and use of means" (1949: 65). Similar statements appeared in the work of John

Kouwenhoven, who explored interdisciplinary linkages between technology, literature, and social practices, as he sought to define a national character in *Made in America* (1948). He contrasted American and English design, expressed in locomotives, commercial buildings, and machine design. He found Americanness in the grid pattern imposed everywhere on the landscape, or in the idea of interchangeable parts that can be found in factories, fast-food restaurants, or the transferable credits of higher education. He found Americanness in skyscrapers, in the poetry of Walt Whitman, and in the structure of jazz. While he wrote from a white, male, middle-class perspective and scarcely mentioned African Americans or gender, these weaknesses were removed and his approach further developed in John G. Blair's *Modular America* (1988).

The most influential early American Studies author to deal with technology was Leo Marx (1965). A student of Perry Miller, F. O. Matthiessen, and Henry Nash Smith, Marx developed a theory of American Literature that ranged from the first settlers to the early twentieth century and provided a blueprint for survey courses for generations. The most prominent "machine in the garden" was the steam engine, installed in the locomotive and the steamboat. The dramatic potential in that confrontation expressed an underlying pastoral tension between nature and technological culture that a succession of authors struggled to reconcile. For example, Marx read *Moby Dick* as a technological fable, which devotes whole chapters to the technologies of whaling. The Pequod is a floating factory, its sole purpose to hunt and slaughter whales, and then process them into oil. The quest for the great white whale deviates only marginally from this activity, and Ahab's ascendancy over the crew does not greatly exaggerate a captain's customary power. Yet if the means used by Ahab are sane when taken individually, his ends are mad. He compares himself to an inexorable machine, and declares, "the path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run" (294). Ishmael's pastoral impulses provide the counterpoint to this mechanized fatal delusion. Marx likewise analyzed the tension between "the machine" and "the garden" in Thoreau, Whitman, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Frank Norris, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and other canonical authors. Marx's work, extended in subsequent essays and reinforced by engaging lectures, established an interpretive framework for American Studies in which technology played an indispensable part. Much subsequent scholarship developed this framework. Notably, John Kasson (1976) wrote a social and intellectual history of how Americans "civilized the machine" during the nineteenth century.

The "Myth-and-Symbol" School was only named in *c.*1970 by critics intent on replacing it. The name was generalized from a large body of work by scholars who never issued a manifesto, declared themselves a group, or jointly held a major grant. "Myth and Symbol" certainly cannot characterize all the research between 1945 and 1970, when technology was a central category in the field. In 1968, perhaps sensing that the formative period of American Studies was drawing to a close, Hennig Cohen published two volumes of essays selected from *The American*

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Quarterly. In one of these, *The American Culture* (1968), technology was the main subject of no less than eight of the 32 articles. Two were classic examples of the Myth-and-Symbol School: Alan Trachtenberg on Brooklyn Bridge in “The Rainbow and the Grid,” and John William Ward on “The Meaning of Lindbergh’s Flight.” Six other essays were not classified under the rubric “images and myths,” however – notably Hugo A. Meier on “American Technology and the Nineteenth Century World,” and Max Lerner on “Big Technology and Neutral Technicians.” As the journal editor then conceived American Studies, technology was central to the field. In striking contrast, the 61 articles in Cohen’s two volumes contained virtually nothing on race except “The Negro Cowboy,” and nothing on gender except for an essay on female heroines in James and Howells.

In the decades after Cohen’s two volumes, the study of American technology matured while the *American Quarterly* focused on the minorities whom it had overlooked before 1968. When a later editor selected 17 contributions to define American Studies in 1998, not a single one dealt with technology, while nine essays focused centrally on gender or race (Maddox 1998). Yet during the three decades between these two selections, important work was done in the history of American technology. For example, in material culture, Henry Glassie (1975) and Thomas J. Schlereth (1985) documented both the enormous variety and the underlying patterns of the American built environment. A special issue of *The American Quarterly* (Schlereth 1983) marked the full emergence of this sub-field, which is particularly important for museum curators. There was also a spate of books emerging from the MIT Program for Science, Technology and Society, notably Merritt Roe Smith’s *Harpers Ferry and the New Technology* (1977), which demonstrated that mass production was achieved far more slowly and partially than early historians realized, and David F. Noble’s *America By Design* (1977), which explored the close relationships between the rise of the engineering profession and the adoption of corporate capitalism between 1880 and 1930.

The Maddox complication did recognize that, briefly, in the early 1980s, American Studies seemed ready to organize itself according to Thomas Kuhn’s enormously influential *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Based on the history of physics and astronomy, Kuhn argued that new paradigms were adopted when many anomalies and inconsistencies accumulated in a dominant scientific model. Anthony F. C. Wallace’s *Rockdale* (1978) was both a historical ethnography of a Pennsylvania textile village and an application of Kuhn’s paradigm theory to industrial and cultural history. Gene Wise wrote an influential article (1979) reconceptualizing previous American Studies as a series of paradigm dramas, and David W. Noble independently championed a similar view. Indeed, the latter’s *Death of a Nation* (2002) still relied upon a Kuhnian perspective.

However, American Studies as a whole did not reposition itself in relation to Kuhn whose work was not widely adopted by historians of labor, technology, or business. Business historians generally sought inspiration instead in the work of Alfred Chandler (1977) or Joseph Schumpeter (1939). Many labor historians, such

as Aronowitz (1973), turned to the Marxist labor theory of value, class struggle, and false consciousness, with Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and the work of E. P. Thompson (1963). Herbert Gutman (1977) and David Montgomery (1979, 1987) led labor history away from institutional studies of labor unions and strikes to consider the social and cultural distinctiveness of ethnic groups or of workers in particular industries (Schatz 1983). An exemplary study contrasted the textile town of Cohoes, New York, with the more diverse community of Troy, based on a wider variety of iron foundries and industries (Walkowitz 1978).

Historians of technology seldom turned to either Kuhn or Marx, but rather were divided into internalists and contextualists. The former focused on individual agency, notably in studies of invention and entrepreneurship. At first, Alfred Chandler's *The Visible Hand* (1978) was quite influential. It argued that the hand of management has always been visible in the market, and the history of corporations is what it writes. But, over time, they increasingly turned to the seminal work of Thomas P. Hughes (1983, 1994), who developed the concepts of system-building, reverse salients, technological momentum, soft determinism, networks of power, and technological style. Hughes also influenced the contextualists, who conceive of technologies as part of a lifeworld or social context (Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 1987). They focus on the role of cultural factors that shape the invention, use, and interpretation of new objects. One characteristic work examined the social construction of new technology between 1880 and 1940, by ordinary people who wove it into popular speech, painting, and photography, as well as into urban life, factories, the home, the farm, and the sense of the future (Nye 1990). Another meditated on the once popular idea that human beings were like motors, leading to definitions of energy and fatigue, which in turn helped to define modernity (Rabinbach 1990). A cultural history of plastic, from the first artificial materials of celluloid and bakelite to its many modern forms, also considered plastic's cultural meanings as it moved from the "material of the future" to low-brow disposability to the stuff of modernist art and design (Meikle 1995). Another contextualist study showed how Americans defined large-scale technologies, such as bridges, railroads, dams, atom bombs, and space launches, not in mere functional terms but as nationalistic triumphs of the technological sublime (Nye 1994).

American Studies working with a more literary bent also exemplified the contextualist approach, notably *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature and Culture in Modernist America* (Tichi 1987), and *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (Banta 1993). Each explored the linkages between technology, gender, popular culture, and narration, and treated technology as an integral part of culture. Similarly, Alan Trachtenberg's studies of photography (1989) recognized images as social, aesthetic, and technical constructions, an approach further developed by his students, as in Maren Stange's examination of documentary photography (1989). Simultaneously, Miles Orvell (1989) developed a comprehensive view of the tension between imitation and authenticity in the arts, literature, and material culture.

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Partly as a consequence of this emphasis on the social construction of everyday technologies, the earlier focus on management, corporate history, and mass production began to shift toward the power of consumers, which also facilitated a gradual rapprochement with American Studies. Focusing on consumption turned Chandlerian business history upside down, emphasizing not standardization but variety, not marketing but shopping. The dynamic dialogue between production and consumption emerged in a history of modern advertising's emergence between 1900 and 1940 (Marchand 1985), or in a social history of the telephone (Fischer 1992). Furthermore, this focus on consumers had implications for the study of industry itself. This first became clear in David Hounshell's chapter on the furniture industry in *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800–1932* (1985), and fully emerged in *Endless Novelty* (Scranton 1990). In contrast to Chandler's focus on large corporations as the essence of advanced capitalism, Scranton examined smaller firms with customized and small-batch production. Rather than being destined for conversion to Taylorism or assembly lines, such companies proved just as important to an advanced economy as mass production. Companies fabricating elevators, turbines, switchboards, and precision instruments did not mimic mass producers. They did not de-skill labor or subject it to routines; rather, they prized skilled workmen who could respond flexibly to demand for varied goods. Such workers made possible the endless novelty that was the hallmark of the consumer society, and such companies were innovative and profitable. Fredrick Winslow Taylor's prescriptions were useful for repetitive production of identical things, but not for batch production of such items as carpets, furniture, jewelry, cutlery, hats, and ready-to-wear clothing. Consumers wanted variety, and large profits accrued to flexible firms with skilled workers that could supply endless novelties.

Specialty production grew just as fast as mass production but did so with different central actors. Instead of the "visible hand" of corporate managers advised by scientific experts, at the center were skilled workers, technologically adept owners, and competing systems, of which Taylorism was only one. Instead of Taylor's "one best way," flexibility was the norm. Instead of standardization of production at capital-intensive plants, diverse production took place at labor-intensive mid-sized factories which proved technologically innovative. Instead of a single path to development, there were varied approaches. Scientific management alone cannot explain the second industrial revolution and at best applies to one third of the economy.

Along with consumption, gender also became a crucial category for the analysis of technologies. Ruth Schwartz Cowan's groundbreaking *More Work for Mother* (1983) traced the ironies of the adoption of household technologies, from the open hearth to the microwave. Despite the rhetoric of liberation, for the most part new machines were used to transfer to women the domestic labor once performed by men and boys. Ruth Oldenziel (1999) later demonstrated how the adoption of the word "technology" paralleled creation of largely male professions, notably engineering

and modern medicine, leaving women to play the subaltern roles of laboratory assistant, dental hygienist, nurse, and so forth. Women could also be studied as active consumers who collectively engaged in complex negotiations with producers, facilitated by mediating translators such as home economists and department store buyers. Scholars attacked the schematic opposition between male production and female consumption, examining women as producers, men as consumers, and shared leisure activities, in which gendered dichotomies tended to break down. They argued that the form, meaning, and use of technologies are negotiated and that a complex chain of meanings, including gender attributions, are embedded in any product as it passes through design, manufacture, marketing, purchase, and use (Horowitz and Mohun 1998). As Regina Blaszczyk put it: “Make no mistake: supply did not create demand . . . but demand determined supply. Whether china decorators or art directors, the most successful design innovators created practical goods that delighted the senses, rather than exotic items that seduced, tantalized, and disoriented” (2000: 13). Firms catered to the mass market through an interactive process. They could seldom dictate taste but succeeded to the extent that they provided what consumers wanted. Elizabeth A. Cohen later made a related argument in her work on consumption (2003). Another example of a technology driven by consumer demand is cosmetic surgery (Haiken 1997).

Before this shift in research, many American Studies scholars had agreed with Fredric Jameson’s contention that, in contrast to the artifacts of older industrialism, the products of postindustrial capitalism preserved no traces of physical labor (or human origins) and therefore were objects without depth. Jameson at first argued, “their plastic content is totally incapable of serving as a conductor of psychic energy . . . All libidinal investment in such objects is precluded from the outset” (1971: 105). However, this proved far truer of the plastic coffee cup than an iPhone. As Jameson later realized (1979), the products of popular culture could serve utopian functions. The consumer was actively seeking release, not passively imbibing ideology. Popular culture contained within it longings subversive to the status quo. Amusements could be understood not simply as forms of false consciousness, but as a psychic release from the world of alienated work, expressing yearnings for a different life. Popular music, romance novels, television programs, and films afforded ordinary people the opportunity for release from work routines. Even though these utopian escapes were internally contradictory, and even though they often recontained the critique implied within them, they nevertheless expressed dissatisfaction with the social order.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas argued, “the most general objective of a consumer can only be to construct an intelligible universe with the goods he chooses” (1979: 65). The automobile did not merely symbolize mobility; consumers used it for exploration, self-gratification, and escape. Yet the automobile is a transient possession that seldom lasts more than a decade, and is rarely handed down through the generations. To the extent that the buyer invests not only money in a car but

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also uses it to expand the parameters of action and perception, its rapid obsolescence underlines a potentially unstable sense of identity. To lack a car after owning one involves a loss of kinetic contact and a shrinkage of bodily experience. Furthermore, not only the journey but also the road is culturally constructed, as highways vary from one nation to another (Seely 1987; Mauch and Zeller 2008).

In the construction of everyday life, the consumer prevailed, demanding more than the solid, reliable, black telephones insisted upon by AT&T engineers, more than a black Model T, and then more than the Model T itself. Consumer desires crystallized around some objects, but not others, and, despite millions spent on design and advertising, the Ford Edsel car would not sell, the air-conditioned bed never caught on, and some expensive films died at the box office. Consumers find only a few products designed so well that their form, function, and kinetic appeal fuse into a satisfying whole. People use such iconic objects to internalize images and bodily experiences. They also seek new landscapes of consumption, which provide settings to restage the self, such as the elegant *fin-de-siècle* department store or the shopping mall (Leach 1994). Steve Lubar has argued that objects “form the boundaries between us and the natural world we inhabit. They mediate our experience of our environment. Even as they separate us from the world, they stabilize our place in it.” Lubar suggested that machines are used continually to reconstruct social relations: “They define life, constrain it, focus energies, and then structure possibilities.” Thus “machines are the material culture of politics in its broadest sense: politics as the interactions between groups of people” (1993: 198). This was not a determinist vision, because of variations in the design of machines, their use, and their pattern of adoption. Consumers are not passive recipients of technologies but reshape them for their own purposes. The pluralism of technological cultures emerged in the vernacular of Latino car design, the unexpected uses of personal computers, or the recycling of many products for new uses (Eglash et al. 2004).

In addition to studies of consumption, scholars began to examine the technological dimensions of race, transnationalism, space, and Environmental Studies. Judith A. Carney (2001) demonstrated that the agricultural technologies of rice production constituted a knowledge system that slaves brought with them and adapted to the American South. Rayvon Fouché’s work showed the persistence of *Black Inventors in the Age of Segregation* (2003) and called attention to the creative appropriation of technologies in black communities. Studies of race and the history of technology are rapidly expanding, as suggested by the collections *A Hammer in Their Hands* (Pursell 2005), and *Technology and the African-American Experience* (Sinclair 2004).

The creative appropriation of technologies also emerged when other cultures came into contact with the United States. As the transnational turn in American Studies focused attention on the global reach of US material culture, it quickly became obvious that a simple hegemonic model was inadequate. While George Ritzer warned of “McDonaldization” (1993), more nuanced scholarship revealed

a complex process of creolization (Kroes 1996). Rob Kroes and Robert Rydell (2005) demonstrated that the transmission and creolized reception of American mass culture began in the middle of the nineteenth century. Long before McDonald's existed, US cultural exports were being modified to suit European audiences who imposed their own interpretive frameworks on the Wild West Show or early American films.

Yet the consumer is not the only actor in the transmission of technologies. Michael Adas (2006) contends that machines were central to an overseas expansionism that was often driven by government and corporate interests. Americans arrived overseas with modern firearms, steam engines, the telegraph, and other devices. They saw technical superiority as proof of cultural supremacy and assumed the mission of modernizing "backward nations." In these encounters, notably with Native Americans, Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Arabs, Americans decided whether a "race" was capable of assimilating advanced technologies and developing the democracy that was expected to follow. Other nations often saw the "gift of technology" as a thinly veiled threat. Japan successfully responded with rapid, homegrown industrialization to defend its culture, but not every nation had the means, the time, or the opportunity. At times, notably in the Philippines, Americans justified subduing another nation by invoking the promise of material improvements such as roads, sanitation, dams, factories, and schools. The justification usually included descriptions of undeveloped resources and often underscored the downtrodden women, depicted as exploited drudges. Adas thus critiques Cold War modernization theories as part of an ideology of technological liberation, with an almost deterministic vision of America's role as a civilizing nation.

There is also an international dimension to environmental history, which, after *c.*1995, became inextricably intertwined with the history of technology (Tarr and Stine 1998). Indeed, *The Sanitary City* (Melosi 2000) and *War and Nature* (Russell 2001) won the highest accolades from both the Society for the History of Technology and the Association for Environment History. At the same time, a group of primarily younger scholars formed the "Envirotech" interest group that meets at the annual conferences of both societies. They find environmental issues inseparable from technology, whether examining waterpowered factories (Steinberg 1991), Chicago's development (Cronon 1991), the remaking of the Columbia River (White 1995), technologies that create landscapes (Nye, ed. 1999), suburban sprawl (Rome 2001), or the narratives and counter-narratives that Americans have used to explain the nation's growth (Nye 2003). Curiously, Envirotech to a considerable degree fused the machine with the garden. Both were understood to be cultural constructions, as could also be seen in the unnatural history of natural disaster in America (Steinberg 2000). This fusion of Technological and Environmental Studies would not have disconcerted Bigelow, who not only introduced the word "technology" into American usage, but also was a botanist and the architect of Mt Auburn Cemetery.

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After several decades of loosened affiliation, the fields of American Studies and Technology Studies have reconverged in studies of labor, consumption, race, gender, American expansionism, transnationalism, and the environment. Indeed, *The American Quarterly* devoted a special issue to technology (Peña and Vaidhyathan 2006). Its 16 articles reprised the social construction of technology, the turn toward consumption of the 1990s, the engagement of technologies with race, gender, and class, visual culture, environmental justice, and transnationalism. The special issue also reflected the transformation of the word “technology” after *c.* 1990, which in the popular press often referred exclusively to digital technologies. Another sign of this rapprochement between the two fields was the development of three new book series focusing on technology and the United States, one from Rodopi (Benesch and Schmidt 2005), another at Rutgers University Press, and yet another at the University of Massachusetts. Potential authors were also becoming more organized. At the 2007 American Studies Association meeting in Philadelphia, a Science and Technology Caucus met for the first time. Four decades after Hennig Cohen had given a central place to technology, it again was proving indispensable to American Studies. Having accepted the idea that technologies are social constructions, scholars realized that they are not only part of urban, industrial, and labor history but also crucial to studies of landscape, the environment, consumer culture, gender, race, and transnationalism.¹

Note

- 1 For further information, see the bibliographic essays on American technology edited by Pursell (2005a), which examine topics that could not be dealt with here, notably technology and art, the colonial period, transportation, early industrialization, urbanization, medical technologies, agriculture, aviation, the space program, and the engineering profession.

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The World Wide Web and Digital Culture: New Borders, New Media, New American Studies

Matthias Oppermann

The Digital Divide: A New Border in American Studies?

In the past two decades, the concept of borders has become an idea of consequence in American Studies scholarship. Borders are understood as spaces where cultures meet and grapple with each other. At the same time, they are sites of conflict, friction, exclusion, and silence. Borders in the latter sense are generative problems for the project of cultural critique. But they should not demarcate the limits of an intellectual community. In contrast, “the joy of American studies is precisely in its lack of firm limits and borders,” as Patricia N. Limerick (1997: 455) pointed out in her 1996 presidential address to the American Studies Association. Limerick’s address exposes the artificiality of borders around American Studies as a field of inquiry, and it encourages resistance to these borders that attempt to separate outsiders from insiders to American Studies (454). Building on Limerick, I want to call attention to another border that is equally artificial and fundamentally divisive. This border cuts right through the field of American Studies: a “digital divide” that separates those who have begun to engage with new technologies in teaching or research (or both) from those who tend to ignore or avoid any involvement with new media that goes beyond the use of email and Google. Many factors contribute to the existence and perpetuation of this divide, among them interests, skills, academic reward structures, and certain culturalist biases. In the long run, this divide will potentially undermine the American Studies

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project in at least two ways. First, American Studies practitioners will deny themselves access to the increasingly digital archive of cultural texts (most broadly construed). This is essentially a question of literacy. Second, it will further preclude them from the capacities to participate actively in, and to contribute to, emerging collaborative spaces of knowledge production. This, too, is essentially a question of literacy, in the sense that reading the archive and contributing to it are ultimately different yet related aspects of the same processes of meaning making.

For this essay, my dominant concern is how the field of American Studies (in traditional or new configurations) has addressed, or failed to address, the impact of new media. By new media, I refer to what Lev Manovich (2001: 44) has described as the result of “a translation of all existing media into numerical data accessible for computers.” This includes the production, storage, and distribution of data. Thus, new media are “graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, spaces and text which become computable, i.e. simply another set of computer data” (44). The dramatic proliferation of new media continues to alter every aspect of society and culture, and this poses tremendous challenges for American Studies to make use of new technologies in productive and creative ways for the project of cultural critique. In order to meet these challenges, we need to develop what Douglas Kellner (2004) has called “multiple literacies” and recognize the fundamental importance of new media environments as spaces of social, cultural, and political negotiations.

American Studies and New Media, 1.0–2.0

Before I develop my argument, I should briefly mention some projects and principal agents in the field of American culture and history that have realized the potential of new media and have responded in creative ways. Miles Orvell, Jay Mechling, and Johnnella Butler have developed the *Encyclopedia of American Studies* into a powerful, multi-purpose online resource. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler invite ongoing reflection and collaboration on *Keywords of American Culture Studies* on the website that accompanies their book project. Another well-known example is the June 1999 issue of *American Quarterly*, an experiment in hypertext publishing that was organized by *AQ* in collaboration with the American Studies Crossroads Project and the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University. The Center for History and New Media, established by Roy Rosenzweig in 1994, is also home to the September 11 Digital Archive and the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank. There are a number of other important projects that engage in scholarly work at the intersection of computing and humanities – also referred to as digital humanities – among them the journal *Vectors* at the University of California, edited by Tara McPherson, and the American Studies Crossroads Project, directed by Randy Bass.

Through the stewardship of Randy Bass, the Crossroads project has been particularly instrumental in shaping the role of new media for the international

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American Studies community. In 1994, Bass founded the Center for Electronic Projects in American Culture Studies (CEPACS) at Georgetown University. This does not seem very long ago to some of us, but it is important to note that Netscape released the first commercial version of its web browser Mozilla in December of that year (and Microsoft's Internet Explorer came out in August 1995). The Internet was so new that, as Bass put it, "we weren't even sure it was the wisest environment for development" (Bass 1995: 1). CEPACS coordinated and developed a range of noteworthy projects, among them T-AMLIT, a website and discussion list primarily for educators that featured essays on teaching American literatures (from the *Heath Anthology Newsletter*), collaborative bibliographies, and syllabi. More importantly, Bass initiated the American Studies Crossroads Project in 1995.

Funded by a FIPSE grant, Crossroads was sponsored by the American Studies Association (ASA), which in practice meant that the ASA had a Web presence when very few other professional organizations did. Through the work with various communities within the ASA, as well as committees and caucuses, but also with international scholars, Crossroads quickly grew into a community-created, comprehensive online resource for the global study of American culture. Under the leadership of Randy Bass, the project and its website developed into a clearing house for information on the ASA, American Studies programs worldwide, online course resources, and international syllabi in American Culture Studies and related fields. In addition to these curriculum support materials, Crossroads spearheaded the work of the scholarship of teaching and learning in American Studies through workshops and research projects, which led to the publication (both online and in print) of the volume *Engines of Inquiry* in 1997.

In October of 1996, Crossroads began to sponsor *Interroads*, one of several discussion lists and news utilities. *Interroads*, a discussion list about "International and Comparative Perspectives on the Study of American Culture," provided a space for communication and collaboration for more than 40 scholars inside and outside the US, among them Melanie Budiarta, Gregory Jay, Richard Horwitz, Paul Lauter, John Carlos Rowe, Gonül Pultar, E-Chou Wu, Robyn Wiegman, and Werner Sollors. The discussion list, edited by Jeff Finlay, was organized into different threads. Most threads consisted of an essay with three to four invited responses, several more follow-up responses from other list members, counter-responses, and finally a postscript; all of these individual contributions were connected through links. The discussions focused on issues around how electronic means of communication would facilitate access to US literatures for non-US scholars, or on the potential of new media for an internationalization of the American Studies methodologies debates. From 1996–8, *Interroads* was a crucial way for American Studies scholars to meet in an international context, a site of exchange about the differences and similarities in scholarship, curricula, and institutional situations of American Studies in various countries. It was, in essence, an academic networking site for the international American Studies community.

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The most popular and frequently utilized component of the Crossroads website was the *American Studies Web*, a link directory to American Studies resources on the Internet. Unlike *Interroads*, which was discontinued in 1998, the *American Studies Web* continues to thrive and has not only adapted to but realized the potentials of recent developments in new media technologies to the fullest extent. Under the guidance of Randy Bass, David Philipps originally created the *American Studies Web* in 1994 as a collection of resources on CD-ROM. These resources grew exponentially over the years, and when Michael Coventry and Jamie Poster revised and expanded the content six years later, the directory already included more than 2,000 links. Clearly, what was needed were some new tools not only for representing and organizing the information that had accumulated over the years and continued to grow, but also for making this information accessible and adaptable. In order to meet these challenges, Edward Maloney converted the content to a database and created a new search interface. But this database continued to be maintained by a small group of Crossroads project editors. In 2006, the Crossroads web staff were joined by Dave Lester, a web programmer and American Studies graduate student. In collaboration with Randy Bass, Lester converted the *American Studies Web* into a database and search engine that allows all users to add resources, to rate and comment on resources, and to add keywords. These Web 2.0, or social networking features, enable all users to contribute to the database of relevant resources for American Studies, and to expand and improve its content. Furthermore, the comment feature invites critical exchanges about the usefulness of a given entry and thus adds a dialogic element of collaborative knowledge production that traditional search engines do not provide.

As a consequence, the new *American Studies Web* of 2008 – an archive as a collaborative database – is a very different thing from the static link directory of 1994. Thus, the *American Studies Web* is to a certain degree expressive of the fundamental changes that result from recent configurations of new media as sites for communication, collaboration, and cultural production. The implications of these changes for the American Studies project of cultural critique are profound, and they challenge tacit assumptions and dominant narratives associated with that project. To elaborate this claim, I will turn now to online video as a site for the maintenance, reproduction, and contestation of cultural and political processes in Web 2.0 environments.

Culture and Database: George Allen's Curse, Chris Crocker's Cupcake

In recent years, social networking sites have emerged as primary spaces for cultural discourses and the contestation of political and social processes. One instance of the growing importance of these sites is their function as a news source

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in the 2008 presidential campaign. Whereas the reliance on traditional news sources has remained static since the last election (and declined since 2000), a recent study of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (a non-partisan “fact-tank” sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trust) found that the Internet has emerged as a major news source, especially for younger Americans (Pew Research Center 2008). According to the Pew study, which was completed in December 2007, 22 percent of Americans use social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook. Among those 18–29 years old, this figure rises to 67 percent, or a good two thirds. More than a quarter of this age group (27 percent) reported that they got information about the candidates and their campaigns for the 2008 elections from social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace (and, again, this figure rises to 37 percent for those aged 18–24). The survey concluded that “the internet is living up to its potential as a major source for news about the presidential campaign” (ibid.). The biggest potential may be connected to the growth of online video, a trend made possible by the spread of inexpensive and easy-to-use editing software, and the availability of broadband Internet connections. According to the Pew study, nearly a quarter of Americans (24 percent) reported that they had learned something about the presidential campaign in an online video. Again, this survey was conducted in December 2007, and it seems highly probable that this figure would have increased at least a couple of points in the month leading up to the election in November 2008.

The two examples of online video as a growing form of cultural production that I want to discuss here are “viral videos,” a phenomenon made possible by Web 2.0 technologies. “Viral videos” are an instance of what cyberculture analyst Douglas Rushkoff described as “media viruses” in the early 1990s:

Media viruses spread through the datasphere the same way biological ones spread through the body or a community. But instead of traveling along an organic circulatory system, a media virus travels through the networks of the mediaspace. The “protein shell” of a media virus might be an event, invention, technology, system of thought, musical riff, visual image, scientific theory, sex scandal, clothing style or even a pop hero – as long as it can catch our attention. Any one of these media virus shells will search out the receptive nooks and crannies in popular culture and stick on anywhere it is noticed. Once attached, the virus injects its more hidden agendas into the datastream in the form of ideological code – not genes, but a conceptual equivalent we now call “memes.” Like real genetic material, these memes infiltrate the way we do business, educate ourselves, interact with one another – even the way we perceive reality. (1994: 9–10)

Building on Richard Dawkins’s (1976) concept of memes as units of cultural transmission, for Rushkoff (1994: 10), writing more than a decade before the advent of the online video platform YouTube.com, such media events are most obviously triggered through the work of media activists who intentionally “design” viruses to spread a certain ideology or challenge the status quo. However, he also accounts

for “self-generated viruses” that spread more or less automatically because they resonate particularly powerfully in cultural or political discourses.

Obviously, the line between intentionally and self-generated media viruses is often blurry. Nonetheless, had it not been for a viral video, the 2008 presidential campaign may have looked quite different. In 2006, the Republican United States Senator from Virginia, George F. Allen, was the presumptive front-runner for the 2008 GOP presidential nomination. Allen had spent years preparing for the presidential election, had established a solid network of Republican campaign donors, and had been embraced by social and religious conservative voters who constitute the grass roots of the GOP. But on August 11, 2006, during a campaign stop in Virginia, Allen called S. R. Sidarth, a campaign staffer of his opponent a “macaca,” an offensive slang term for Indians of the subcontinent in the West Indies (Global Language Monitor). Sidarth, who identifies himself as Indian American, was filming Allen’s campaign as a tracker, someone who follows the opposing campaign and reports back to his camp. He caught the incident on digital video (cf. WebbCampaign 2006).

The video recording quickly spread on YouTube.com. Allen reacted promptly, apologizing and claiming that he did not know the meaning of the word. But he never recovered from the downward spiral of his approval ratings that was in no small part attributed to the intensity with which the video was spread and discussed on YouTube (cf. Pew Reserch Center 2008). Allen lost his bid for re-election to the Democrat Jim Webb, and his premature departure from the Republican presidential nomination left the GOP without a front-runner (Craig 2008). In a January 2008 *LA Times* article, Dan Schnur, who served as the national communications director for John McCain’s 2000 presidential campaign, referred to the reverberations of the incident as “George Allen’s curse.”

While a racial slur by a front-runner for the presidential nomination should have had equally profound consequences in more traditional media like newspapers or television, the incident nonetheless dramatically illustrates the impact of viral videos that take on a life of their own once they enter publicly accessible databases, and once users start to engage with their content. Since the evidence of Allen’s racism existed as data, it could be accessed in virtually infinite versions, through numerous interfaces, at any time (on demand), by an unlimited number of end-users (cf. Manovich 2001: 57). Many of these users did not simply watch the incident online, but they posted the recording on different social networking sites, commented on its content, added keywords or tags, and linked the incident to what they felt were appropriate cultural contexts. In other words, they engaged in the work of amateur cultural critique, and contributed to a digital database containing competing discourses in which the incident is now embedded. To use Rushkoff’s media virus terminology, Allen lost the battle for control over his utterances – the “host cell” – and the video as media virus “permanently alter[ed] the way the cell functions and reproduces” (1994: 9). In 2006, the Global Language Monitor selected “macaca” as the “most politically inCorrect word of the year.”

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In the same year, *Time* magazine crowned the amateur media producer *Time's Person of the Year*: “[. . .] for seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital democracy, for working for nothing and beating the pros at their own game” (Grossman 2006).

My second example of viral video is less straightforwardly political. It did not change the balance in the US Senate or someone's election bid. However, it represents an intriguing cultural moment whose social, cultural, and political impact is muddier and much harder to assess. On September 10, 2007, Chris Crocker posted a video titled “Leave Britney Alone!” to YouTube.com. He had just shot the 2:11 min long clip in his grandparents' home in a small town in Tennessee. In the video, Crocker lashes out at members of the mainstream media for their criticism of Britney Spear's performance at the 2007 MTV Music Awards. Looking directly into the (handheld) camera, Crocker (2007a) sobs and shouts: “All you people care about is readers and making money off of her. She's a human! Leave Britney alone!”

Again, the clip spread like a virus, only much more powerfully than in Allen's case. Within 24 hours the video had been viewed 2 million times (Manjoo 2007). Less than a year later, by August 2008, the clip had not only attracted 22 million viewers, but had become the second most discussed video on YouTube, with over 324,000 comments and more than 2,000 video responses (YouTube 2008). It was selected as the Top Video of 2007 by *Wired* magazine (Sjöberg 2007) and earned its creator interviews on CNN, ABC, Fox News, and other mainstream media outlets. At the same time, Crocker and his video were parodied by Hollywood actors (e.g. Seth Green's “Leave Chris Crocker Alone!”), football fans (e.g. New England Patriot fans begging for coach Bill Belichick to be left alone), and appeared in a *South Park* episode (“Canada on Strike”, Season 12, No. 171).

The comments on Crocker's video on YouTube and MySpace ranged from supportive to outright hate speech. On the morning news program *Fox and Friends*, Fox News commentators repeatedly questioned Crocker's gender, referred to him as a “she with an Adam's apple” and compared the background in his clips (a plain yellow cloth) to those of Osama Bin Laden's videos (Iacohenga 2007). In two follow-up videos on YouTube, *Poor Fox News* (September 14) and *Rosie O'Donnell was Right about Fox News* (September 17), Crocker in turn addressed what he perceived as his unfair treatment, referring to Fox News as a “Republican, conservative, homophobic channel” (Crocker 2007b, c).

“Leave Britney Alone!” was by no means Crocker's first online video production. Before its success made him known to a wider public and turned him into a bona fide Internet celebrity, Crocker had already released more than 60 clips on YouTube, MySpace, and salon.com. Most of these clips deal with issues of his own gender and sexual identity, and with growing up as an openly gay teenager in a small town in the Bible belt of the United States. “Here in the South, the only gay pride we have is in my room,” Crocker explains in one of his videos, holding up a rainbow-colored cupcake. “We have MySpace, and that's about it”

(Strangervideo 2007). These videos soon developed a cult following. With over 128 million viewings by October 2008, Crocker's YouTube channel ranked as the sixteenth most "subscribed to" channel in the website's history (YouTube 2008). How can we begin to open up the cultural work behind this phenomenon?

The success of Chris Crocker's "Leave Britney Alone" epitomizes many of the dystopian and utopian aspects of the "digital revolution" and its impact in the social and cultural sphere. For some, the popularity of Crocker's videos is a sure sign for the continuing demise of US American popular culture. "Some of the comments on YouTube make you weep for the future of humanity just for the spelling alone," Lev Grossman (2006) has argued in *Time*, "never mind the obscenity and naked hatred." No doubt, a lot of the writing on Crocker's channel is simply inappropriate, and anyone who spent some time reading through comments on YouTube will nod in recognition at Grossman's assessment. Even those contributions that attempt to engage in a more serious debate of the issues Crocker raises in his videos reveal that the skills volunteers bring to this particular collaborative project of knowledge production are uneven at best.

For others, Crocker's case powerfully illustrates that "the means of creativity have now been democratized," as has been suggested by Ray Kurzweil (2007: 14), a member of the National Inventors' Hall of Fame and one of the leading experts on artificial intelligence. For him, "anyone with an inexpensive high-definition video camera and a personal computer can create a high-quality, full-length motion picture. [. . .] Individuals now have the tools to break new ground in every field" (ibid.). This assessment is more indicative of a continuing rhetoric of the technological sublime, a mythology about the impact of technology on culture that becomes most obvious when Kurzweil claims that "in about 20 years, you will be able to email three-dimensional products; [. . .] That will democratize the means of production, so we'll finally be able to bury Karl Marx" (15). Of course, as Roy Rosenzweig (1999: 161) has noted, neither democratization nor commodification are inherent in new technologies – but the responses to new technologies are certainly embedded deeply in the culture and politics of the moment (ibid.: 172). What is needed, then, is a more balanced and nuanced approach that begins to explore how and why new forms of cultural expression, like those of viral video, come into existence at a particular cultural moment. And, in order to expose the ideologies these new forms of expression contain, it may well be that we need to adjust our intellectual tools to account for these changes.

In his book *American Historical Explanations: A Strategy for Grounded Inquiry* (1973), Gene Wise describes what seems to be a similar epistemological challenge. As a trained expert in the analysis of cultural phenomena in the United States, Gene Wise saw himself confronted with the now infamous events surrounding the Chicago Democratic Convention of August 1968:

here I was a product of years of training in American culture Studies, and I had no tools to comprehend what the hell was happening at Chicago in August 1968.

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I had been trained to understand America through its manifest ideas and values, and those ideas as they were formed into broad currents of thought floating through time – Puritanism, Liberalism, Transcendentalism, the Idea of Progress, the Frontier, Technology, Manifest Destiny and Mission. Now and then the culture would emphasize some ideas more than others, and these emphases would change over the years. Hence I had been taught to envision historic “climates” of intellectual opinion in America – the “consensus” climate of the 1940s and 1950s, say, or the “Progressive” climate of the 1900s and 1910s. But such intellectual tools helped me not at all in trying to comprehend Chicago in 1968. (1980: xxiii–xxiv; prologue to this edition)

For Wise, “big ideas” or “broad currents of thought” such as Puritanism, Liberalism, and Transcendentalism dominated the interpretative framework of American Studies. The events at the heart of the political turmoil of 1968 provided an opportunity to bring these categories to bear on the dramatically changing cultural archive. But the archive was slippery; it resisted containment in the neat categories at hand. The summer of 1968 did not conform to the “historic climates” Wise had been trained to identify, and he became acutely aware of the shortcomings of these categories as intellectual tools: “What I lacked was a way to get ideas out of the air and onto the ground, so to speak [. . .] What was needed was some strategy for catching hold of a cultural idea as it is working inside a concrete historical event. [. . .] Clearly, what was needed were some different metaphors for ideas, and for change in ideas” (ibid.: xxiv). The ideas that Wise is referring to here, the broad categories of intellectual climates, are essentially narratives of cause and effect, and the chaos of the events in Chicago refused to be ordered according to these narratives: the chaos of the cultural archive resists the order and sequencing of the narrative, and the subsuming of the particulars under the universal.

In *American Historical Explanations* (1973), Gene Wise’s quest for a new strategy begins with a re-evaluation of the methodologies of the Myth-and-Symbol School. Building on Thomas Kuhn’s concept of paradigm shifts, Wise homogenizes earlier approaches to American Studies to explain the crises of their “explanation forms” (ix–x). I am not interested in claiming yet another crisis for American Studies here, or in calling for another paradigm shift. Rather, I want to suggest that one of the reasons new media such as online video are not part of what Pease (1990: 11) has called the “field-imaginary” of American Studies is simply that we lack the strategies to understand “what the hell is happening” on YouTube. In the most generative sense of that problem, there is what Randy Bass has referred to as a “productive tension, even dialectic, between narrative (in all its cultural and ideological forms) and the archive” (Bass 2008: 189). The digital archive that contains Chris Crocker’s videos exists as a database, a collection of individual items of user-generated content. Theoretically, every single one of these items is just as significant as any other; as items in the database, neither Chris Crocker’s nor Walt Whitman’s narratives are privileged (a point which is admittedly hard to

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swallow). Rather, as Lev Manovich (2001: 194) has pointed out, the database is the privileged narrative of the computer age. And he goes on to note that:

As a cultural form, database represents the world as a list of items and it refuses to order this list. In contrast, a narrative creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items (events). Therefore, database and narrative are natural enemies. Competing for the same territory of human culture, each claims an exclusive right to make meaning out of the world. (199)

As a field that is primarily print-based, American Studies is just beginning to develop a language that can accurately account for cultural objects that privilege constant re-ordering and arbitrariness over sequence and narrative. In this sense, Chris Crocker serves here only as one particularly salient example of a wider conflict between narrative and database. No matter which shape new media objects take on the surface – linear online articles, videos, or even virtual worlds like *Second Life* – underneath they are all databases. Ed Folsom, creator of the Walt Whitman Archive (with Kenneth Price), describes the tension between narrative and database in their account of how the works of Whitman now exist as database:

Initially, Price and I had ideas of how we could control the material in the database, and we knew the narratives we wanted to tell, the frames we wanted to construct. But the details of the narrative quickly exceeded any narrative we might try to frame the data with. Little roots shot out everywhere and attached to particulars we could not have imagined. Only if we insulated the narrative from the database could the narrative persist. As databases contain ever greater detail, we may begin to wonder if narrative itself is under threat. (2007: 6)

It seems to me that these challenges of framing data through narrative have direct implications for the field of American Studies, a project of radical cultural critique that has thus far been firmly based on narratives that grew out of an archive that was linear and physical. The move from a physical archive to a virtual database threatens to deconstruct at least some of our narratives. The archive-as-database contests the authority of certain texts and audiences, and it will force us to rephrase and reconsider some of the questions most central to our project.

The documents in the Whitman archive, among them correspondence, notebooks, and prose were formerly scattered in various physical archives, accessible only to a handful of privileged researchers and students. Through the work of Folsom and Price, the archive-as-database is now accessible worldwide. Folsom (2007: 8) reports that, while the database averages around 15,000 hits a day from within the US, their users have become “increasingly international, with, over the past two months, 17,000 hits in South America, 21,000 in Asia, nearly 60,000 in Europe, and nearly a thousand in Africa.” These figures may bring the continuing existence of a very real digital divide into sharp relief, and I do not want to claim this as a story of equal access or an indicator of happy transnational

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scholarship. After all, the archive-as-database follows the protocols of the US information industry, and the language of databases is English. Does this imply that such projects (quasi-automatically) reinforce cultures of US imperialism (cf. Rowe 2002b: 177)? Or can they resist and transform such imperialist tendencies by enabling connections in a global context and through a multiplicity of trans-cultural reconfigurations? It is difficult to grapple with such questions alone, and I hope they allow us to engage in work that is truly interdisciplinary, and that takes perspectives from diverse fields into account. Sabine Sielke (2006) has suggested that American Studies shows the greatest affinity with this kind of interdisciplinary endeavor “when it examines new media technologies and popular cultures, to name only two fields of inquiry which project the future of American Studies while reconnecting with its innovative, emancipatory methodological ‘roots.’” As the Walt Whitman Archive is beginning to collaborate with international scholars from diverse fields to prepare translations of *Leaves of Grass*, and, as the work of Whitman is read through, by, and into other languages and cultures (Folsom 2007: 8), the database seems to be an exciting place to be for American Studies. It is a place that speaks in multiple languages, across borders, and beyond territorial epistemologies.

New Media – New American Studies

In the early 1960s, as many American Studies programs ceased to be subsidized operations, the *American Quarterly* editor Henning Cohen (1963: 551) bitterly observed that deans and provosts now seemed more drawn to funding computers than American Studies programs. American Studies in the early sixties are most commonly associated with the work of a community of scholars who are subsumed under the label “Myth-and-Symbol School.” Although their work is far too diverse to suggest a monolithic research agenda, it seems safe to say that their scholarship sought to establish a connection between social experience and literary symbols (see Lenz 1987; Kerber 1989; Kuklick 1972). Their “textual reality” (Scholes 2001) was dominated by the literary work of white males, and their textual archive was overall print-based and comparatively static. For the Myth-and-Symbol School, computers were neither tools for scholarship nor part of the research agenda. The database was a place for scientists and technology people who competed for funding with programs in the humanities.

Contemporary scholarship in American Studies is inconceivable without new media, at the very least as tools for publishing, communication with colleagues, and access to online sources. Our textual reality is fluid multimedia; items in our database are changing and (dis-)appearing before our eyes. This flux expresses the transitory nature of (popular) cultural texts and contexts. But new media have also accelerated the speed with which our cultural archive is evolving. This acceleration makes the ephemerality of our archive strain against our traditional tools

of interpretation, tools grounded in a comparatively more static textual reality. However, instead of emphasizing (or lamenting) the dissimilarities between the old and new archive, we should – as John Carlos Rowe has pointed out – understand this moment as an opportunity to pay closer attention to the methods and theories we bring to bear on the cultural work performed by texts in classic or new configurations (cf. Rowe 2002a: ix). By “cultural work” I understand what Paul Lauter has referred to as “the ways in which a book or other kind of ‘text’ [. . .] helps construct the frameworks, fashion the metaphors, create the very language by which people comprehend their experiences and think about their world” (Lauter 1999: 23). For Lauter, the focus of our inquiry is not so much on the texts themselves (“text” being anything from “a movie, a Supreme court decision, an ad, an anthology, an international treaty, a material object”), but rather on where, how, and why “certain texts or objects come into existence in the particular historical landscapes of the United States” (24).

Transnational reconfigurations of the American Studies project such as the New Americanists came forward in the early 1990s. The New Americanists persuasively revealed the ways in which “American literary imagination was in fact an ideological construct that developed out of the consensus politics of liberal anti-communism of the postwar era” (Pease 1990: 4). Particularly noteworthy here are the essays gathered in two special issues of *boundary 2* (1990: vol. 17, and 1992: vol. 19), and the volume *Revisionary Interventions into the American Canon* (1994), all edited by Donald E. Pease. The contributions to these volumes offer counter-hegemonic re-readings of (predominantly) major works of American literature (Emerson, Melville, Chopin, Twain, et al. in *boundary 2*, vol. 17), explore the social logics of Cold War national narratives (see *boundary 2*, vol. 19), and foreground postnational narratives. With their critiques of the use of class as the master category of earlier American Studies, New Americanists “heightened awareness of the relative autonomy and analytic importance of the social formations of race and gender in arriving at understandings of political and social change” (Pease 2008: 94). However, the emergence of the New Americanists coincided not only with the end of the Cold War and an increasing neoliberalization of global power dynamics (ibid.: 95), but also with what some interpret as the beginning of a technological revolution that has changed the ways we communicate, work, and make meaning of the world (Postman 1992; Kelly 1995; Kellner 1995, 2004). Thus, it is remarkable that the groundbreaking scholarship that has emerged from New Americanist circles has failed to address new media as sites for the reproduction and contestation of cultural negotiations.

The early- to mid-1990s were marked by a vibrant academic discourse around the ways in which new media challenge traditional notions of what constitutes a text (Bolter 1991) and embody certain aspects of poststructuralist critical theory (Landow 1992, 1997; Mitchell 1995), as well as how new media reveal the problematic relationship between popular culture and new technologies (Postman 1992), and show up the failure of Modernist intellectual concepts to account for the effects

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of postmodern communication technologies (Poster 1995, 1998). The New Americanists have not participated in these attempts to theorize the implications of new media for concepts of textual or cultural practices. Perhaps there has been a reluctance to engage in what Espen Aarseth (1999: 31 and *passim*) has referred to as the “‘colonialist’ strategy” of re-appropriating existing theories not developed with new media in mind (“‘the theoretical perspective of <fill in your favorite theory/theoretician here> is clearly really a prediction/description of <fill in your favorite digital medium here>”). And, clearly, such a strategy has in many instances skewed the academic debates about the impact of new technologies. However, the unwillingness or inability to engage with the cultural work of new media might also point to a culturalist bias inherent in the New Americanist project. The counter-hegemonic readings of the New Americanists continue to limit themselves to a particular instance of a distinct type of textuality; with the exception of a few instances in which visual or cinematic texts are examined, these new configurations of American Studies in the twenty-first century remain dominated by the paradigm of print. “If it happens in new media, don’t touch it” seems to be a tacit yet constitutive and largely unquestioned principle of New Americanist scholarship.

This statement may seem strategically overdetermined, and I do not mean to disparage the important work of New Americanist scholars on the basis of a sweeping generalization about what I perceive as the hegemony of a certain type of textuality with regard to their current research materials. In contrast, I want to suggest that the cultural work of new media is highly relevant to the New Americanist project and must be examined in that project’s terms. But rather than simply relocating New American Studies within new media environments, or calling for the “conquest” of new media through existing methodologies, I believe what is necessary is attention to the interdependencies of different layers of cultural production. As Lev Manovich (2001) has pointed out, the logic of new media technologies not only reflects changes in the cultural logic (60); what Manovich calls the “cultural layer” and the “computer layer” mutually affect each other: “cultural categories and concepts are substituted, on the level of meaning and/or the language, by new ones which derive from computer’s ontology, epistemology and pragmatics. New media thus acts as a forerunner of this more general process of cultural re-conceptualization” (Manovich 2001: 64). It seems to me that the processes of cultural translation and appropriation currently under way have direct implications for the concepts and categories that constitute the interpretative frameworks of the New American Studies. Categories such as identity, nation, and representation are undergoing substantial reconfigurations and call for redefinitions in light of the new media. Likewise, questions around economic and cultural hegemonies, access and equality, censorship and free speech, intellectual property, governance, privacy, and anonymity – to name just a few – cannot be addressed without taking into consideration their “translation into another format” (what Manovich calls “transcoding” (2001: 64)). How do global social

networking sites such as MySpace or YouTube, or virtual worlds such as Second Life challenge the already weakened category of the nation-state? How do emancipatory social movements actively contest the coherence of national narratives in these transnational, digital environments? And how do new media challenge those notions of representation and of representation's potential for political and social change that undergird the New Americanist project?

Certainly, none of these issues pertain to new media alone. However, they clearly do not pertain exclusively to "old" media either, but converge instead in moments of cultural translation in particularly forceful and visible ways. My claim here is that if American Studies is to remain relevant to the project of radical cultural critique, we must form coalitions and collaborations across the digital divide that separates practitioners at the moment. Rather than hoping that Media Studies, Cyberculture Studies, or other fields in the digital humanities will answer questions about the impact of new cultural forms for us, we need to change the status of new media from being something outside the field to something that advances the rigorous, problem-driven intellectual work that lies at the heart of the New American Studies project.

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Problems and Issues

Regionalism

Kevin R. McNamara

In the most general sense, regions are land areas distinguished from their surroundings by some significant characteristic or set of characteristics. In their landmark survey, *American Regionalism: A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Unification*, Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moore identified 41 variant senses of the term then in use (1938: 2).¹ A region's identity may derive from natural features; it may be the land that lies within a watershed, the extent of a particular terrain or climate, or the land area within which a particular natural resource is common. A region may be purely a bureaucratic designation, such as a division of a polity by aggregate population or distance from an administrative center; by 1935, the US federal government used 108 such regional schemes (Odum and Moore 1938: 194). The regional distinctions that most interest scholars and students of American Studies are defined by cultural, social, or economic features such as shared history, ethnicity, political identity, language or dialect, folklore, or religion, a particular class and social structure, or economic and industrial base (which may itself be determined by the region's physical features).

Regionalism is the analytical and interpretive framework through which regions are caused to appear. At several points in the study of US culture, analysts have considered regions to be self-evident, even natural, divisions of the polity, not simply because physiographic characteristics are common indices of regional coherence and determinants of regional borders, but because culture itself was regarded as a product of the material conditions of life, and the most important of those conditions in pre-industrial societies were topography, soil condition, and climate. Thus, J. Hector St John de Crèvecoeur, one of the early commentators on American identity, remarked that "Whoever traverses the continent must easily observe those strong [regional] differences [among Americans], which will grow more evident in time. The inhabitants of Canada, Massachusetts, the middle provinces, the southern ones will be as different as their climates; their only points of unity will be those of religion and language" (1793: 51).

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While regions must display significant degrees of internal similarity and external dissimilarity for regional analysis to be meaningful, we must remember, first, that similarity is not, and does not imply, homogeneity, and, second, that the measures and thresholds of similarity that qualify an area as a region are set by the analyst. As a result, while the regional typology of the Northeast, the South, the Southwest, the Midwest, the Northwest, and the Far West has remained fairly constant for well over a century, the borders of these regions have not (Gastil 1975: 25–40). In demarcating regions, analysts are faced with such questions as the following. Is West Virginia part of the East (it borders Pennsylvania and lies predominantly within the Pittsburgh and Washington, DC, media markets), the South (it was once part of Virginia), or the Midwest (it is a mining and manufacturing state that borders Ohio)? Is all of Texas part of the Southwest, or is the former plantation country of East Texas part of the South? Indeed, how many Souths are there? A cursory reading of Thomas Sutpen's journey from the western (not yet West) Virginia hills to the Tidewater plantations, to the Mississippi Delta (via Haiti) and on to New Orleans, in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), reveals how socially and culturally different Southern "subregions" and "districts" were. These questions are not only matters to be answered by regionalist analysis; they are problems produced by regionalist analysis.

We ought, then, to understand regions in the way that structuralism understands language, as a system of differences with no positive terms. We "know" what a Southerner, a New Englander, a Midwesterner, Southwesterner, or a Westerner is, in the same way that we "know" what a tree or a dog is. But just as no one tree or one kind of tree is the ideal tree, unless we arbitrarily select the oak – if we are Canadian, the maple – no one Southerner or Southern subregion is the South except as it is declared so for some polemical purpose. Likewise, the limits of Southernness are set not by some essential characteristic or ideal type, but by the presence of other regions; absent the North and the sectional conflict, the American South would never have appeared so solid.

At present, the study of cultural regions is more common outside the US than within its borders. As reflected in the contents of this *Companion*, the focus of US American Studies has shifted from variants of the socially dominant American "monoculture" of the North Atlantic rim toward Ethnic Studies, Critical Race Studies, Transnational and Comparative American Studies, and the critique of American imperialism. While these interests certainly are present in non-US American Studies, these programs often take sole responsibility for the study of all facets of American society and culture, unlike in US universities where the US is a central focus across the humanities and social sciences. Moreover, non-US American Studies scholars see the importance of putting the United States together, as it were, in order to comprehend the sources of the cultural, political, economic, and military power to which they are subject (Fluck 2007: 28–9). It is also true that distance brings an alternative perspective, allowing some differences to resolve themselves into patterns of coherence rather as a pointillist painting, seen too closely,

appears to be an undifferentiated field of dots, but from another perspective is revealed to be a crowd of Parisians taking their leisure in a park.

Regardless of academic trends, however, regional identity – *vernacular regionalism* – continues to matter in American politics, popular culture, and everyday life. The vernacular region is the region as imagined and lived by people who identify with the region and use it as a form of “ethnic” identification, from the people who after a recent spate of flooding along the Mississippi River vowed never to leave because, they say, “I have the river in me,” to people who express their sense of heritage through interest in craft and musical traditions, on to people who appeal to their regional identities to explain their life choices and voting patterns. Their perspectives on their regional identities are, of course, inflected by class, educational level, and a host of other factors; nevertheless, the vernacular region is a mode of identification through which people both associate themselves with those they differ from in some respects and differentiate themselves from others with whom they have much else, but not regional roots, in common. A steady stream of research that updates and re-describes the nation’s regions attracts a broad readership. While pundits develop ever more regional schema (e.g., Rust Belt/Sun Belt, Red State/Blue State, even Heartland/Brainland) to account for domestic social, cultural, and political differences, Democratic political activists debate how to broaden their party’s appeal in regions where they have fared poorly in recent years by identifying and appealing to shared core values,² and people within the several regions invoke elements of regional identity to explain who they are and why they do what they do.

Regionalism as a Mode of Social and Cultural Analysis

The academic study of American regionalism flourished between the world wars, a period bracketed by the fervent nationalism of the Red Scare and “100-percent Americanism” at one end, and the mobilization for the Second World War and the Cold War at the other end. While usually referred to as a movement, Robert L. Dorman’s (1993) history of interwar regionalism shows it to have been a loose affiliation at best. Its ranks included archconservative Southern Agrarians and Western historians such as J. Frank Dobie, who believed that their purpose was to foster regional myths, not to critique them. It also included Carey McWilliams, who was an activist, organizer, and attorney in the causes of racial and economic justice, as well as the author of two excellent Regional Studies titles, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (1946) and *California: The Great Exception* (1949). Howard W. Odum, arguably the dean of Regional Studies, was one of many progressive social scientists who wished to use the data gathered by multidisciplinary regional analyses to foster social, economic, and cultural development; he sought “to give ‘the dignity of cultural history’” to Southern underdevelopment (1936: 3), not to rationalize or justify it, but to diagnose and remedy it. If Dobie

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perpetuated the myth of the frontier, Angie Debo, John Joseph Matthews, and D'Arcy McNickle demythologized it as "the invasion front of an alien and ruthless race into cherished homelands, establishing in its wake a regime dedicated to the Indians' cultural, social, political and economic subjugation" (Dorman 1993: 169).

Before regionalism became the preferred mode of analysis, there was its more contentious cousin, *sectionalism*. While regionalism presumes that divergent interests are mediated by the common pursuit of the national interest, sectionalism is a theory of struggle for political hegemony. The axis of sectionalism was North–South until the historian Frederick Jackson Turner called attention to the pivotal role of Western regions in the sectional struggle (1932: 26–41). The Compromises of 1820 and 1850 permitted expansion while maintaining the numerical balance of slave and free states. The Kansas–Nebraska Act and the *Dred Scott* decision hastened secession – the Act by inciting the insurrections of "Bleeding Kansas," and the ruling by using the question of the legal status of a slave who had traveled to the free soil of Wisconsin territory and voluntarily returned to deny the possibility of black citizenship and to protect the institution of slavery for all time.

Ultimately more important to Turner was the West's contribution to American exceptionalism. Casting the culture of the West as a product of frontier life, not the regions of settlers' origins, he rewrote Crèvecoeur's agrarian idyll of European immigrants as formerly useless plants thriving after transplantation (1793: 45) into his own fantasy of American settlement as a life-and-death struggle in which the frontiersman must lose his European ways and learn to live like the Indians do before he could "transform[] the wilderness" into a society built "on American lines" (1920: 4). The further west the settlement, the more truly American – that is, individualist and egalitarian – it is.³

Even as Turner called for studies to "illuminate the character and formation of the American people" from the subsiding sectionalism (1932: 10), others anxious about the cultural consequences of industrial capitalism turned to the regions for renewal. Van Wyck Brooks challenged artists and intellectuals to recover – if necessary, to *invent* – a past more fruitful than the realm presided over by "professors who accommodate themselves without effort to an academic world based . . . on the exigencies of the commercial mind" (1918: 338). Lewis Mumford re-regionalized the American Renaissance, reading Transcendentalism as a strain of Romanticism nurtured in the intellectual climate of Concord, where "the inherited medieval civilization" of the Puritans "had become a shell; but . . . for a brief day . . . had a more intense experience in the spirit" (1926: 86). In those same years, Vernon Louis Parrington penned *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927–30), his unfinished, three-volume study of the nation's regional "minds" and the triumph of centralization over their republican and populist traditions.⁴

By the 1930s, universities across the country housed centers for regional studies, all of them at least partially devoted to documenting folkways and regional histories, research that became a staple of many university presses (Dorman 1993:

40–53). This work found receptive audiences among planners involved with the New Deal and the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA). Mumford, an RPAA co-founder, defined regional planning as a discipline that “sees people, industry, and the land as a single unit” and that seeks “to promote a vivid, creative life throughout a whole region – a region being any geographic area that possesses a certain unity of climate, soil, vegetation, industry, and culture,” by decentralizing populations and civic facilities (1925: 151). The RPAA developed a “Town for the Motor Age” in Radburn, New Jersey, cooperative apartments in Sunnyside Gardens, Queens, and the Appalachian Trail, which it hoped would become a cultural nexus and reinvigorate the region. The federal Tennessee Valley Authority sought a comprehensive solution to the social, cultural, technological, and agricultural needs of that multi-state region. The Resettlement Administration built garden cities in Greenbelt, Maryland, Greendale, Ohio, and Greenhills, Wisconsin; its predecessor, the Farm Security Administration, sought improved conditions and opportunities for sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and the poorest of farm-owners. The celebrated FSA photo-documentary project employed Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Walter Parks, and Ben Shahn, among others.

In these years, the Library of Congress collected American folksongs, life histories, and oral histories of former slaves. The Index of American Design amassed “approximately 18,000 watercolor renderings of American decorative arts objects from the colonial period through the nineteenth century” (National Gallery of Art 2004). The Federal Writers Project’s American Guides Series covered the 48 states, more than a dozen regions, and two dozen cities ranging in size from New York to McGregor, Iowa; contributors included historians, social scientists, critics, and writers such as Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, John Steinbeck, and Richard Wright. Novelist and documentarist Erskine Caldwell’s American Folkways Series produced 28 titles by a roster of authors that included McWilliams, Meridel LeSeur, and Wallace Stegner.

Buoyed by such achievements, Odum closed a 1949 symposium on regionalism by affirming the goals of the movement as the simultaneous promotion of justice and difference not only at home but around the world. He envisioned a global program of “regionalism *and* universalism” that would pair “regional and cultural autonomy with financial [and other forms of] help” to remedy imbalances of wealth, power, resources, education, and opportunity between the developed and developing worlds (1965: 401). Yet, as he spoke, the regionalist movement was going into eclipse, his progressive vision outflanked by conservative reaction centered, indeed, in “the provinces.”

Regionalism in the Arts

American musical forms such as the blues, bluegrass, Cajun, zydeco, Tejano and Western swing all have distinctive geographic and ethno-racial roots. All of them

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are products of free and forced migration and cross-cultural contact: French-speaking Acadians expelled from maritime Canada resettled in Louisiana, where they incorporated elements of black and white Southern music into their own; zydeco incorporates all of these influences into the Afro-Caribbean music of Louisiana's Creoles. Tejano music draws its polka beat from the music of Germans and Czechs who immigrated to Central and South Texas in the mid-1800s.

Regional architectural variation results from the traditions – including Native American – that builders drew on, the available tools and materials, climate and topography. Regional ideologies informed the radically different solutions of New York and Chicago architects to the problem of the skyscraper; the East Coast looked to Europe for historical precedent while influential Midland architects sought to evolve the tall building's organic form. More recently, Kenneth Frampton (1983) introduced the concept of critical regionalist architecture to the English-speaking world. A strategy to resist the "placelessness" that results from modern technologies of design and construction, the global availability of materials, and the worldwide circulation of architectural fashion, architectural critical regionalism employs a dialectic of advanced design and construction technologies with customary forms, materials, and practices to localize modernity and to modernize local practices.

In American art history, regionalism is associated less with regional variations of subject and style than with the reaction of Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood against the influence of European modernisms in the 1920s. The pugilistic Benton described their program as "a home-grown, grass-roots artistry which damned 'furrin' influence and which knew nothing about and cared nothing for the traditions of art as cultivated city snobs, dudes, and aesthetes knew them" (quoted in Dorman 1993: 118), even though Benton himself studied in Paris and depicted Middle American life and history in a style influenced by El Greco.

Regionalism's literary history is long and contentious. As "local color writing," it was often derided as an art of the passing rural US, despite William Dean Howells's embrace of regionalist writing as a force for democracy capable of "humbl[ing]" all Americans "with a sense of their fraternity" by rendering "each phase of our civilization known to all the other parts" (1887: 639, 641). Recent re-evaluations largely replay the question of the genre's progressive or reactionary status in updated terms. Regionalists either "share with tourists and anthropologists the perspective of the modern urban outsider who projects onto the native a pristine authentic space immune to historical changes" (Kaplan 1991: 252), or they "translate imperialism into the power relations of gender and create resistance effects as an aspect of gendered interactions" (Fetterley and Pryse 2003: 242).

Both lines of argument remain within the premise that regionalism is necessarily a literature at the cultural margin. Yet pioneering eco-regionalist writer Mary Austin took a broader view, as did many popular critics of the 1930s. "There is no sort of experience that works so constantly and subtly upon man as his regional environment," Austin argued, and any art that explores those influences is

properly considered to be regionalist (1932: 97). Forbearing to equate the environment with the natural world or the region with the other of the metropolis, Austin included Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), Henry James's *Washington Square* (1881), and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905) on her roster of exemplary regionalist novels (1932: 100–1).⁵ Her judgment is echoed by the novelist John LaFarge, who judged that “there have been very few stories written that are not fundamentally sectional” (1937: 5). In this light, many of the modernist “classics” are regional literature, including Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels, Richard Wright's stories and *Native Son* (1940), Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), and William Carlos Williams's *Paterson* (1946–63).

Limitations of Interwar Regionalist Analysis

Cultural nostalgia

The criticism of interwar regionalism that informs all of the other objections against it casts the movement as a “symptom of the passing of the older America” (Dorman 1993: xiv), a clinging to the ideal of organically evolved culture as a refuge from the disruptions and dislocations of industrial capitalist modernity. This felt sense of loss led some regionalists to romanticize the cultures they studied and often hailed from, and to invest regional cultures with an authenticity that belied their relatively recent creation as part of the same historical processes that now threatened to engulf them. Many regionalists elided class and gender divisions and excused or ennobled histories of conquest, subjugation, and expulsion or extermination of earlier inhabitants.

The nostalgic urge ought not to surprise us; were folk cultures not perceived as imperiled, the impulse to collect tales and artifacts would not have assumed such importance. Moreover, nostalgia is a powerful force in cultural criticism, embraced equally by critics on the left and the right. If sociologists “are, as it were, congenitally committed to ontological nostalgia” (Stauth and Turner 1988: 510), at least since Ferdinand Tönnies's 1887 distinction between *gemeinschaft* community and the *gesellschaft* world of impersonal relationships, nostalgia is equally fundamental to an anthropology whose primal scene is the uncontaminated village, a literary tradition whose countryside has been disappearing since Theokritos, and a Cultural Studies movement that begins with Richard Hoggart's eulogy for an authentic working-class culture eclipsed by “the candy-floss world” of mass entertainment (1957: 171). Not even Urban Studies has been immune, as Michael Sorkin proved when he called for “return to a more authentic urbanity, a city based on physical proximity and free movement” (1992: xv), thereby overlooking how the very same issues of race, gender, and class that the regionalists too often slighted limited freedom in the urban past. The current interest in diaspora, which “appears to be replacing, or at least supplementing, minority discourse”

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as the privileged form of cultural experience under late capitalism (Clifford 1994: 311) is itself founded on the potentially resistive nature of migrants' continued affective attachments for former homelands.

Suppression of intraregional difference

Only in the work of the so-called Indian subregionalists (Dorman 1993: 75) and collectors of folksongs and personal narratives do non-white populations routinely rise to the level of subject. Even the more progressive regionalists silently inscribed white dominance when they wrote of "the mind of the South" rather than "the mind of the white South," although they at least recognized the shared and divergent elements of Southern black and white cultures.⁶ Similarly, Odum and Moore identified the Southwestern mind with its Anglo population even as they described the region as a contact zone in which "two great cultural systems have met and clashed and fused and are still in the process of clashing and fusing," with the result that, "Dominant though the 'American' now is, his daily contact with a Latinized [*sic*] culture has had its inevitable effect in his speech, his manners, his ways of doing business" (1938: 595).

Regionalists were also taken to task for overstating the cultural and social homogeneity of the regions' white populations, an objection that redirects their own objection to theorists of a single national culture. It is certainly correct from the perspective of contemporary American Studies, but the issue is one of *granularity*: the more fine-grained the level of analysis, the more diversity it will register until, finally, the "local" – the neighborhood, the block, the family – all become welters of difference. John Dewey, an ardent localist, remarked the effect of granularity in his observation that "when living on the other side of the world the United States tend to merge into a unit," but when "one happens to receive a newspaper from one of the smaller towns, from any town, that is, smaller than New York . . . [o]ne is brought back to earth. And the earth is just what it used to be. It is a loose collection of houses, of streets, of neighborhoods, villages, farms, towns" (1920: 684).

While such microanalysis provides a rich field for research and is faithful to the smallest details of difference, it limits one's ability to speak meaningfully of larger social and cultural groupings. A refusal on principle to think in terms of totality and the mediating levels of identification with regard to which individuals and groups position themselves may, by its own logic, produce a socially and economically regressive condition of "universal marginalization" (Miyoshi 2002: 42). As true as it is that culture is not an "organically unified, homogeneous thing which is bound to fixed territory" (Radway 1999: 13), mediating levels of abstraction have their necessary place if we are to produce analyses at scales between the local and the global, to link diasporic communities in several lands, or even to speak of minority and ethnic cultures. Not only does "the national" continue to mediate between the locality as site and the global scope of cultural flows on the world's

many “rims” and “contact zones” (Ickstadt 2002: 551), making it possible for the same American Studies scholars who deny the existence of a national culture to decry its worldwide export, but below the national the regional exerts its force and accounts for many of the differences still easily discernible among “world cities” such as Houston, Los Angeles, and New York.

The very notions of contact zones, borderlands, hybridity, and such “deconstructions” of national identity as Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) presume the continued existence of identifiably distinct cultures out of, and against, which the new identities and cultural spaces emerge. These abstractions from experience are meaningful units of analysis at some levels but not at others. Remarking the limitations of hemispheric American Studies, José Limón notes that:

specific parts of the [US–Mexico border] may be almost as socio-culturally different from one another as they are from Colombia. It is not a small matter that Américo Paredes, in the very first words of “*With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero* (1958), specifically defines his [. . .] area of interest: “The Lower Rio Grande Border is the area lying along the river, from its mouth to the two Laredos,” the two Laredos less than 200 miles from the mouth of the Rio Grande with other parts of the border being “otra gente” (other people). (2008: 164)

So, too, while the class-based cultural divide in African American culture has been much in the news of late, there also exists a rich literature (social scientific, narrative, and lyric) attesting to *regional* inflections within African American culture and the very complex relationship of attachment to and revulsion that African Americans have toward the US South as a cultural homeland and site of enslavement. These differences do not prevent us from making valid generalizations about African American, Asian American, white American, or Latino culture, any more than they prevent valid generalizations about European, Asian, African, or US culture. They simply mean that we must be aware that any statement about a group involves generalization and that the coarser the grain is, the more unregistered variation there will necessarily be.

Cities

Odum and Moore proposed viewing the industrial city as a spatially discontinuous American region, one whose characteristic social, economic, and cultural structures were being elaborated at the time by urban sociologists. Yet, following Mumford, who lamented that the city drains the surrounding region of its vitality, and culture turns rootless amidst the city’s “stony wastes” (1925: 151), they also regarded the large city as a threat to the broader region because it “gathers unto itself most of the fruits of our civilization and hordes [*sic*] them away from the ruralite” (Odum and Moore 1938: 134). Here again we glimpse regionalist nostalgia in the anxiety

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that cultures are being lost, not changed, and the desire that small-town “folk” resist the same metropolitan ways with which regionalists already were at home.

It was left to the cultural pluralists and urban sociologists – regionalists of a sort, but not within the usual extension of the term – to theorize the emerging American urban culture. Randolph Bourne imagined “Trans-National America” as “a federation of cultures” (1916: 91), echoing Horace Kallen’s vision of the US becoming “a great republic consisting of a federation or commonwealth of nationalities” (1915: 219). Their optimism was founded on their particular version of American exceptionalism, their belief in “the outstanding ideal content of ‘Americanism’ – that democracy means self-realization through self-control, self-government, and that one is impossible without the other” (Kallen 1915: 219). Dewey even suggested that the immigrants who did not assimilate were thereby proving themselves to be good American localists like the settled generations in the villages; both groups were more interested in the goings-on around them than in anything as abstract as Americanism (1920: 685). For Mumford and other nostalgic regionalists, however, a federated republic of diverse national cultures was the death knell of the Jeffersonian tradition they revered as, at once, a cultural inheritance and a universal principle.

The industrial city of immigrants was not the only location of this “transnational America” (Kallen drew attention to the German and Scandinavian farm-belt communities of the upper Midwest), but it was our present, increasingly de-territorialized and diasporic world writ small. What Kallen and Bourne failed fully to imagine was how the city’s concentration of differences, unlike the spaced colonies of rural immigrants, might produce new cultures and consciousness. The sociologist Lewis Wirth speculated that the loosening of traditional bonds and the increased awareness of other ways of living in the world fostered by cross-cultural contact in the school, the workplace, and public spaces would erode the boundaries between communities and produce a less schematic cartography of difference. Exposure to “stimulation by a great number of diverse individuals and [. . .] fluctuating status in the differentiated social groups that compose the social structure of the city” would, he hypothesized, make city-dwellers favorably disposed “toward the acceptance of instability and insecurity in the world at large as a norm” (1938: 16). While not developing their comments on cities as regions with anything like the range and perspicacity of Wirth’s essay, Odum and Moore also foresaw that the mixing of cultures would render cities more alike than different in significant respects; however, they carefully added the caveat that each city would retain “its own flavor, its own peculiarities, its own distinctive character” (1938: 133) drawn from its surrounding region and its predominant ethnic communities.

A mundane anecdote may suggest something of how the dynamic of cultural crossings and regional distinction functions. A few years ago, I returned to New York City to visit a family member in Bellevue Hospital, near where I grew up. When I said I wanted to get coffee and dessert on the way back to the apartment,

her nurse joined in to warn, in her Caribbean lilt, “Oh, you can’t even find good cannolis here anymore; these Chinese are everywhere!” I’m less interested in the culinary multiculturalism (the nurse’s and my own) than I am in the complaint. While obviously an immigrant herself, this woman claimed the long-time New Yorker’s “right” to rail against the changing landscape – including the cultural landscape – of the city, despite having “contributed” to it. She thus also claimed an affective tie to a slice of an ethnic past not her own, as well as to the desserts, neither of which would have been possible had she settled in Houston, which lacks old *caffè* and *pasticceria* to mourn. What matters about this story is how utterly mundane it is, a simple reminder that cultures and perspectives are always located somewhere and inflected by that location.

Recent Directions in Regionalism

While there is today nothing as coherent as the regionalist movement of the interwar years, regionalist thinking survives in many forms. The environmental and conservation movements are perhaps the clearest inheritors of the regionalist ethos. Contemporary bioregionalism, which offers a regionalist alternative to the nation-state as the foundation of the world’s political division, views the earth as divided into contiguous but discrete organic regions defined by their life forms, and regards local and regional cultures as both physically and symbolically rooted in these “homelands,” which it also considers the most appropriate units for democratic polities; its less radical, more administratively oriented cousin, ecoregionalism, shares many of the same goals, but it “has excised or sanitised much [*sic*] of [bioregionalism’s] idealistic social goals” (Wolmer 2003: 17).

Interest in adapting human settlement to existing ecosystems and bridging separation of the urban and the natural, values at the heart of the RPAA vision, has in recent years spawned the sub-genre of urban naturalism practiced by writers such as Jenny Price, who calls for “a foundational literature that imagines nature not as the opposite of the city but as the basic stuff of modern everyday life” (2006). Two popular expressions of this trend toward seeing nature as the basis of everyday existence rather than as a place to be preserved are the local foods movement, which also advocates for sustainable agriculture, and increased awareness about “carbon footprints,” or the amount of fossil fuels consumed and greenhouse gases produced in the course of daily living.

The environmental justice movement combines environmentalism, planning, and sociology to combat the burdens placed on poor and minority communities through the siting of hazardous facilities such as utility stations, dumps, and industrial plants, and to spread more equitably public amenities such as transportation, health-care facilities, parks, and play areas.

“Critical regionalism” has been adopted by social and cultural analysts whose work cites Frampton’s architectural program, but it owes a greater debt to critical

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social theory. The dialectic of universal modernity and local culture that Frampton made a principle of design is here recast as a conflict between economic globalization and local socio-cultures that is played out as a set of “distinctive but shared worldwide struggles against [the] hegemonic structures” of the neoliberal world order (Herr 1996: 2). Timothy Reichert Powell’s study of contested histories of space, place, and identity in eastern Tennessee, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (2007), is perhaps the most rigorous application of the method to a US region to date. He seeks to “interpret phenomena materialistically,” as Theodor Adorno said of Walter Benjamin, by relating them “in their isolated singularity to material tendencies and social struggles” (1981: 236), and thereby to unsettle the retrospective inevitability of historical outcomes. Avowedly activist in his work, Reichert Powell hopes to reclaim the liberatory and utopian energies that might have caused events in that region’s history to unfold otherwise.

To date, critical regionalism has been distinguished by its focus on culture and ideology,⁷ likely a reflection of its origins in Literary and Cultural Studies. Reflecting that intellectual inheritance and set of concerns, critical regionalism approaches a mode of mobilization for social and political struggle. It promises to tell us a great deal about recognition and rights struggles. Yet the sort of culture without interiority, to rework a phrase of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1999), that critical regionalism constitutes would seem less well suited for the task of naming and describing the new cultural and social forms and relationships now taking shape around us that Reichert Powell (2007: 69) identifies as the second principal goal of critical regionalism. It remains to be seen how well suited it is to explore the content and affective experience of cultural beliefs and practices, or to analyze the complex relationships and often clashing objectives of cultural, social, and economic equity – a serious concern if, as Fredric Jameson has argued, cultural difference projects are themselves “somehow related to [neoliberalism’s] own deeper internal dynamics” (1994: 204). Critical regionalism is thus faced with the same problem of granularity that plagued interwar regionalism; as Limón cautions, an interpretive framework committed to an overarching narrative of shared struggle leads analysts to recast discrete events as iterations of a single dynamic and to ignore aspects of culture and cultural change that do not further the prevalent narrative.

It may well be that the nascent “interdiscipline” of critical regionalism could benefit from multi-disciplinary analysis created by scholars across the social sciences, rather than one restricted to Literary and Cultural Studies, if it is to realize, on its own terms, an agenda as robust as Odum’s grand vision of fostering diversity and development.⁸ American Culture Studies may contribute to this project by taking a broader – and finer-grained – account of the dialectic of culture and modernity, one less constricted by the terms of any structural analysis and more aware of the expressive dimensions of cultural practices, of “topophilia, that ‘affective bond between people and place’” (Halttunen 2006: 5, quoting the

geographer Yi-fu Tuan), and of the beliefs and practices that make particular places significant and continue to inflect identities and to bind people to homes, wherever they may be. Increased attention to transnational cultural flows – the Caribbean and Pacific Rims, the Black Atlantic, the US extension and absorption into Latin America – has effected a necessary displacement of the North Atlantic Rim on which American culture had been too exclusively sited, but it challenges students of American culture to be more cognizant of how cross-cultural contact is transforming cultures and creating new identities in ways that “have yet to be accounted for by academics and governments alike” (Rafael 1999: 1210).

The “translations and transformations . . . into regional idioms” of these global cultural, social, political, and economic processes through geographic, economic, and information mobility, rising rates of intermarriage, individuals’ own idiosyncratic cutting-and-mixing of cultural codes to construct and to express their senses of themselves, and all of the other “contested and open-ended processes that are never entirely predictable” (Rafael 1999: 1209) may well contribute to the creation of a less-nucleated and less-stratified social cartography of cultural difference. The working out of the global dialectic sketched by critical regionalism, the local dynamics of cultural change, and the myriad local and regional struggles for economic and social justice ensure that regionalism – under whatever name it proceeds – will remain a vibrant field of inquiry in the coming years.

Notes

- 1 Odum’s stature in American Studies has never approached Mumford’s. Yet he was, as Harvey A. Kantor notes in his appreciative essay, “the man who was to synthesize all these major strands of regional thinking and who was to become their leading promoter” (1973: 278).
- 2 See, for example, Jerome Armstrong and Markos Moulitsas Zúniga’s analysis (2006: 64–8, 152–6, 164–6) of regional strategies for the Democratic Party.
- 3 William Carlos Williams gave this myth literary expression in his idiosyncratic history of American settlement, *In the American Grain* (1925).
- 4 John L. Thomas (1990) notes that Mumford and Parrington traced a line of development from pioneer rapacity to the greed and corruption of Gilded Age business and politics. Turner had already noted these negative proclivities of frontier culture (1920: 32). Constance Rourke’s *American Humor* (1931) and Bernard DeVoto’s *Mark Twain’s America* (1932) refute the contention that the frontier lacked a culture.
- 5 Austin excluded Willa Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) from her list of regional classics because “the major patterns” of the protagonist’s life were set while he was still in France, she argued, “there is little that New Mexico can do for him besides providing him an interesting backdrop against which to play out his missionary part” (1932: 105).
- 6 “Often it is difficult to discern whether [the studied avoidance of calls for social equality between blacks and whites among Southern regionalists] revealed some bedrock racism or instead reflected a recognition of the facts of Southern political life,” Dorman notes (1993: 186), because even Odum himself, “a leading member of the Council for Interracial Cooperation, [who] argued the most radical of theoretical positions in *Southern Regions*” often softened his arguments through a “diffuse prose style” and “tendency to include a range of opinion” in his analyses. As the

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- head of a state-funded institution, Odum had reason for concern; a federal government that never passed an anti-lynching law and that turned against the New Deal was not overly receptive to rapid social change.
- 7 In her cross-national study of Ireland and Iowa, Cheryl Temple Herr accords a special place to literature and film as cultural documents, with the claim that they “draw together voices of a given region and allow comparison with another space’s structurally significant life situation” (1996: 2). As editor of the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to Los Angeles Literature*, I certainly agree that fiction and film can tell us much about the way regions function in local, national, and even international imaginaries. I also agree that to the extent that they remain faithful to the singular event and its social, cultural, and economic overdeterminations, literature and film usefully resist oversimplified analysis by showing that conflict exists not only between the local and the global, etc., but *within* each antagonistic pair. Yet any claim that literature better represents a “structurally significant life situation” than might economic, sociological, or other social-scientific analyses seems to require either discounting the effects of aesthetic reworking of the material the texts draw on or using the text as a pretext for sociological and economic analysis. Reichert Powell (2007: 17) more modestly concedes that many of the issues that concern critical regionalists, “could be better examined by scholars with training in geography, history, or economics” than someone schooled in Literature and Cultural Studies, but that such training equips him to discern associative and thematic connections.
 - 8 Herr articulates a goal of “a more heterogeneous and tolerant future” (1996: 18) but it is worth noting here both that diversity and tolerance are compatible with unequal distributions of resources and opportunity and that increased diversity is accepted as a good in itself without any felt need to explain what benefits it brings.

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The West and Manifest Destiny

Deborah L. Madsen

Westward expansion is central to American Studies for the very simple reason that the object of study (the United States) has been constituted by successive processes of westward migration and territorial expansion. At the same time, the rhetoric of American Studies as a discipline, in terms of both the vocabulary of American selfhood and of the US nation, has been grounded in migration histories. From the corporate expansionism of the 1630s, which Perry Miller fixed into the paradigm of “the Great Migration,” American Studies has been characterized by disciplinary metaphors such as Sacvan Bercovitch’s powerful analyses of “the Puritan origins of the American self” (1975) and a foundational understanding of the US as formed by the Americanization of (European) migrants. In the wake of ground-breaking work by Ronald Takaki, Gary Okihiro, and others, Americanists have been encouraged to look not across the Atlantic but across the Pacific, from and to “a different shore,” to borrow Takaki’s phrase. But this proposed change of direction from West to East has not transformed the rhetoric of migration and Americanization so much as it has extended the remit of Western expansionism to Hawai’i, the Pacific islands, and into Asia. Richard Drinnon’s account of American conquest, *Facing West* (1980), begins in early seventeenth-century Massachusetts but ends in Indochina, with a chapter appropriately titled “Closing the Circle of Empire.”

The West, particularly Western imperialist expansion into the Americas, across the continental US and beyond, continues to provide the basis upon which later revisions of the disciplinary paradigm are based. As Raymond Williams (1983) points out, in his *Keywords* definition of “Western,” thinking about the wider significance of a global North–South polarity is modeled upon existing meanings of East–West relations. Even the shift to Transpacific or East Asian histories in American Studies inscribes the West as the primary point of comparison. Williams observes that the concept of “the West” is no simple geographical concept. In our current usage, and in the period since the Cold War, the West has been largely identified with free-enterprise or capitalist states and their political or military allies,

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while the East is identified with socialist or communist societies (334). Williams sees this as a development arising out of ancient East–West divisions of the Roman Empire and the early Christian Church, and draws attention to the politicization of geography that complicates efforts to think about “Western civilization.” A consequence of this discursive history is that when we think about the importance of the West and westward expansion in the US context, we must keep in mind the wider global context within which the idea of the West operates. The very notion of the continental US as organized into East and West is a European conceptual imposition. The indigenous peoples of the Great Plains, for example, did not think of themselves as living on “Western” lands. The description of those lands as “Western” also carries a strong Eurocentric association, such that the land is identified with the West of Williams’s definition – a free-enterprise or capitalist state – which is emphatically European rather than indigenous. As Raymond Williams warns, the language we use to describe concepts like “the West” in fact prescribes the object we would study.

The West as an object of study is slippery for more than terminological reasons. In what follows, I want to begin by asking “where is the West?” because this location has changed both in historical terms and in disciplinary terms, and continues to be debated. I then turn to the issue of how the study of the West has changed, from foundational work by scholars such as Henry Nash Smith, Leo Marx, and R. W. B. Lewis, to the “new” West Studies which turns away from the understanding of the West as a process to focus more on the West as a place. “New” Western scholars, following the work of historians such as Patricia Nelson Limerick, Richard White, Peggy Pascoe, and Donald Worster, address the specificities of experience of people living in the West, both the colonizers from the East and the Western colonized, particularly in relation to issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. The particular case of indigenous communities and their experience of Euro-American expansionism with its ideological justification, “Manifest Destiny,” brings my chapter to a close.

Where is the West?

The geographical location of the West has continually moved as the reference point from which it is defined changed. From the early Spanish and French colonies, through the Anglicization of the original 13 Atlantic colonies, to the incorporation of Alaska and Hawai’i as states in 1959, the United States as a nation has been in continual transition. This means that what constituted the West in the colonial period is not the same as that in the early republican period and it is certainly not the same as twenty-first-century understandings of the American West. Any contemporary reader of James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* is led to ask how Cooper can refer to upper New York State as “the West,” and such a reader will sympathize with Leslie Fiedler’s question, posed in *The Return*

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of the Vanishing American (1968): “where, geographically, is the elusive West? We know that first of all it was Virginia itself, the Old Dominion, then New England, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, Missouri, Texas, the Oregon Territory, etc., etc. – always a bloody ground just over the horizon, or just this side of it, where we confronted *in their own territory* the original possessors of the continent” (26). Fiedler’s is a powerful reminder of the indeterminacy of this concept and the extent to which it is tied to European colonial ambitions in North America. As historian Clyde A. Milner II (1994) summarizes:

The American West is an idea that became a place. This transformation did not occur quickly. The idea developed from distinctly European origins into an American nationalistic conception. The western edge of several European empires, especially the British, moved into the hinterlands of North America. The United States inherited this westward edginess and made it the main directional thrust of its own empire. Once across the Mississippi, these American lands did not fill up with a steady progression of settlers. Overlanders and gold seekers pushed ahead to Oregon and California. The mountains, plains, and deserts would be filled in later, if at all. Throughout the nineteenth century, the United States laid claim to more and more of its West, culminating in 1898 with the annexation of Hawai’i. All of this occurred because a nation established mainly by African and European peoples created a region that replaced a world – a homeland once defined exclusively by native peoples. (35)

This process of territorial expansion was, of course, complex and carried different meanings at different moments in time: just as the frontier shifted with each incremental extension of the US, so the place and people next to be conquered changed. While the practicalities changed, the reasons for expansion and the ideological justification of conquest largely did not change over time and in fact appear to have solidified into a national mythology. The initial generations of settlers saw their colonies as constituting a divinely ordained “errand into the wilderness,” to use Perry Miller’s phrase, which has come to be called the mythology of “American exceptionalism.” Exceptionalism names the idea that the New World (and specifically that part of it which became the United States) has been singled out above all nations for a distinctive, God-given destiny. The nature of this destiny was variously interpreted: as the purification of the Anglican Church, for the seventeenth-century Puritans, but as the perfection of a new political system of democratic republicanism for the architects of the revolution. What remained constant was the vision of this destiny as a matrix of political, religious, economic, social, and, above all, territorial relations.

During the nineteenth-century period of rapid national expansion, this “destiny” was focused by national ideology upon the creation of an empire of middle-class farming communities: an extension of the eighteenth-century agrarian ideal that impressed commentators such as Hector St Jean de Crèvecoeur (1782). Territorial expansion in the name of democracy was prescribed for an “exceptional” nation

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destined to occupy the continent from East to West. Expansion was articulated as a democratic “Manifest Destiny.” This term was first used by John L. O’Sullivan in the *Democratic Review* in 1845, in a comment that brings together the twinned ideologies of Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism. He refers to “our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (quoted in Hietala 1985: 255). It is worth pausing to unpack this statement. O’Sullivan implies that the American continent was assigned by God to the United States. In fact, by using the term “Providence,” he suggests more than this: he suggests that the “Manifest Destiny” of the United States is part of a sacred providential history, designed by God, and played out through his agents. Consequently, the US labors not simply under a duty to conquer and possess the North American continent but under a divine and irresistible necessity. This necessity is juxtaposed with the cause: “the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” Whether this demographic multiplication is the result of a growing domestic population, or to increases in the national population due to immigration, is left unclear. What is clear is the sense that the new nation required ever more space in which to develop freely, even while acting out a divine script in all its historical inevitability. This tension between freedom and necessity characterizes the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. As Thomas Hietala (1985) remarks, O’Sullivan’s original vision of US expansion was a process based on the experience of Texas: where a group of settlers formed their own autonomous government and later sued for annexation to the US. However, in a January 1848 debate in Congress, Senator John A. Dix of New York (1848) articulated the now-accepted understanding of “Manifest Destiny” when he claimed: “no one who has paid a moderate degree of attention to the laws and elements of our increase, can doubt that our population is destined to spread itself across the American continent, filling up, with more or less completeness, according to the attractions of soil and climate, the space that intervenes between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans” (181).

New World exceptionalism was legitimated and supported by the assumption that North America represented a land of opportunity: economic opportunity for the landless of Europe and religious opportunity for those who sought a haven from persecution. In fact, from the early colonial period, both sets of assumptions were false: Puritans persecuted the Quakers of the Pennsylvania colony and the Catholics of Maryland, for instance, and land was increasingly concentrated in the hands of wealthy settlers through the operation of land grants such as the “headright” system introduced in 1618 in Virginia. Under this system, every new settler was entitled to a grant of 50 acres and every colonist who paid the passage of a new settler received the same grant. Thus, wealthy colonists who brought indentured servants to Virginia could quickly accumulate extensive land holdings. Benjamin Franklin proposed a similar system in his “A Scheme for a Western Settlement” (1763/4), under which both settlers and “contributors” to the governing company would be granted a parcel of land, and where individuals could acquire

land in both capacities. While it may not have been true, the promise of land and economic opportunities for all was repeated over and over in pamphlets, promotional life writings, newspapers, and so on, from the earliest reports prepared for Queen Elizabeth by courtiers who never visited North America, to Benjamin Franklin's representation of himself as living proof that hard work will bring extraordinary success, to the belief held by contemporary immigrants that in the US they will enjoy opportunities unavailable elsewhere.

The sheer repetition of this claim perhaps accounts for its power, which is the power of the "American Dream." The promise relied on the perception that the New World offered unlimited land and other natural resources that could be claimed by European migrants. The emphasis continually placed upon hard work and the improvement of the land justified European over indigenous possession even while it underlined the values of progress, technology, rationality, and the work ethic: the values of "the West." If, unlike the previous inhabitants of the land, colonists increased the productivity and commercial value of the land, by bringing European technological innovation and Protestant hard work to bear, then these colonists justified and legitimized their new territorial ownership. Territorial expansion thus brought into being a frontier where "civilized" European agriculture met traditional or "savage" tribal lifeways. This trope of a continually moving, linear frontier has proven resilient and influential, particularly in terms of thinking about the distinctive nature of the American national character. The so-called "Turner Thesis," proposed by historian Frederick Jackson Turner, locates the source of a set of specifically American character traits in the unique historical experience of the moving frontier. Turner's essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) sets out a vision of American history that is identical with the process of Western colonization. The continuous retreat of an area of "free" land before the forces of westward settlement provides the context in which existing social institutions are required continually to adapt and change, giving rise to a culture of individualism, self-reliance, and Western democracy. The frontier, for Turner, represents a confrontation with the "primitive" and a consequent redevelopment of the social structures brought by settlers, with a transformation in the character of the European settler who becomes Americanized by the wilderness. The constant rebirth of American "civilization," in the face of Western "savagery," provides Turner with the forces that shape a distinctively American national character. Later historians, such as Walter Prescott Webb, argued that it was not "savagery" or "wilderness" that caused the reappraisal of conventional modes of society so much as the environmental differences between the Atlantic seaboard of the East and the Great Plains of the West. One definition of the West is the area beyond the 98th meridian where annual rainfall drops to less than the 20 inches required for conventional agriculture. The lack of water and timber, the differences in vegetation, wildlife, and the features of the landscape, all set the West apart from the East and account for changing social institutions.

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Turner's frontier thesis was influential throughout the early part of the twentieth century, and continues to be debated, but his vision of the frontier was decisively challenged by an alternative model of colonial relations typified by Mary Louise Pratt's understanding of the colonial "contact zone." Pratt (1992) defines the concept of contact zones as: "social spaces where highly disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4). Such spaces are not unlike the "middle ground" described by Richard White (1991) in his study of colonial indigenous-white relations in the Great Lakes Region. Pratt goes on to describe how she uses the term to refer to "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (6). Turner presents a view of the West as a kind of *tabula rasa*, awaiting the arrival of civilization; Pratt's contact zones are much more complex spaces where the trope of *translatio imperii*, the ongoing westward movement of empire, is continually placed in question. Turner's thesis enacts the myth of the westward course of empire, assuming the necessary triumph of Eurocentrism in the unconquered Western territories. Of course, Turner announced his theory at precisely the moment that the frontier was declared "closed," and this is no coincidence. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam remark in their introduction to *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (2000), Eurocentrism is the vestigial worldview of colonialism that remains even after formal colonialism has ended; further, Eurocentric discourse projects a linear historical trajectory leading from one empire to the next and "attributes to the 'West' an inherent progress towards democratic institutions" (2). What they call the "Plato to NATO" paradigm of Eurocentrism identifies historical progress with European progress (14), just as Turner does.

If, for Turner, the West is a shrinking zone always one settlement away from the frontier, for Shohat and Stam, the West is a no less elusive place but one clearly located in discourse. In their discussion of the constitutive Eurocentrism of Western films, they note the many titles of Hollywood Westerns that include the names of European-designed state borders – such as *Colorado Territory* (1949) or *Oklahoma Kid* (1939) – while in fact many states and natural environmental features (such as rivers and mountain ranges) carry indigenous names. Other titles that gesture overtly to westward expansion, such as *Westward Bound* (1959) and *The Way West* (1967), "relay the 'becoming' of the American nation, which reached its telos with the complete transmogrification of nature into culture, a point fully reached only in the age of cinema" (Shohat and Stam 2000: 117–18). For Shohat and Stam, then, the question "where is the West?" is easily answered: "the west was thus less a place than a movement, a going west, a moving horizon, a 'vaguely realizing westward' in Robert Frost's phrase, a tropism in both senses of the word – a movement toward and a figure of speech" (118).

The West: Old and New

The discursive importance of the West was a foundational element for early American Studies scholars as they sought to define a distinctive methodology for the new academic discipline. Henry Nash Smith, in the preface to *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950), defines his key terms “myth” and “symbol” as words that “designate larger or smaller units of the same kind of thing, namely an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image.” He goes on: “The myths and symbols with which I deal have the further characteristic of being collective representations rather than the work of a single mind” (xi). The myth of the frontier is the idea with which he begins his classic study. He argues that St Jean de Crèvecoeur’s question, “what is an American?,” can be answered by what Nash Smith calls “the pull of a vacant continent drawing population westward” (3).

The myths and symbols used by successive generations of Americans reveal the impact of the US as “a continental empire” upon what he presents as “the American mind” (4). In Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964), the Virgin Land myth gives way to the pastoral motif of the West as a garden, where progress is represented by technology in general, and the locomotive in particular, and the pastoral ideal promises opportunities for self-invention and a new life. Marx explores the tensions that arise when the pastoral ideal conflicts with the destructive force of industrialization through the conflict between nineteenth-century progressive and pastoral ideals. In this conflict Marx finds “the American view of life” (3), a distinctive “way of ordering meaning and value” (4), which is his subject. Marx is indebted to Henry Nash Smith for his methodological focus on national consciousness through the analysis of myths and symbols. Marx’s definition of a “cultural symbol” as “an image that conveys a special meaning (thought and feeling) to a large number of those who share the culture” (4) clearly draws on Nash Smith’s earlier work. Marx’s work also follows R. W. B. Lewis’s *The American Adam: Innocence, Tradition, and Tragedy in the Nineteenth Century* (1955), which traces a distinctive American style of writing to the experience of the “newness” of the nation, represented by the wilderness of the frontier. For Lewis, the consciousness of the nineteenth-century American is akin to that of a “new Adam” perpetually struggling to separate from the corrupt world of the historical past. Among canonical writers like Emerson, Hawthorne, James, Melville, Thoreau, and Whitman, as well as lesser-known writers such as George Bancroft, Horace Bushnell, Orestes Brownson, and Theodore Parker, Lewis finds a common engagement with the prospect of an American future that is unburdened by the past.

Richard Slotkin’s trilogy dealing with the history of US national mythology begins with *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (1973), where he argues that US culture is characterized by attitudes,

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values, rituals, and traditions that can be traced back to the historical experiences of the settlers who violently displaced Native communities as they established their frontier towns. Historical experience becomes symbolic myth that legitimates and perpetuates particular values and behaviors. In *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (1992), Slotkin shows how vigilante violence is rationalized through Western myths, such as those of the “winning of the West,” the outlaw gunfighter, and the lawless Wild West. The racialized nature of vigilante violence is made clear in Ken Gonzales-Day’s study *Lynching in the West, 1850–1935* (2006), where he shows the frequency with which Latinos, but also Native Americans and Asians were lynched in California. Slotkin links this personalized vigilante violence, the right to take the law into one’s own hands to seek private justice, with the issue of race to explore, not so much “the American mind” which interested Henry Nash Smith, but the particular power of US national mythology to perpetuate destructive domestic and foreign policies. He explores the Western myth in relation to the Philippine–American War, the Cold War, and the My Lai massacre. In the second volume of his trilogy, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (1992), Slotkin argues that the myth of westward expansion, together with the powerful discourse of Anglo-Saxon racial purity, was a key factor in the promotion of America’s imperial image through the late nineteenth century. Like earlier Americanists Nash Smith, Lewis, and Marx, Slotkin ranges widely in his discussions of both “high” and popular culture. But, where earlier scholars sought to analyze a national consciousness or “American mind,” Slotkin states clearly that his interest is in the operations of cultural ideology. He offers, then, not an explanation of “Americanness” but a political critique and revisionist historiography of the US. Annette Kolodny’s work brings a feminist critique to these issues of ideology and mythological legacy. In *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975), she examines the troping in exploration narratives of the land as female, the explorer as male, and conquest as rape; in *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630–1860* (1984), she looks to women’s appropriation of frontier experience in a feminine tradition of Western writing.

Slotkin’s monumental work on the legacy of the Western “savagery versus civilization” mythology, and the ideological freight borne by this trope, has been very influential on later directions of scholarship on the West in general and popular Westerns in particular. Kim Newman observes that:

[w]hile couched in terms of the coming of civilization, the rise of law and order or the establishment of community values, the Western is essentially about conquest. Cavalries conquer the Indians, pioneers conquer the wilderness, lawmen conquer outlaws and individuals conquer their circumstances. But with each conquest, another stretch of territory, whether geographical or philosophical, comes under the hegemony of the United States of America. (1990: 1)

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As Shohat and Stam argue in their work on Eurocentrism, the ideological premise of the Western genre is based on making indigenous people appear to be invaders in their own land, as enemies of Western progress, presented with “elegaic nostalgia” and “thanatological tenderness” (2000: 118) toward this now-vanished race. In contrast to the elimination of these enemies of national progress and Manifest Destiny, a happy ending is reserved for those European characters who, in the course of the narrative, come to embody the West and its values of progress and improvement. Later Westerns critiqued the expansionist narrative privileged in earlier Westerns by John Ford and others; perhaps the most sensational of these later revisionary films is Ang Lee’s *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), based on E. Annie Proulx’s 1997 story. The popular Western is, like much American cultural production, ambivalent. John Carlos Rowe opens his study of *Literary Culture and US Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (2000) with the observation that if Americans are variously shaped by “a powerful imperial desire and a profound anti-colonial temper” (3), then so too are the literary and cultural texts produced by this ambivalence within the discursive matrix of national identifications.

The West continues to play an important national exceptionalist role, especially in terms of the national imagery through which the US represents itself to itself. Richard Drinnon, in *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* (1980), traces the genealogy of what he calls John Adams’s “messianic nationalism” (76) back to the Puritan massacre of the Pequots and forward to the Western conquest or “Indian Wars,” and later to US colonial conflicts in the Pacific such as the Philippine–American War. He writes: “With . . . a gentle stir the pigments of Indian-hating shaded off into coolie-hating, the Chinese exclusion act (1882) and the ‘Yellow Peril’ hysteria at the turn of the century” (221). In each case, Drinnon emphasizes, the threat posed by the enemy takes on apocalyptic dimensions. The idea that the US learned colonizing strategies early, and repeatedly used them on both internal or domestic and external or extra-territorial communities that were marked for elimination, is developed by John Carlos Rowe in *Literary Culture and US Imperialism* within the complex situation of a new republic that was populated by a racially and ethnically diverse population making various claims to national rights and liberties. Rowe observes: “Virtually from the moment the original colonies defined themselves as a nation, there was an imperial project to restrict the meaning of the American by demonizing foreigners, in part by identifying them with the ‘savagery’ ascribed to Native and African Americans” (2000: 7). US nationalism and American colonialism are therefore linked not only in the literal historical sense that the New World colonies preceded the US nation, but in a more profound sense that Richard Slotkin explores in his trilogy: that later cultural images, identities, and behaviors were established during the first 260 years of European settlement (1600–1860).

Internal colonialism and imperialist foreign policy were confused from the earliest nationalist period, not least because of the continental territorial ambitions

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of the new nation that were promoted and legitimized by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. Rowe explicitly likens the elimination of indigenous peoples to the Holocaust:

Manifest Destiny proved to be our own “Final Solution” to the “problem” of native peoples, which is also relatively unique in modern imperialisms: that the purpose of territorial expansion is not to subjugate native peoples for the purposes of exploiting their labor but simply to remove them from useful colonial territory with the ultimate purpose of eliminating them and their lifeways altogether. (2000: 10)

What does perhaps set US internal colonization apart from foreign policy, or external imperialism, is the relative emphasis upon the acquisition, settlement, control, and possession of land. The domestic expansion of the nation into the western territories of the North American continent was motivated by the acquisition of land, and by the control of commerce and trade routes that acquisition made possible.

The emphasis upon the West as a place, as territory or land to be conquered, settled, and possessed, is one of the primary characteristics of the “New West Studies.” Patricia Nelson Limerick, in the volume she co-edited, *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (1991), provides a virtual manifesto of the new approach. She lists six points at which “new western historians” depart from their predecessors. First is the definition of where the West is located: in the trans-Mississippi geographical region west of the 100th meridian. Second is the rejection of the term “frontier” to describe the process of settlement. Third is the development of an alternative vocabulary comprised of terms such as conquest, colonization, imperialism, exploitation, and expansionism, with a corresponding interest in the diverse communities involved in the process of settlement: women as well as men, indigenous peoples, Hispanic, Asian, African Americans as well as Europeans, in relations with each other and the natural environment. Fourth is the rejection of any chronological disruption of the history of the West by dividing it into “old” and “new”; the notion of an end to the frontier is rejected and the early history of the western region is seen as continuous with contemporary histories. Fifth is the rejection of the rhetoric of progress and improvement in favor of an approach that recognizes the destructive impact of some aspects of Western history. Linked closely to this refusal of optimistic national narratives is the sixth and final point: that new Western historians make no claim to a neutral or objective approach to their subject. This landmark collection includes essays by leading scholars of the New West Studies: Richard White, Peggy Pascoe, Brian W. Dippie, and Donald Worster.

Donald E. Worster, one of the best known of the “new” Western environmental historians, issued the following call in his 1985 book, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*:

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The West is still supposed, in popular thinking, to be a land of untrammelled freedom, and in some of its corners it may be just that. However, that is not all it is, is not even the more important part of what it is. The American West is also more consistently, and more decisively, a land of authority and restraint, of class and exploitation, and ultimately of imperial power. The time has come to brush away the obscuring mythologies and the old lost ideals and to concentrate on that achieved reality. (4)

Writing about the Great Valley of California, he describes the culture and society of the West as based upon a managerial and exploitative, highly technological relationship with nature, what Worster calls “a modern *hydraulic society*” (7): a “techno-economic order imposed for the purpose of mastering a difficult environment” (6), a “coercive, monolithic, and hierarchical system, ruled by a power elite based on ownership of capital and expertise” (7). Worster’s argument does not end here. Taking up the image of the West as a colony of the American East, first proposed by Bernard DeVoto in 1934, he presents the West as “a principal seat of the world-circling American Empire” (15) and asks how the imperial West arose out of the desert and what the implications are for the mythology of Western democracy and freedom.

The rhetoric of democracy and the practicalities of expansionism were complicated by issues of race; in particular, the contradictory desire to possess western territory without incorporating the people living in those territories into the US nation. How to expand territorially while maintaining European racial purity was a problem taken up, as John Carlos Rowe (2000) explains, by anti-imperialist groups in the mid-nineteenth century who were opposed to imperialism yet overtly racist: “Rather than defending the rights of foreigners against imperialist aggression, most nineteenth-century Americans upheld ideas of ‘American’ racial purity against the ‘inferiority’ of such foreigners” (8). Peggy Pascoe takes up the twinned issues of gender and sexuality in her 1990 study, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939*. She examines, through four case studies of female moral reformers, the class and racial assumptions inherent in the myth of the white woman as an agent of civilization in the West. In her most recent book, Pascoe addresses the history of miscegenation laws in the West and elsewhere to underline relationships among race, gender, sexuality, and class and the naturalizing of these values through ideological practices of white supremacy. Miscegenation and the allied problem of ensuring the “whiteness” of the West focused anxieties about the racial identities of future generations of American citizens. June Namias, in her study of captivity narratives *White Captives* (1993), points out that it was only from the 1830s that captive women were depicted as sexual victims. Namias suggests that this shift in emphasis arises from well-publicized cases of female captives who chose to stay with their Native husbands rather than return to white society. As Namias argues, “Once the sexual boundary was crossed [by women who took and remained with Indian

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husbands], a political boundary was crossed as well. The fate of the next American generation, in fact the fate of America's mission on the frontier was at risk" (112). This anxiety is linked to the capacity of women and families to legitimize the white claim to the land. The control of women and their reproductive capacity is intimately linked to the validation of white settlement and the claim to the future control of the land in the interests of white supremacy. The racial identity of those coming into the new nation was policed by immigration and naturalization laws that controlled the racial profile of the national body politic: from the Naturalization Act of 1790, which set out the terms of citizenship for free white persons of good moral character, to the McCurrnan-Walters Act of 1952.

The first laws to restrict migration by a particular racial group were the Chinese exclusion laws, first introduced in the mid-1870s. As Catherine Lee (2003) cogently explains, the settling of the West in the latter part of the nineteenth century involved contradictory demands: that cheap temporary labor be available for the work of building such infrastructure as the Transcontinental Railway and that permanent settlements be comprised of white families to ensure the continuity of political, economic, and nationalistic ties with the East Coast. Lee's study shows how Chinese prostitutes served both demands by ensuring that Chinese men neither formed families with white women nor produced mixed-race families that would "taint" the national bloodstock (11–16). George Anthony Peffer's study of the 1875 Page Law, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here* (1999), takes its title from the claim made by Judge Lorenzo Sawyer of the US Circuit Court, who asserted that if Chinese men did not bring their women to the US then "they would never multiply. . . . When the Chinaman comes here and don't bring his wife out here, sooner or later he dies like a worn out steam engine; he is simply a machine, and don't leave two or three or half dozen children to fill his place" (108–9). The ideological link between race and gender is clear: to control one requires control of the other. The mixed-race subject, akin to Gloria Anzaldúa's *mestiza*, is undesirable as a dangerous blurring of racial categories. Indeed, in her 1987 essay "*La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness*," Anzaldúa describes "a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" as the particular strength of the *mestiza* who "learns to be Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures" (79). Colonialist and white supremacist hegemony mediates Anzaldúa self-representations as variously "American," "Mexican," or "Native"; similarly, the heteronormative imperatives constitutive of those colonialist myths mediate her "queer" lesbian subject position. In her scholarly and creative work alike, Anzaldúa uses the language of empire to contest, from a Chicana perspective, the dominant ideologies of colonialism, juxtaposing the mythology of Manifest Destiny with Mexican and indigenous narratives of dispossession and genocide.

At the time of European contact in the late fifteenth century, North America was home to thousands of indigenous tribal communities. What followed was a lengthy process of conquest, genocide, and annexation as European colonial

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powers established settlements that became the continental United States. In his book *American Holocaust* (1993), David Stannard claims that 100 million indigenous people were subject to genocidal policies as the European conquest of the Americas unfolded; this number of casualties is disputed by critics such as R. J. Rummel who, in *Death by Government* (1994), argues that between 2 and 15 million people died as a consequence of colonization. The end of the Indian Wars is usually marked by the massacre of 300 unarmed Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1876. The Seventh Cavalry, reinforced after their defeat under Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn earlier that year, brought the military conquest of the western tribes to a conclusion. The “old” West Studies assumed that, with the closing of the frontier and the conclusion of the “Indian Wars,” “the West” was won and finished. An important dimension of the “new” West Studies is the refusal of this chronology and awareness of the inescapable fact that indigenous tribes did not disappear as the myth of the “Vanishing American” suggested. Not only is the contemporary West peopled by Native communities that grow despite the manifold difficulties of poverty and widespread discrimination, but scholarly reappraisal of indigenous – white relations since the period of contact emphasizes the active agency expressed by indigenous communities in their attempts to engage with and to shape the catastrophic changes that contact and conquest have brought.

The indigenous responses to the ideology of Manifest Destiny, which rationalized the often violent appropriation of tribal lands, refuse to situate Native people as the passive victims of this ideology of divinely sanctioned US expansionism. Rather, indigenous writers turned the rhetoric of American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny against the white invaders. Like African American writers who used the vocabulary of US democracy to denounce the institution of slavery, Native writers such as Elias Boudinot (Cherokee) and William Apess (Pequot) used the discourse of Manifest Destiny to critique the practices of tribal removal and forced assimilation. Apess’s autobiography, *A Son of the Forest* (1829), was first published during the period of the Indian Removal Act (1830). In this and other works, Apess contrasts the Christian rhetoric of “savagery versus civilization” with a history of European atrocities and injustices against the Native tribes. He ruthlessly exposes the fact that race forms an impenetrable barrier to equality for all Native people; in one of the most affecting passages of his autobiography, Apess spells out his efforts to become what white “civilization” demands; but, despite these efforts, including his military service in the war of 1812, his conversion to Christianity, and his ordination as a Methodist minister, he is still treated as a member of an inferior race, a quality he is powerless to change. Indeed, as Reginald Horsman (1981) makes clear in *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism*, by 1850, US expansion was located within a powerful discourse of Anglo-Saxon superiority and inevitable racial destiny. Apess echoes the sentiments of Samson Occum (Mohegan) who, in his “Narrative” (1768), explains his experience of blatant discrimination: “I *must say*, ‘I believe it is because I am a poor Indian’. I Can’t help that God has made me So; I did not make my self so. –”

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([1829] 1992: 947). Apess questions the Christian commitment of white settlers and so subverts the divine sanction for expansion provided by Manifest Destiny: “O thou pretended hypocritical Christian, whoever thou art, to say it was the design of God that we should murder and slay one another because we have the power” (279).

The willingness of some Native leaders to cooperate with white demands for assimilation is evident in the disillusionment of Apess and Occum, who finally confront the immovable obstacle of white supremacy. Elias Boudinot, a signatory to the Treaty of Echota (1835), came to the conclusion that only removal offered a promise of Cherokee survival. Boudinot’s “An Address to the Whites” (1826) linked the US democratic experiment with the Manifest Destiny of tribal people, arguing that “on [the Cherokee] destiny hangs the destiny of many nations. If she completes her civilization – then may we hope that all our nations will – then, indeed, may true patriots be encouraged in their efforts to make this world of the West, one continuous abode of enlightened, free, and happy people” (1800). As Michael Paul Rogin observes in *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (1975), “The Indian was one symbol of divided America. He may have posed a danger to inner harmony and economic growth; he posed no danger to the Union. Guilt and aggression generated American fears of Indian war and slave insurrection; the imagined ‘internecine’ military threats were largely fantastic” (296). Works such as Robert Berkhofer’s *The White Man’s Indian* (1978) focused upon the nature of these “fantastic” images. Berkhofer argues that, from the earliest colonial period, Europeans simplified the complex and diverse indigenous communities of North America into a single racial group, “the savage,” and named them by the common term “Indian” in order to solidify this categorization. The most powerful contemporary analysis of “the Indian” is offered by Anishinaabe writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor.

Vizenor’s early collection *The Everlasting Sky: New Voices from the People Named the Chippewa* (1972) is ironically titled because the “Chippewa” were the object of colonial naming; the people thus named called themselves “Anishinaabeg.” In essays such as “The Sacred Names Were Changed” and “Something the White Man Named,” Vizenor explains how “[t]he woodland identity of the people was homogenized in patent histories” (7) and in the imposed name “*indian*”; he describes the ideological freight borne by indigenous people via the word “*indian*,” which “is a heavy burden to the *oshki anishinabe* because white people know more about the *indian* they invented than anyone” (15–16). In Vizenor’s work, the term “*indian*” (which he always writes in lower-case italics to emphasize the artificiality of the category) is a primary strategy in what he calls the “word wars.” Every time an indigenous person is asked “Are you an Indian?,” they are engaged in a discursive conflict over subject positioning within a situation of ongoing colonization. The word wars that are fought in print and celluloid, as well as everyday encounters, are waged for control over how history is interpreted and disseminated: no white people want to hear the true stories of massacre and genocide that still live

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on in Native memory, so mainstream media perpetuate false images of Native savagery and white civilization, focused on the figure of the “*indian*.” Vizenor’s work is directed against these images and the colonialist vocabulary that sustains them. The narrator of his story “Sand Creek Survivors” demands passionately that:

We should pull these words down, beat them on altars until the truth is revealed, beat the sweet phrases from the institutions that have disguised the horrors of racism . . . drive the word pains and agonies of the heart into the cold . . . We are the victims of these words used to cover the political violence and white horrors in the memories of the tribes . . . Hear these primal screams, the tribes scream with the trees and rivers, from diseases, the massacres and mutilations of the heart . . . racist isolation and the repression of the heart in white schools and institutions. (1981: 37)

In his 1994 book, *Manifest Manners*, Vizenor engages the ideology of Manifest Destiny head on. The cover of the first edition features Andy Warhol’s silk-screen portrait of Russell Means, captioned *This is not an Indian*. Vizenor gestures towards Magritte’s painting *This is not a pipe* to underline that this image must not be taken for reality. The “*indian*” is a simulation, in Baudrillard’s sense of an image with no external referent. The Indian does not exist in nature but is purely a set of stereotypes and images representing colonialist desires and fantasies. The “manifest manners” of Vizenor’s title demand that real living individuals be rendered invisible and mute in favor of the manufactured simulations of the Indian that meet white supremacist notions of “savage authenticity.” The discourse of authenticity sustains the illusion that only “*indians*” are real. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff explains:

In Vizenor’s view, whites invented “Indian” as a new identity for tribal people in order to separate them from their ancient tribal traditions. To survive this cultural genocide, tribal people responded by inventing new pan-Indian creeds, ceremonies, and customs that have blinded them and whites to their true tribal heritages. Only through the visions and dreams of tricksters and shamans can both tribal people and whites be led to the truth. Vizenor sees his literary role as that of illuminating both the sham of contemporary “Indianness” and the power of vision and dream to restore tribal values. (1985: 73)

Manifest Destiny, the ideological rationale and legitimation of race war, dispossession, and removal (or what would now be called “ethnic cleansing”), operates as Vizenor so incisively shows through a powerful set of discursive practices, but also through everyday gestures and modes of address: “manners.” The expansion of the US was made possible through slave labor, genocide, and annexation of western lands held by Mexico, Spain, and thousands of autonomous tribes. To return to the question with which I began: where is the West? And the allied query: when was the West? Studies of US expansion and the myth of

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Manifest Destiny show us that the West is as much “now” as it was “then.” It is both “here” and “there” – historian Richard White begins his 1993 book, *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”*: A New History of the American West, with the claim “The boundaries of the American West are a series of doors pretending to be walls” (3) – and indeed wherever we encounter the political, economic, and cultural reach of the US Empire. The shift from “Old” to “New” West Studies shows us that attention to the particularities of migration histories (voluntary and coerced), within the critical context of US cultural mythologies, has the capacity to transform the disciplinary paradigm of American Studies by allowing greater understanding of the operations of US imperialism, East and West.

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Canadian Studies and American Studies

Alyssa MacLean

First dates may be painfully awkward as a rule, but everyone likes a good love story. The cartoon in Figure 20.1 by Donald Reilly, from the November 19, 2001, edition of *The New Yorker*, uses the visual rhetoric of a romantic encounter to make light of Canada's uncanny relationship with the US. For many Americans, Canada is strangely hard to place. Its important similarities with the US – a shared border, a history of white European settlement, a largely English-speaking population, a similar currency, an interrelated trade history and popular culture, for example – often make Canada seem familiar, more like an extension of the US's domestic space than a foreign country. While the Canada–US border may be the longest undefended border in the world, as so many claim, it is also perhaps the most difficult one for US Americans to perceive. At the same time, Canada's bilingualism, its formal recognition of French, English, and Native founding cultures, its continuing affiliation with the British monarchy, and its different approaches to foreign policy can sometimes render Canada strange to US audiences. While the male speaker in this cartoon recognizes Canadian difference, and even finds it alluring, the cartoon still positions Canada as a nation only vaguely known, and raises larger questions about the unconscious beliefs that shape the rhetorical construction of Canada within the hemisphere.

The outlines of this romantic encounter draw from classic national stereotypes – the coy, modest Canadian lured by a nerdy, bold, physically and psychologically intrusive American – to investigate the contemporary framework of the hemisphere in an everyday context. And while the cartoon anticipates a potentially fulfilling

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Image not available in the electronic edition

Figure 20.1 Cartoon by Donald Reilly, from the November 19, 2001, edition of *The New Yorker*, making light of Canada's uncanny relationship with the US. ©The New Yorker Collection 2001 Donald Reilly from cartoonbank.com. All Rights Reserved.

relationship between Canada and the US, it also hints at the possible dangers concealed within the niceties of small talk. The round table seems to promise an egalitarian conversation, yet the cartoon reduces this encounter to a smarmy pick-up line. The gender politics of the image, which place the female Canadian figure in a passive role, visually recall the ways Canada's 33.8 million citizens are overwhelmed by their 308.5 million US neighbors (Statistics Canada 2010: n. pag; US Census 2010: n. pag). Generalizations about Canada as the US's closest friend are brought to a head as Canada becomes the object of the US gaze. Thus, even as the cartoon makes light of the history of US expansion and its tendencies toward conquest, it suggests that the US's relationship with its "national cousin" risks becoming too close, geographically incestuous, as Canada becomes a domestic partner. The speaker's comfortable pose and his raised index finger indicate his clear rhetorical and geographical power over his companion, and emphasize that the Canadian is in unfamiliar territory. Meanwhile, the Canadian's speechlessness recalls other historic silencings in North America: the slow destruction of Canadian media by American media conglomerates, the displacement of Canadian narratives, and the erosion of French Canadian language and culture through the influence of English Canadian and US media. Even as the American's self-definition depends on his companion's presence and sexual availability, Canada itself remains undefined and unidentifiable.

One could be forgiven for wondering whether this relationship is tending. The Canadian's posture indicates that she may not be averse to this American attention. But her lidded eyes equally suggest some form of emotional distance – as if, perhaps, she has heard this all before, or is considering the consequences of a bad match. Her smile could express a range of reactions, from confusion to self-recognition, amusement to profound irritation. In fact, while the American here seems to favor a merging of the minds, many Canadians would insist on reading themselves ironically, in this cartoon, as the US's most significant Other, resisting US advances and prompting Americans to question and reconsider their own place in the world.

Of course, this is hardly the first time the national relationship between the United States and Canada has been likened to a marriage. In an address to the Canadian Parliament on May 17, 1961, US President John F. Kennedy characterized the bond between Canada and the United States as a match made in heaven: “Geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies. Those whom nature hath so joined together, let no man put asunder” (qtd in Martin 1982: 190). Yet Canadians have often been more candid about the stakes of such a lopsided intimate encounter. A few years after Kennedy's visit, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau stated wryly that, for Canadians, living next to the US “is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant: No matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt” (qtd in Martin 1982: 241). The humor of this cartoon lies in its tacit admission of the attraction between the two countries, but also in its visual representation of the power of the US's position in the hemisphere, and the ways that Americans have sometimes been blissfully unaware of the effects of this unequal power structure.

In a variety of ways, this cartoon's restaging of national (in)comprehension, in which the US subject simultaneously acknowledges and disavows the idea of Canadian difference, describes not only the uneasy liaison between Canada and the US, but also the fraught relationship between Canadian Studies and American Studies as disciplinary fields. In recent years, scholars in American Studies have actively embraced transnational approaches to the study of American culture, and have tried to foster methods that would investigate the effects of US power across the world, and especially across the hemisphere. In practice, though, Canada has yet to be mapped out in so-called transnational American Studies, a discipline whose very name carries the unwanted baggage of US expansion around in its explorations of the continent. As Ricardo L. Ortiz explains, even the most well-meant transnational American Studies projects have engaged in a “conventional absenting of Canada from certain powerfully imagined, and powerfully strategic, configurations of continental and hemispheric space” (Ortiz 2002: 337).

The romantic invitation described by the *New Yorker* cartoon could describe the recent attempts on the part of transnational American Studies scholars to establish a conversation about the research goals and interests they have in

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common with Canadian Studies. Yet, too often, American Studies researchers have been dismayed to find their proposals met with expressions of incomprehension or even silence. Despite the fact that scholars in Canadian, American, Hemispheric, Postcolonial, and Transnational Studies all share an interest in generating informed scholarship on Canada's cultural, historical, environmental and political relationships in the Americas, academic conversations have unfortunately tended to evolve in "splendid isolation" (Siemerling 2007: 140). Furthermore, attempts to include Canada in Transnational American Studies projects have mostly generated confusion; in both everyday conversation and academic discourse, Canada's uncanny place in the continent has become the most familiar thing about it. Some scholars explicitly studying the Americas fail to mention Canada at all. Others regretfully cite either Canada's excessive similarity to the US, or its "marginality within US American studies and Americas studies" (Shukla and Tinsman 2007: 23) as a reason to eliminate Canada's noisy presence in an otherwise coherent conversation. In recent years, hemispheric American collections seem to have stabilized in what seems like a parody of Canadian content regulations,¹ gesturing vaguely northwards with one article on Canada's presence in the Americas (see, for example, Duncan and Juncker 2004; Levander and Levine 2006, 2008; Pease and Wiegman 2002). While this research recognizes the need to include Canada, too often it neglects to acknowledge and confront the problems that come with representing a nation that is at once extremely diverse and severely underrepresented in hemispheric discussions. As a result, Canada seems virtually guaranteed to remain the "reified singularity of an inveterately American perspective" (Traister 2002: 46). Even in this very volume, Canada is a continental misfit, a national island marooned in the "Problems and Issues" section of American Studies; other fields and national identities that may once have also been "problems" for America have found their place in more appropriate "foundational" classifications. How did Canada – seemingly the most benign, charming, and attractive of neighbors – manage to become America's problem?

The present inability of American Studies and Canadian Studies alike to make sense of the relationship between Canada and its neighbors in the Americas should make us aware of the ways in which ideas of national identity, language, political difference, ethnicity, religion, and race shape ideas of what it means to be "American," in all the most diverse and loaded meanings of that term. Studying Canada's uncanny placement in, and displacement from, hemispheric conversations may bring to light the unconscious presuppositions that ground the production of knowledge in US Studies, Canadian Studies, Transnational Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Hemispheric Studies. How have the hemispheric power imbalances raised by the *New Yorker* cartoon affected or even perhaps disabled the production of knowledge in the academy? Can the uncanny, characterized by Martin Kreiswirth as "a hesitation in the production of knowledge" (qtd in Zeitlin 2004: 629), help us understand the sites of confusion and resistance within so-called Transnational American Studies, and between Canadian

and American Studies? In short, what can we learn from this vexed relationship, and how did we get to this place?

Dismantling the Garrison: Canada, the Americas, and US Empire

The *New Yorker* cartoon makes light of US misrecognition of Canada's position in the Americas, but, to be fair, Canadians seem to suffer from a similar confusion. Black Canadian writer Wayne Compton probably summed up the feelings of many Canadians on the matter when he responded to the question posed by the title of a 2008 conference held in Montreal, "Are We American?" Compton carefully replied, "Yes and no, but mostly no" (unpublished observations 2008). His comment shows how profoundly Canadian understandings of the hemisphere have been shaped by Canada's on-again, off-again relationship with the United States in particular. Until very recently – and with a few notable exceptions in First Nations² cultures – theorizations of Canada's engagements with the US and/or Britain have been much more common than examinations of Canada's place in the wider Americas. At times, the imbalanced power relationship between Canada and the US has become such an obsession, and the expression of anti-American sentiment has become such a fundamental part of Canadian culture, that Canada's links within other nations in the hemisphere have been virtually invisible. Ironically, in their laudable attempts to understand and deconstruct US conceptualizations of the continent such as the Monroe Doctrine, an unfortunate number of projects in transnational American Studies have ended up in a confrontational relationship with forms of Canadian nationalism designed precisely to resist US hegemony.

The US's courtship of Canada has a long history. For hundreds of years, invocations of Canada's similarities with the United States have been especially threatening because they have often been tied to much larger predictions of the racial, political, and economic destiny of the New World that have drawn Canada closer to US imperial pursuits. Canada's links to the British Empire, its tradition of primarily white European immigration until the 1960s, its democratic government and its class privilege have especially been cited as "family resemblances" shared by Canada and the US. This familial rhetoric often places Canada awkwardly within the well-known representation of US revolutionary history as a family feud. If colonial America reached national adulthood by rebelling against Mother England, then Canada is the slightly less impulsive younger sibling who avoided the violent histrionics of the US–British relationship, but, by choosing to remain in the Commonwealth, failed to achieve democratic maturity. As literary historians James Doyle (1983) and Edward Watts (2006) show, nineteenth-century interpretations of Canada as a white nation within the Americas that had yet to reach its full national potential fueled many discussions of the future of the North

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American continent as a space destined for US-style democracy. In a series of editorials on “The Canada Question” in 1838 and 1839, for example, *The United States Democratic Review* described British North American resistance to the American Revolution as a failure of imagination; English Canadians were often represented as potential US citizens sadly lacking in political ingenuity, who would eventually need to be rescued from British rule. Of course, this conceptualization of the hemisphere as a family placed the US in a position of benevolent protection and moral superiority over Canada in a way that helped produce what Gretchen Murphy (2005) calls the discourse of the Monroe Doctrine. Predictions of Canada’s annexation by the US reached a fever pitch whenever the unity of Canada was called into question (notably during the War of 1812, the discussions preceding the 1867 Confederation of Canada, and the constitutional debates about Canadian national unity which persist to this day). However, many Canadian authors and politicians fiercely resisted the idea of US annexation, arguing that Canada’s interests would be better protected through its Commonwealth ties to Great Britain.

Such predictions of a Canada so similar to the US that it should be annexed also enabled fantasies of Anglo-Saxon supremacy in North America. Fantasies of Canada as the Great White North described a landscape that was historically blank and racially pure, the perfect site of expansion for white colonists. In the nineteenth century, images of the French Canadian *voyageur* vanishing from the US frontier were often used by US authors such as Francis Parkman to suggest that the permissive attitudes of the French toward racial mixing with Native populations led to moral degeneracy and political decay (Watts 2006). These speculations linked notions of democratic citizenship to whiteness; closer ties between (English) Canada and the US promised a union of white, English-speaking nations standing together against the racially and linguistically chaotic regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. Similarly, scholars from Pierre Berton (1975) to Sherrill Grace (2001) show how later representations of Canada as North – a space ready for conquest, the geographical equivalent of an available woman – helped to construct and sustain the obsessions of mainstream US culture and its Cold War ideologies. For many artists, Canada was seen as sufficiently proximate, and sufficiently blank, to enable the spread of white, anglophone values across the Americas.

These representative strategies celebrating the similarities shared by Canada and the US stand in sharp contrast to some of the most prevalent characterizations of Canada by Canadian writers and theorists, who have often resisted US power by insisting on Canada’s differences from the United States.³ Canada’s history has been shaped by its peripheral status in relation to the imperial powers of Britain and France, and its need to resist and at times violently oppose US political, military, and cultural dominance. Colonists in New France fought against and ultimately fell to British forces during the Seven Years’ War. Later, British North American settlers resisted American military invasion during the War of 1812, and nervously watched developments such as the US declaration of the Monroe

Doctrine in 1823, the US invasion of Texas, and the Civil War. Some of Canada's biggest national projects – Confederation in 1867, the Trans-Canada railway project completed in 1885, and the creation of the national television and radio network, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Société Radio-Canada), in 1936 – were explicitly undertaken to defend Canada against the military and cultural threat of the United States. Thus, the anti-American sentiment that is so often invoked in Canadian discourse has a historical basis that precedes the creation of the United States.

The Canadian government has taken an aggressive role in protecting Canadian culture and fostering the notion of Canadian difference in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, largely in response to what was perceived as a veritable barrage of US popular culture in the post-World War II period. Despite the massive protectionist efforts of Canada's government since the mid-1950s, the impact of American cultural imperialism is enormous – so powerful, in fact, that it frequently displaces the stories that Canadians tell themselves. (Canadian films, for example, are routinely shelved in the “Foreign” section of video stores in Canada, which is especially ironic given how often Toronto and Vancouver masquerade as New York and Seattle in Hollywood productions.) The two most significant governmental inquiries into the state of Canadian culture, the Aird Commission (1929) and the Massey Commission (1949), were specifically undertaken to protect Canada from the threat of assimilation posed by US mass media, by encouraging the production of Canadian culture and developing Canada's educational institutions (Moss and Sugars 2009).

Canadian literature and the practice of Canadian literary criticism were necessarily shaped by this history of government intervention into Canadian culture. The creation of “CanLit” as both a literary field and as a critical practice emerged in the post-World War II period, when debates about US influence on Canadian letters were especially prominent. As Canadian literary scholar Imre Szeman argues, concerns about Canadian identity and cultural independence generated the popularity of Canadian thematic criticism, which sought to distinguish Canadian literature from its British and American counterparts:

Literary nationalism in the postwar period is directed toward an identification of the unique national characteristics of the Canadian nation either in opposition to the United States or to what the United States represents: the embodiment of the values of modernity in national form . . . It is the threat of American cultural dominance – of neoimperialism and cultural imperialism rather than colonialism and imperialism – that is the most important stimulus for literary and critical examinations of the Canadian nation; neocolonialism is the starting point of literary and critical inquiry in Canada. (2003: 161)

As a result, many of the first conceptualizations of Canada depended heavily on Canada's unique status in the Americas, and many invoked Canada's nordicity

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to differentiate Canada from its southern neighbors in the Americas. Of these, the garrison mentality thesis of Canadian cultural theorist Northrop Frye (1971) was the most influential.⁴ Frye suggested that, for early European settlers, the Canadian wilderness posed both a physical and a spiritual threat insofar as it symbolized the denial of Enlightenment thought and of human morality in the New World. The result of this perpetual opposition between remote settler communities and the hostile wilderness, he argued, was the production of a defensive “garrison mentality” (225–6) in Canadian culture that policed internal dissent and protected communities from physical and cultural threats, including the effect of US culture in Canada. According to Robert Lecker (1994), the garrison mentality thesis and other similar thematic analyses in the 1960s and 1970s formed a “national-referential aesthetic” (4) that defined and privileged quintessentially “Canadian” texts, and justified the cultural existence of Canada as an independent nation.

Yet, even as these theories ostensibly helped to define Canada, they also created an isolationist interpretive structure in Canadian literature and scholarship that has since been abandoned in favor of a view of Canada as a field of interacting cultures. Postcolonialism, as an interrogative framework, a literary mode, and a political praxis, has probably been the most helpful in identifying Canada’s critical investments in, and differences from, countries in the Americas other than the US. While the applicability of the term “postcolonial” to a Canadian context is itself a contentious issue, Laura Moss argues that postcolonial approaches have enabled scholars to examine:

how Canadian literature engages with British and American (cultural) imperialism and neo-imperialism; positions First Nations literatures; rethinks history in colonial and chronologically post-colonial works of fiction and poetry; examines constructions of race and ethnicity in poetry and prose; explores the flawed memory of Canadians; differentiates between multicultural policy and practice; undergoes canonical revision; and “writes back” to colonial education. (2003: vii)

Canada’s status as a member of the British Commonwealth and its asymmetrical relationship with US power informed some of the first theories of Canadian culture (see, for example, Grant 1965; Staines 1995; New 1998). More recently, postcolonial scholars have complicated the view of Canada as a colonized space by considering Canada’s own colonial engagements with religious, racial, and linguistic minorities in Canada. Scholars have sometimes invoked postcolonialism to examine indigenous engagements with Western cultural systems, and to contest forms of Canadian nationalism that often denied or erased Canada’s violent history of north/westward expansion and the displacement of aboriginal peoples.⁵

Postcolonial approaches have also been useful in drawing parallels between the diasporic and postcolonial experiences of Canadians and those of other peoples in the Americas. Until the twentieth century, Canada’s relationship with Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean was largely eclipsed by its connections with

Britain and the US. However, in more recent years, writers and artists have begun to use discussions of Canada's connections with nations in the Americas other than the US as a mode of resistance against conceptualizations of the Americas which placed the US at the geographical or political center of the Americas. Alternative associations in the Americas that deliberately overlook or exclude the US allow Canadian thinkers to interrupt US cultural influence, and strengthen parallels with a range of postcolonial experiences across the Americas. Postcolonial approaches also became increasingly important in the late twentieth century, when Canada ended its restrictions against non-white immigration, and more and more immigrants from countries such as Haiti, Chile, Cuba, and Guatemala made new homes in Canada. At the same time, concerns about indigeneity, diaspora, and linguistic protectionism in Canada also prompted new interest in Latin American and Caribbean culture (Hazelton 2002). Fears of economic and cultural neocolonialism brought on by the Cold War and the North American Free Trade Agreement further reinforced the parallels between Canada and the Americas. Works such as Hazelton's *LatinoCanada* (1996) explore how Latino-Canadian writers are now reflecting on different facets of Canada's trans-American identity.

Similar interests led French-language scholars to draw thematic parallels between the situation of Quebec and that of former French territories in the Caribbean. This translated into not only an appreciation for theorists such as Frantz Fanon, but also an increased awareness of shared concerns about assimilation, decolonization, and linguistic and cultural hybridity in the francophone Americas (see, for example, Dorsinville 1974; Lacroix and Caccia 1992; Cuccioletta, Côté, and Lesemann 2001; Cheadle and Pelletier 2007). Other scholars in French Canada (Morency 1994; Bouchard 2000) explore the idea of a trans-American identity with the concept of *américanité*.⁶ Both strategies enabled French Canadian cultures to recognize their diverse origins and develop a sense of solidarity with other minority French and Creole cultures in the Americas.

Yet Postcolonial Studies of the Canada-US relationship have so far been less successful.⁷ This is due at least in part to the fact that Postcolonial Studies in Canada emerged out of Commonwealth Studies, a type of world literary study that by definition excluded the United States. Postcolonial approaches, which often understand imperialism as a conflict between nation-states, have productively described Canadian forms of resistance toward British and American imperial power. But discussions of Canada-US political collaboration, diasporic movements of Canadians in the US, or the popularity of US culture in Canada, for example, have not been as frequent, perhaps because postcolonialism has had such an investment in fostering the development of local Canadian cultures in the face of US cultural imperialism. Put another way, the 49th parallel is the intersection point of some conflicting imperatives in Postcolonial Studies, which has led to the repression of some research projects and avenues of inquiry. While US imperialism is a significant concern that merits careful scholarly analysis, the framework of Postcolonial Studies has made some particular avenues of inquiry difficult. For

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example, there is no shortage of analysis of the Canada–US political relationship, and of the Canadian book industry’s slow death through overexposure to US mass media. However the relative paucity of nineteenth-century Canada–US Literary Studies is striking, especially given the provocative research of Nicholas Mount (2005) on the ways that Canada’s Confederation Poets – some of Canada’s most celebrated writers – profited artistically and financially from their exposure to a large US print-cultural audience. Many researchers consider the formation of Canadian myths and national icons in Canada (Grace 2001; New 1998), but very few examine the rhetorical formation of Canada in the US (Doyle 1983; Gatenby 1993). Finally, academics in First Nations Studies, such as Roger L. Nichols (2003) and David G. McCrady (2006), suggest that the glamorization of Canada’s more “peaceful” approach to settlement in the West, in relation to the violence of the US policies of westward expansion, has made it more difficult to study the way that the US and Canadian governments collaborated in controlling and repressing the passage of Native populations across North America.

Postcolonial scholar Diana Brydon (1990) claimed that an overemphasis on the nation in Canadian Studies might have obscured many of Canada’s postcolonial alignments with other sites. However, I would suggest that the emphasis, within Postcolonial Studies, on the power differentials between national entities, and the conflicting imperatives to support national constructions that resist imperialism(s) and to criticize national constructions that foster imperialism(s), has obscured some Canada–US alignments (see also Davey 1993). The US and Canada have too often been locked into an oppositional relationship. Until recently, many doubted that a more open-ended research paradigm would succeed in Canada. Surveying the state of Canadian literature in the mid-1990s, Robert Lecker (1994) maintained that “canonical and institutional power are still tied to nationalist concerns” (7) in Canadian literature, and that Canadian literature is still obsessively protective about its own status as a result. Can Canadian nationalism and Canadian literature, both of which have been built by centuries of anti-American sentiment and wariness toward US power, also come to recognize the way that the US has affected their own construction? Or, perhaps, as Lecker wonders aloud, “Is it possible to speak about Canada and the postnational at the same time?” (9).

Sleeping With the Elephant: Transnational (North) American Studies and the Limits of Canadian and American Studies

Given this history of scholarship, the “transnational turn” in American Studies and the present interest in hemispheric study would seem quite inviting. In the late 1990s, scholars such as Janice Radway (1999) proposed a radical rethinking of the discipline of American Studies, arguing that the geographical and discursive frame of American Studies – the very notion of “America” itself – might need to be questioned and perhaps even discarded as a key organizing principle of

cultural study. Though transnational approaches vary widely, they share a commitment to “decentering the tenacious model of the nation as the basic unit of knowledge production” (Kaplan 2004: 11; see also Rowe 2002). Since the emergence of the term in the 1990s, transnationalism has come to encompass a variety of research formations, goals, and techniques, which have divided into two broad but overlapping projects. Some scholars have taken transnationalism as an invitation to explore the possibilities raised by investigating “alternatives to state-sponsored forms of identity” (Sadowski-Smith 2002: 2), and the new perspectives that emerge when subjects identify themselves through post- or extra-national paradigms. Gloria Anzaldúa’s study of *mestiza* culture (1999), David G. McCrady’s analysis of the Native North American cultures bisected by the borders of nation-states (2006), and Paul Gilroy’s formulation of the Black Atlantic (1993), for example, recognize the importance of the nation as both a conceptual category and historical reality, but suggest that notions of national identity and citizenship have often alienated and divided diasporic or migratory populations, and have marginalized those communities in political, geographic, social, economic, and literary contexts. Other scholars use transnational approaches to recognize the contingency of the nation itself, to reveal the different demands and interests that shape the formation of nation-states, and to investigate the way in which perceptions of one nation-state could be used in the service of another’s self-definition. Anna Brickhouse’s 2004 study of the international knowledge networks that shaped the production and reception of the so-called American Renaissance, for example, shows the ways that “foreign” voices, perspectives, and experiences both construct and contest the conceptual apparatus that sustains the idea of the “domestic” in US culture. For Paul Giles (2001), “using national cultures against each other in this way functions as a kind of materialist version of deconstruction, whereby each cultural formation reveals the blindspots or limitations of the other” (n. pag.). Transnational approaches are often informed by methods and concepts in Postcolonial Studies. However, by sidestepping the temporal and political registers of Postcolonial Studies, transnational approaches have been somewhat more flexible in imagining and studying the relationships of nation-states with no history of direct colonial interaction.

Given that so many US exceptionalist narratives reinforce US power in the hemisphere, transnational approaches have been widely promoted as a way to contest the deployment of US power across the Americas in particular. Adherents argue that transnational approaches to American Studies will “contextualize and clarify, rather than reproduce, the exceptionalism that has long been central to the [US] nation’s conception of its privileged place in the American hemisphere” (Levander and Levine 2008: 3). While most of the first transnational projects examined the US’s relationship with Mexico, Cuba, and Latin America, researchers have expressed growing interest in “locating Canada within the history and culture of the Americas” (Adams and Casteel 2005: 5), thereby establishing Canada’s

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presence in a field that had, at the very least, taken Canada's similarities with the US for granted. Such attempts to reconsider the boundaries of the Americas would, according to transnational American researchers, contest "the synecdoche of a US read as 'America'" (Porter 1994: 468), and offer a way to redress long-standing power imbalances in the hemisphere.

Despite these apparently inclusive efforts, the relationship between Canadian and so-called Transnational and/or Hemispheric American Studies has been uneasy, at best, and has occasionally turned sour. In fact, the tacit rejection of Hemispheric American Studies by many academics may come to endanger the Canadian reputation for politeness and good humor. Some Comparative American Studies scholars have widely expressed frustration that their transnational efforts have not been embraced with the appropriate level of enthusiasm from Canadian Studies. Rachel Adams and Sarah Casteel (2005), for example, criticize "Canadianists' withdrawal from hemispheric conversations" (5) but offer few reasons why Canadianists may have turned down such an invitation (and few insights on how the history of US imperialism may have prompted such a response). Yet a cursory look at the introductions to many hemispheric projects, including that of Adams and Casteel, reveals justifications that accept the knowledge deficit of their intended US audience in a way that awkwardly rationalizes Canada's marginalization in hemispheric discussions. Others situate US–Mexico concerns at the implicit centre of the discussion, if only to show how Canada diverges from well-trodden research avenues. In so doing, such approaches often reinforce stereotypes about Canada, and the hegemonic interests of American Studies, at the expense of specific considerations of Canadian history and Canadian cultures. This has led researchers in Canadian Studies on both sides of the border to complain that the recent excitement about Transnational Studies has done little to change the methods that inform US research on the hemisphere. At a recent International American Studies Association conference held in Ottawa in 2005, Winfried Siemerling noticed that "specialists in US literature who were theoretically interested in internationalizing their field did not necessarily seek to take advantage of the Canadian conference setting to inquire actively into transnational issues that would include Canadian topics" (Siemerling 2007: 140; see also Nichols 2003: 599). This feeling is only reinforced by the numerous complaints by Canadian academics who have gone to American Studies Association meetings to present discussions of transnational or hemispheric work involving Canada, only to be faced with an empty room. These patterns have led many scholars in Canada, notably Robert K. Martin (1993), Sandra Tomc (1993), and Bryce Traister (2002), to worry that the study of Canada by Transnational American Studies forms what Cultural Studies scholar Eric Lott calls a love-and-theft paradigm, one which has a "tendency to *add on* marginal forms while leaving the center whole" (Martin 1993: 358).

Common editorial reactions of surprise or disbelief at the "very different" approaches and "seemingly disparate" (Levander and Levine 2006: 403) concerns

invoked by Canada's presence in hemispheric conversations suggest that the premises and methods of Transnational and Hemispheric American Studies have solidified prematurely in a way that has rendered the study of Canada more difficult. After all, the problem lies not with Canada's unfortunate difference from other nations in the Americas, but with theoretical approaches in American Studies. Canada's uncanny position in these conversations shows that current conceptualizations of the hemisphere need to be revised.

The Border Studies model imported from the US–Mexico border is one example of a valuable theoretical approach that has been immensely useful in helping scholars investigate some aspects of Canada's relationship with the Americas. Gloria Anzaldúa's conceptualization of the borderland as a space where "two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa 1999: 19) has enabled the study of First Nations issues along the Canada–US border (Davidson, Walton, and Andrews 2003), as well as Latin American immigrant writing in Canada (Adams 2008). Yet, as many critics have pointed out, the interrelations of ethnic identity, historical land claims, class distinctions, violent conflict, and racial difference recalled by the US–Mexico border are the product of specific historical conditions along the Southwest border, many of which simply don't describe the experiences of the many individuals who crossed, recrossed, contested, ignored, and otherwise engaged with the Canada–US border. Some border-crossing groups, such as the different waves of black immigrants who came to Canada from the US, have had such different motivations for coming to Canada and such varied experiences upon their arrival that comparisons based on a shared ethnic, racial, and cultural background have proven less helpful (see, for example, Winks 1997).

Furthermore, Bryce Traister (2002) suggests that the emphasis on the fluidity of the borderland suggested by the US–Mexican border has fostered an "anti-national agenda" (35) that has made Transnational American Studies structurally prone to overlooking the significance of the Canada–US border as a site of resistance against US power, including the way that it is "permeable for the purpose of circulating goods, services, and persons, and fixed for the purpose of articulating national difference" (Traister 2002: 34; see also Almonte, Chariandy, and Harris 2000). As a result, he argues, most researchers have not yet imagined the potential value of the nation-state in creating the kind of strong national culture (including academic disciplines that study the nation) that would help protect citizens from aggressive forms of imperialism. For Traister, the further study of Canada:

hold[s] the promise of issuing an understanding of national identity that is distinct from the emptied versions of the nation urged by post-nationalist and globalist ideologies alike. In our laudable commitment to anti-hegemonic historiographical

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and theoretical scholarship, we have lost our ability to understand the liberal nation-state as a positive and still intriguing contributor rather than impediment to meaningful and even politically progressive identity. (Traister 2002: 46)

The question, then, is not simply whether hemispheric American approaches can or should “include” Canada, but how Canada’s different perspective toward, and experiences with, national formations could construct a more informed understanding of the function of the nation-state and the meaning of the nation.

This is just one example of one theoretical approach, but it is informative in the way that it has shaped discussions of the hemisphere and continues to do so. These theoretical and historical conditions should explain why some of Canada’s hemispheric concerns have often seemed petty, incomprehensible, or, worse, non-existent, to many researchers in American Studies. Of course, it would be foolish (and historically inappropriate) to assume that any hemispheric approach developed without detailed, and explicit, consideration of a Canadian perspective would be the most constructive model for the analysis of all Canadian literatures and cultures. However, the absence of an easy model that situates Canadian concerns firmly “within” the Americas has made it difficult to change the way Canada is studied by Hemispheric American Studies projects, which seem to have maintained Canada’s outsider status in the hemisphere largely because scholars haven’t found what they expected to find with the tools they planned to deploy. Far from being a disruption, the Canadian example should be seen as an invitation to reconsider some of the most familiar assumptions of hemispheric approaches. Scholars who are genuinely committed to exploring the diversity of hemispheric perspectives must be prepared to develop new methods of “reading for Canada” by historicizing Canada’s rhetorical and material significance across the Americas in different periods, engaging with multi-lingual research conversations across the world, and asking what uncanny perspectives may emerge when we consider Canada’s view of the Americas.

Meanwhile, it has become quite clear in the last decade that Canadian Studies could stand to gain immensely from transnational conversations. Even though some transnational approaches may have undervalued the role of the liberal nation-state, as Traister contends, many peoples in Canada have had experiences with the Canadian nation-state that were anything but positive. For example, recent work in nineteenth-century black history in Canada shows how national mythologies of racelessness in Canada marginalized immigrant black populations in Canada, enabled forms of segregation, and prevented black Canadian writing from being included in conceptualizations of Canadian literature. Transnational approaches have contributed to this discussion by enabling researchers to consider nineteenth-century black writing in Canada both as a form of literature that understood itself as profoundly, resistantly Canadian (Almonte 1998), as well as a form of black diasporic writing that was intimately

connected with the US abolitionist movement and anti-slavery writing across the world (Winks 1997). As Winfried Siemerling (2007) points out, whether Canadian literature is conceptualized as inherently postcolonial, inherently transnational, or inherently nationalist:

Questions about what role nineteenth-century Black writing might play in our narratives of Canadian literature thus strongly reinforce arguments – which can be drawn from many other areas – that transborder and comparative contexts will assist us in going through the issues relevant for Canadian literature. (138)

Interdisciplinary research projects such as the TransCanadas Institute, based at the University of Guelph (see Kamboureli and Miki 2007), and the Promised Land Project, based at the University of Ottawa, have both sought to establish worldwide research networks that investigate Canada's rhetorical construction in the hemisphere and explore the historical interactions that led to the creation of many different Canadas in different periods. Transnational projects such as these, which pay close attention to Canadian historical realities, and understand their function “not [as] transcending nation but resituating it” (Brydon 2007: 15), offer promising opportunities for new kinds of hemispheric analysis.

Conclusion

American literary scholar Carolyn Porter (1994) summarized transnational approaches to American literary analysis as an invitation to “rethink what we thought we already knew” (470) about the most celebrated texts of the American canon, and to consider “what we know that we don't know” about works that had yet to be studied in American literature. To borrow a phrase from Slavoj Žižek, I would suggest that we must now consider the “unknown knowns” in our approaches to knowledge production across the Americas – the repressed beliefs about nation, ethnicity, language, canonicity, foreignness, and domesticity that structure our knowledge of academic fields and that come to light through the process of situating Canada in the Americas. Understanding Canada in relation to its hemispheric neighbors requires confronting the most persistent and most powerful assumptions that have grounded the formative concepts of National Area Studies and of Transnational Studies. I began this essay with an image of a discussion abruptly interrupted by such assumptions; the hope and the failures of transnational approaches could, perhaps, be found in this scene. Even as the meeting of these two characters questions the division between foreign and the domestic, presents alternatives to national systems, and bridges the gap between national identities, it remains unclear what forms of knowledge this relationship could produce. My hope is that we may some day find a model for a productive and engaging conversation, one that respects the specific contexts of language,

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history, culture, and location, yet defies the apparently untranslatable dimensions of nation and empire. How, in the current situation, can we develop a transnational register in American, Hemispheric, and Canadian Studies that alternates between speaking and listening, and moves toward more accurate self-knowledge and historical awareness? What academic practices and scholarly inquiries could foster an equal partnership between Canadian and American Studies? Are scholars across the world brave enough to imagine a positive, collaborative relationship between disciplines in the hemisphere, one that builds forms of knowledge that are so very needed?

Notes

- 1 Canadian content regulations are a set of practices established by the Canadian government, and enforced by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) that regulate the amount of “Canadian content” – i.e., content produced by Canadian artists and/or personnel – in Canadian mass media, and that encourage the production of cultural material that reflects “Canadian values” in television and radio. In most cases, stations must ensure that a percentage of their daily and hourly broadcasts feature Canadian content as determined by the CRTC (see CRTC 2007).
- 2 The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes three aboriginal groups in Canada: Indian, Inuit, and Métis. In Canadian usage, the term “First Nations” refers to members of the Assembly of First Nations, a national aboriginal advocacy organization that represents First Nations citizens (i.e., status Indians). However, “First Nations” is sometimes used in a more expansive sense to refer to people of aboriginal descent, regardless of their status, because it invokes the idea of a national community that precedes the establishment of the Canadian government. I will be using the term in that context throughout this essay. The terms “First Peoples,” “aboriginal,” and “indigenous” include all peoples of Native descent in Canada. “Native American,” while recognized as a term that applies to Native peoples living in the US, is not often used to refer to aboriginal peoples in Canada. I would like to thank Margery Fee for her insight on these terminological distinctions.
- 3 The differences between Canada and the US have also offered counter-discursive potential for many US authors. Even though the Canadian models described by these authors were sometimes more myth than reality, the example of Canada became more rhetorically attractive to US audiences precisely *because* it seemed so proximate – a representational strategy that continues to this day in US political debates about universal health care, for example. See especially Doyle (1983), Gatenby (1993), and Watts (2006).
- 4 Similar themes of fear and isolation run through many of the structuralist interpretations of Canadian culture. Philosopher George Parkin Grant (1965) discusses Canada’s besieged status in relation to the United States. Author Margaret Atwood (1972) revised Frye’s garrison mentality thesis to consider survival and victimization as the central tropes defining Canadian identity. Literary and cultural paradigms in French Canada also invoked the notion of survival: Québécois historian Gérard Bouchard (2000), for example, argues that the ideology of *survivance* enabled the development of Québécois nationalism by encouraging Quebecers to portray themselves as a linguistically, racially, and culturally homogenous nation threatened by the assimilationist presence of English Canada and the United States. Hugh MacLennan’s portrayal of the fundamental separation between the English and French Canadian communities in his novel *Two Solitudes* (1945) describes the conflict and isolation between these two national cultures as a major, albeit problematic, feature of Canadian national identity.

- 5 Though postcolonial approaches have enabled some First Nations writers and intellectuals to destabilize Western frames of reference and respond to Canada's colonial legacy, others such as Thomas King (1990) reject any association with Postcolonial Studies, arguing that the approach reifies colonial relationships and denies Canada's continued actions as a colonial agent.
- 6 Many formulations of *américanité* draw inspiration from the writings of Octavio Paz and José Martí, and explore the cultural, racial, and linguistic effects of the shared settler-invader and postcolonial histories of the Americas, and the similar political concerns and conflicts that have been produced in the Americas as a result of these factors. Some concentrate explicitly on the relationship between Québec and the US (Nepveu 1998). Scholars often use the positive idea of *américanité* against the more negative concept of *américanisation*, the gradual erosion of distinct cultures of the Americas by US cultural imperialism (see Thériault 2002). Though the hemispheric analyses produced by many of these scholars converge with American and English Canadian Studies in compelling ways, the divide between French- and English-language academic cultures seems to be impeding any significant cross-cultural conversation.
- 7 Space constraints prevent me from being able to investigate the treatment of Canada in US postcolonial approaches in detail. Briefly, though, US postcolonial projects (Kaplan and Pease 1993; Singh and Schmidt 2000) have largely concentrated on more direct sites of US imperialism, such as Puerto Rico and the Philippines, rather than Canada.

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The US University under Siege: Confronting Academic Unfreedom

Henry A. Giroux

At a time in which social forms and collective bonds increasingly lose their shape or disappear altogether, higher education seems to retain a reassuring permanency, as a slowly changing bulwark in a rapidly dissolving landscape of critical public spheres. Higher education may be one of the few institutions left standing that still fosters critical inquiry, public freedom, and common deliberation, simultaneously keeping alive the promise of a democratic ethos and politics. Of course, educating young people in the spirit of a critical democracy by providing them with the knowledge, passion, civic capacities, and social responsibility necessary to address those crucial problems facing the nation and the globe has always been challenged by the existence of rigid disciplinary boundaries, the cult of expertise or highly specialized scholarship unrelated to public life, and anti-democratic ideologies that scoff at the exercise of academic freedom. Such forces have hardly gone away; they have been intensified and supplemented by the contemporary emergence of a number of diverse fundamentalisms, including a market-based neoliberal rationality, a post-9/11 militarism, and an aggressive right-wing patriotic correctness, all of which exhibit a deep disdain, if not contempt, for both democracy and publicly engaged teaching and scholarship. This means that, while the American university still employs the rhetoric of a democratic public sphere, there is a growing gap between a stated belief in noble purposes and the reality of an academy that is under siege.

Just as democracy appears to be fading in the United States, so is the legacy of higher education's faith in and commitment to democracy. Higher education is increasingly abandoning its role as a democratic public sphere as it aligns itself with corporate power and military values, while at the same time succumbing to a range of right-wing religious and political attacks (see Giroux 2007). Instead of being a space of critical dialogue, analysis, and interpretation, it is increasingly defined as a space of consumption, where ideas are validated in instrumental terms and valued for their success in attracting outside funding while developing increasingly "strong ties with corporate and warfare powers" (Angus 2007: 69). As the culture of research is oriented toward the needs of the military-industrial-academic

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complex, faculty and students find their work further removed from the language of democratic values and their respective roles modeled largely upon entrepreneurs and consumers. With no irony intended, Philip Leopold argues that it is an “essential part of an academic career” that academics be viewed as business entrepreneurs, trained to “watch the bottom line” and to be attentive to “principles of finance, management, and marketing” and to the development of a “brand identity (academic reputation) that is built on marketing (publications and presentations) of a high-quality product (new knowledge)” (Leopold 2007). In another statement pregnant with irony, Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush, has recently proposed the creation of what he calls a new “Minerva consortium,” ironically named after the goddess of wisdom, whose purpose is to fund various universities to “carry out social-sciences research relevant to national security” (Brainard 2008). Gates would like to turn universities into militarized knowledge factories more willing to produce knowledge, research, and personnel in the interest of warfare and the Homeland (In)Security State than to assume the important role of tackling the problems of contemporary life, while holding dominant institutions – especially those that trade in force, violence, and militarism – accountable by questioning how their core values and presence in the world alter and shape democratic identities, values, and organizations. Unfortunately, Gates’s view of the university as a militarized knowledge factory and Professor Leopold’s instrumental understanding of faculty as a “brand name,” and the university as a new marketplace of commerce, are not lines drawn from a gag offered up by Jon Stewart on the Comedy Channel. Instead, such views have become highly influential in shaping the purpose and meaning of higher education. Hence, it no longer seems unreasonable to argue that, just as democracy is being emptied out, the university is also being stripped of its role as a democratic setting where, though in often historically fraught ways, a democratic ethos has been cultivated, practiced, and sustained for several generations.

Higher education in the United States appears to be suffering from both a crisis of politics and a crisis of legitimacy. Politically, higher education is increasingly being influenced by larger economic, military, and ideological forces that consistently attempt to narrow its purview as a democratic public sphere. Public intellectuals are now replaced by privatized intellectuals, often working in secrecy and engaged in research that serves either the warfare state, corporate state, or both. Intellectuals are no longer placed in a vibrant relationship to public life, but now labor under the influence of managerial modes of governance and market values that mimic the logic of Wall Street. Consequently, higher education appears to be increasingly decoupling itself from its historical legacy as a crucial public sphere, responsible for both educating students for the workplace and providing them with the modes of critical discourse, interpretation, judgment, imagination, and experiences that deepen and expand democracy. Unable to legitimate its purpose and meaning according to such important democratic practices and principles, higher education now narrates itself in terms that are more instrumental,

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commercial, and practical. As universities adopt the ideology of the transnational corporation and become subordinated to the needs of capital, the war industries, and the Pentagon, they are less concerned about how they might educate students about the ideology and civic practices of democratic governance and the necessity of using knowledge to address the challenges of public life (see Giroux and Giroux 2004; Giroux 2008). Instead, as part of the post-9/11 military-industrial-academic complex, higher education increasingly conjoins military interests and market values, identities, and social relations while John Dewey's once vaunted claim that "democracy needs to be reborn in each generation, and education is its midwife" is either willfully ignored, forgotten, or has become an object of scorn (quoted in Hollander 2000).

Prominent educators and theorists such as Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Maxine Greene have longed believed and rightly argued that we should not allow education to be modeled after the business world. Nor should we allow corporate power and influence to undermine the semi-autonomy of higher education by exercising control and power over its faculty, curricula, and students. Dewey, in particular, warned about the growing influence of the "corporate mentality" and the threat that the business model posed to public spaces, higher education, and democracy. He argued:

The business mind, having its own conversation and language, its own interests, its own intimate groupings in which men of this mind, in their collective capacity, determine the tone of society at large as well as the government of industrial society . . . We now have, although without formal or legal status, a mental and moral corporateness for which history affords no parallel. (Dewey 1930: 41)

Dewey and the other public intellectuals named above shared a common vision and project of rethinking what role education might play in providing students with the habits of mind and ways of acting that would enable them to "identify and probe the most serious threats and dangers that democracy faces in a global world dominated by instrumental and technological thinking" (R. Bernstein 2005: 45). All of these intellectuals offered a notion of the university as a bastion of democratic learning and values that provides a crucial referent in exploring the more specific question regarding what form will be taken by the relationship between corporations and higher education in the twenty-first century. In the best of all worlds, corporations would view higher education as much more than merely a training center for future business employees, a franchise for generating profits, or a space in which corporate culture and education merge in order to produce literate consumers.

Higher education has a deeper responsibility not only to search for the truth regardless of where it may lead, but also to educate students to make authority politically and morally accountable and to expand both academic freedom and the possibility and promise of the university as a bastion of democratic inquiry,

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values, and politics, even as these are necessarily refashioned at the beginning of the new millennium. While questions regarding whether the university should serve public rather than private interests no longer carry the weight of forceful criticism as they did when raised by Thorstein Veblen, Robert Lynd, and C. Wright Mills in the first part of the twentieth century, such questions are still crucial in addressing the reality of higher education and what it might mean to imagine the university's full participation in public life as the protector and promoter of democratic values, especially at a time when the meaning and purpose of higher education is under attack by a phalanx of right-wing forces attempting to slander, even vilify, liberal and left-oriented professors, cut already meager federal funding for higher education, eliminate tenure, and place control of what is taught and said in classrooms under legislative oversight (see Doumani 2006; Gerstmann and Streb 2006; Abowd et al. 2006; see also American Association of University Professors 2003, 2007; American Federation of Teachers 2007). While the American university faces a growing number of problems that range from the increasing loss of federal and state funding to the incursion of corporate power, a galloping commercialization, and the growing influence of the national security state, it is also currently being targeted by conservative forces that have hijacked political power and waged a focused campaign against the principles of academic freedom, sacrificing critical pedagogical practice in the name of patriotic correctness and dismantling the university as a site of autonomous scholarship, independent thought, and uncorrupted inquiry.

Conservatives have a long history of viewing higher education as a cradle of left-wing thought and radicalism. Just as religious fundamentalists attempted to suppress academic freedom in the nineteenth century, they continue to do so today. Yet, in its current expression, the attack on the university has taken a strange turn: liberal professors, specifically in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, are now being portrayed as the enemies of academic freedom because they allegedly abuse students' rights by teaching views unpopular to some of the more conservative students. To understand the current attack on academe, it is necessary to comprehend the power that right-wing thinkers have historically attributed to the political nature of education and the significance this view had in shaping the long-term strategy they put into place as early as the 1920s to win an ideological war against liberal intellectuals, who argued both for changes in American domestic and foreign policies and for holding government and corporate power accountable as a precondition for extending and expanding the promise of an aspiring democracy. During the McCarthy era, criticisms of the university and its dissenting intellectuals cast a dark cloud over the exercise of academic freedom, and many academics were either fired or harassed out of their jobs because of their political activities outside the classroom, their alleged communist fervor, or left-wing affiliations. In 1953, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) was founded by Frank Chodorov in order to assert right-wing influence and control over universities. ISI was but a precursor to the present era of politicized and

paranoid academic assaults. In fact, William F. Buckley, who catapulted to fame among conservatives in the early 1950s with the publication of *God and Man at Yale*, in which he railed against secularism at Yale University and called for the firing of socialist professors, was named as the first president of ISI. The current president of ISI, T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr, delivered the following speech to the Heritage Foundation in 1989 that captures the ideological spirit and project behind its view of higher education:

We must . . . provide resources and guidance to an elite which can take up anew the task of enculturation. Through its journals, lectures, seminars, books and fellowships, this is what ISI has done successfully for 36 years. The coming of age of such elites has provided the current leadership of the conservative revival. But we should add a major new component to our strategy: the conservative movement is now mature enough to sustain a counteroffensive on that last Leftist redoubt, the college campus . . . We are now strong enough to establish a contemporary presence for conservatism on campus, and contest the Left on its own turf. We plan to do this greatly by expanding the ISI field effort, its network of campus-based programming. (qtd in Media Transparency (online) 2003)

ISI was an early effort on the part of conservatives to “‘take back’ the universities from scholars and academic programs regarded either as too hostile to free markets or too critical of the values and history of Western civilization” (Media Transparency (online) 2003). As part of an effort to influence future generations to adopt a conservative ideology and leadership roles in “battling the radicals and PC types on campus,” the Institute now provides numerous scholarships, summer programs, and fellowships to students (Blumenthal 2006: 14). The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported in 2007 that various conservative groups are spending over \$40 million “on their college programs” (Field 2007: A35). Perhaps the most succinct statement for establishing a theoretical framework and political blueprint for the current paranoia surrounding the academy is the Powell Memo, released on August 23, 1971, and authored by Lewis F. Powell, Jr, who would later be appointed as a member of the US Supreme Court. Powell (1971) identified the American college campus “as the single most dynamic source” for producing and housing intellectuals “who are unsympathetic to the [free] enterprise system.” He recognized that one crucial strategy in changing the political composition of higher education was to convince university administrators and boards of trustees that the most fundamental problem facing universities was the lack of conservative educators, or what he labeled the “imbalance of many faculties.” The Powell Memo was designed to develop a broad-based strategy not only to counter dissent but also to develop a material and ideological infrastructure with the capability to transform the American public consciousness through a conservative pedagogical commitment to reproduce the knowledge, values, ideology, and social relations of the corporate state. The Powell Memo, while not the only influence, played an important role in generating, in the words of Lewis Lapham

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(2004), a “cadre of ultraconservative and self-mythologising millionaires bent on rescuing the country from the hideous grasp of Satanic liberalism” (p. 32). The most powerful members of this group were Joseph Coors in Denver, Richard Mellon Scaife in Pittsburgh, John Olin in New York City, David and Charles Koch in Wichita, the Smith Richardson family in North Carolina, and Harry Bradley in Milwaukee – all of whom agreed to finance a number of right-wing foundations to the tune of roughly \$3 billion over 30 years, building and strategically linking:

almost 500 think tanks, centers, institutes and concerned citizens groups both within and outside of the academy . . . A small sampling of these entities includes the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Manhattan Institute, the Hoover Institution, the Claremont Institute, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, [the] Middle East Forum, Accuracy in Media, and the National Association of Scholars. (Jones 2006)

For several decades, right-wing extremists have labored to put into place an ultra-conservative re-education machine – an apparatus for producing and disseminating a public pedagogy in which everything tainted with the stamp of liberal origin and the word “public” would be contested and destroyed.

Given the influence and resources of this long campaign against progressive institutions and critical thought in the United States, it is all the more important that we, as educators, sit up and take notice, especially since the university is one of the few places left where critical dialogue, debate, and dissent can take place. Some theorists believe that not only has the militarization and neoliberal reconstruction of higher education proceeded steadily within the last 25 years but it is now moving at an accelerated pace, subjecting the academy to what many progressives argue is a new and more dangerous threat. Ellen Schrecker (2006), one of the most noted historians of the McCarthy era, insists that “today’s assault on the academy is more serious” because “[u]nlike that of the McCarthy era, it reaches directly into the classroom” (B20). As Schrecker suggests, the new war being waged against higher education is not simply against dissenting public intellectuals and academic freedom, but is also deeply implicated in questions of power across the university, specifically regarding who controls the hiring process, the organization of curricula, and the nature of pedagogy itself. Moreover, conservative trustees and academics within the university receive assistance from a growing number of well-funded and powerful right-wing agencies and groups outside the walls of the academy. Joel Beinin (2006) argues that many of these right-wing foundations and institutions have to be understood both as part of a backlash against the protest movements of the sixties – which called into question the university as a “knowledge factory” and criticized its failure to take its social functions seriously – and as political movements that shape public knowledge in ways unconstrained by the professional standards of the university. He writes:

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The substantial role of students and faculty members in the anti-Vietnam War movement; the defection of most university-based Latin America specialists from U.S. policy in the Reagan years, if not earlier; similar, if less widespread, defections among Africa and Middle East specialists; and the “culture wars” of the 1980s and 1990s all contributed to the rise of think tanks funded by right-wing and corporate sources designed to constitute alternative sources of knowledge unconstrained by the standards of peer review, tolerance for dissent, and academic freedom. (2006: 242)

Subject to both market mechanisms and right-wing ideological rhetoric about using the academy to defend the values of Western civilization, the promise of the university as a democratic public sphere appears to be dwindling.

While it is crucial to recognize that the rise of the “new McCarthyism” cannot be attributed exclusively to the radical curtailment of civil liberties initiated by the George W. Bush administration after the cataclysmic events of September 11, 2001, it is nonetheless true that a growing culture of fear and jingoistic patriotism emboldened a post-9/11 patriotic correctness movement, most clearly exemplified by actions of the right-wing American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), which issued a report shortly after the attacks accusing a supposedly unpatriotic academy of being the “weak link in America’s response to the attack” (Martin and Neal 2001). Individuals and groups who opposed George W. Bush’s foreign and domestic policies were put on the defensive – some overtly harassed – as right-wing pundits, groups, and foundations repeatedly labeled them “traitors” and “un-American.” In some cases, conservative accusations that seemed disturbing, if not disturbed, before the events of 9/11 now appeared perfectly acceptable, especially in the dominant media. The legacy of this new-style “McCarthyism” is also on display in Ohio, California, and a number of other states where some public universities required job applicants to sign statements confirming that they did not belong to any terrorist organization as defined by the Bush-Cheney administration, which would suggest anyone who opposes domestic and foreign administration policies.

The nature of conservative acrimony may have been marked by a new language, but the goal was largely the same: to remove from the university all vestiges of dissent and to reconstruct it as an increasingly privatized sphere for reproducing the interests of corporations and the national security state, while also having it assume a front-line position in the promotion of an imperialist military agenda. In short, universities were castigated as hotbeds of left-wing radicalism; conservative students alleged that they were being humiliated and discriminated against in college and university classrooms all across the country. The language and tactics of warfare moved easily between so-called rogue states such as Iraq and a critique of universities whose defense of academic freedom did not sit well with academic and political advocates of what Sheila Slaughter calls the “neoliberal or security-surveillance state” (qtd in Byrne 2008). McCarthy-like blacklists were posted on the Internet by right-wing groups such as Campus Watch, ACTA, and

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Target of Opportunity, attempting to both out and politically shame allegedly radical professors who were giving aid and comfort to the enemy because of their refusal to provide unqualified support for the Bush administration. “Academic balance” was now invoked as a way to protect American values and national identity when it really promoted a form of affirmative action for hiring conservative faculty. In a similar manner, “academic freedom” was redefined, both through the prism of student rights and as a legitimating referent for dismantling professional academic standards and imposing outside political oversight on the classroom. If the strategy and project of conservative ideologues became more energetic and persistent after 9/11, it is also fair to say that right-wing efforts and demands to reform higher education took a dangerous turn that far exceeded the threat posed by the previous culture wars.

Under the Bush-Cheney administration, the war on terror became a pretext for a war against any public sphere that took responsibility for the welfare of its citizens and residents, including higher education. The neoliberal mantra of “privatize or perish” became a battle cry for a generation of right-wing activists attempting to dismantle public and higher education as democratic public spheres. The right-wing coalition of Christian evangelicals, militant nationalists, market fundamentalists, and neoconservatives that had gained influence under the Reagan administration now had unprecedented power in shaping policy under the second Bush presidency. Academics as well as public school teachers who critically addressed issues such as the US presence in Iraq, the neoconservative view of an imperial presidency, the unchecked market fundamentalism of the Bush administration, or the right-wing views driving energy policies, sex education, and the use of university research “in pursuit of enhanced war making abilities” were either admonished, labeled un-American, or simply fired (Turse 2004). Similarly, academic and scientific knowledge that challenged the rational foundations of these anti-democratic worldviews was either erased from government policies or attacked by government talking heads as morally illegitimate, politically offensive, or in violation of patriotic correctness. Scientists who resisted the ban on stem-cell research as well as the official government position on global warming, HIV transmission, and sex education were intimidated by congressional committees, which audited their work or threatened “to withdraw federal grant support for projects whose content they find substantively offensive” (Cole 2005b: B7). Educators who argued for theoretical and policy alternatives to abstinence as a mode of sex education were attacked, fired, or cut out of funding programs for education. And when the forces of patriotic correctness joined the ranks of market fundamentalists, higher education was increasingly defined through the political lens of an audit culture that organized learning around measurable outcomes rather than modes of critical thinking and inquiry.

As the web of surveillance, security, mistrust, and ideological damnation spread from enemies within to enemies abroad, the Bush administration routinely and in a highly indiscriminate way increasingly revoked residency visas or denied

visas to foreign scholars wishing to enter the country. All of those who were denied entry or were forced to leave the country allegedly posed a threat to national safety – though the nature of that threat was rarely ever spelled out by the Department of Homeland Security. For example, in 2007 the up-and-coming musicologist, Nalini Ghuman, was stopped at a San Francisco airport while on her way to perform at a music festival at Bard College, and was told that “she was no longer allowed to enter the United States” (N. Bernstein 2007: A19). Ms Ghuman, a British citizen, had lived in the United States for the last 10 years and was at the time an assistant professor of music at Mills College. Leon Bostein, the President of Bard College, argued that Ms Ghuman’s case is “an example of the xenophobia, incompetence, stupidity and . . . bureaucratic intransigence” that increasingly characterizes the National (In)Security State (qtd in N. Bernstein 2007: A19). Ms Ghuman said the ordeal made her feel like a character in a Kafka novel. “‘I don’t know why it’s happening, what I’m accused of,’ she said. ‘There’s no opportunity to defend myself. One is just completely powerless’” (qtd in N. Bernstein 2007: A19). In a similar case, Riyadh Lafta, an Iraqi professor of medicine was denied a visa to visit the University of Washington in order to present his research findings on the high rate of cancer among children in Southern Iraq. Those academics and scientists familiar with his case believe that he was denied the visa because he had published a study in 2006 in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*, that “controversially estimated that more than 650,000 Iraqis – far more than officially reported – had died as a result of the American-led invasion” (Bollag 2007). Not only are such cases troubling and abusive; they are also part of a broader pattern of censorship and denial of academic freedom put into place by a government that neither tolerates dissent nor feels any responsibility to provide reasons to those it denies visas, interrogates, or puts into prison.

One of the more outlandish government abuses concerned the internationally recognized scholar Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss citizen and Islamic scholar who has published over 20 books. In 2003, he was offered the prestigious Henry B. Luce Professorship of Religion, Conflict and Peace at the University of Notre Dame. Ramadan accepted the job, resigned his position in Switzerland, and obtained a work visa early in 2004. Nine days before he was to fly to the United States, the Department of Homeland Security revoked his work visa, thus preventing him from assuming his teaching position at Notre Dame. While not offering a specific explanation for revoking his visa, the government suggested, without any substantial proof, that Professor Ramadan “endorsed or espoused” terrorist activities. Not only was Ramadan an outspoken critic of terrorism in all of its forms, but he was also a strong advocate of reconciling the democratic principles of both Islam and Western modernity. Professor Ramadan’s advocacy in the name of peace and against global violence later earned him the distinction of being named by former Prime Minister Tony Blair “to serve on a British commission to combat terrorism” (Shuppy 2006). But the US government continued to reject his visa application, even in defiance of a federal court order, offering up new and specious

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arguments in which it claimed that Ramadan had donated to charities that contributed to Hamas, even though the two humanitarian organizations that provided relief for the Palestinian people were not blacklisted by the US government until 2003, a year after Professor Ramadan donated about \$800 to them. Ultimately, Professor Ramadan was prevented from obtaining a US visa because he was critical of Bush's Middle East policies and was a moderate who refused the violence of all fundamentalisms. In 2006, he wrote an article in the *Washington Post* on why he was banned from entering the United States. His words are as ominous as they are important. He writes:

My experience reveals how U.S. authorities seek to suppress dissenting voices and – by excluding people such as me from their country – manipulate political debate in America. Unfortunately, the U.S. government's paranoia has evolved far beyond a fear of particular individuals and taken on a much more insidious form: the fear of ideas . . . I fear that the United States has grown fearful of ideas. I have learned first hand that the Bush administration reacts to its critics not by engaging them, but by stigmatizing and excluding them. Will foreign scholars be permitted to enter the United States only if they promise to mute their criticisms of U.S. policy? It saddens me to think of the effect this will have on the free exchange of ideas, on political debate within America, and on our ability to bridge differences across cultures. (Ramadan 2006: B01)

Another instructive instance pertains to the barring of foreign academics who, upon arriving in the United States to attend conferences and share their research, are detained, interrogated about their political views, and then put back on flights to their own countries. This procedure has become so commonplace that many scholarly associations now hold their annual meetings in Canada. The arbitrary way in which recognized international public intellectuals and committed scholars have been denied visas by the US government serves as a chilling reminder that international knowledge production is being policed in an unprecedented fashion and that appeals to the principle of academic freedom are largely viewed by the (In)Security State as either irrelevant or what Herbert Marcuse called “a disturbance created by criticism” that is ultimately met with state violence and open brutality (Marcuse 1969: 26). Sadly, the government is not the only political entity restricting open inquiry, critical knowledge, and dissent in the United States.

The current harassment of critical intellectuals after 9/11 has also been aggressively promoted by private advocacy groups. Media watchdogs, campus groups, and various payroll pundits not only held favor with the Bush administration but also received millions of dollars from right-wing foundations and were powerfully positioned to monitor and quarantine any vestige of independent thought in the academy. Since the events of 9/11, academics who challenged the political orthodoxy of the Bush administration have been subjected to intimidation and

harassment by conservative politicians, ultra-conservative commentators, right-wing talk-show hosts, Christian zealots, and conservative students.

Some of the most famous cases include professors such as Joseph Massad of Columbia University, Norman Finkelstein, Nadia Abu E-Haj, and Ward Churchill of the University of Colorado. Though these cases received wide attention in the dominant media, they represent just some of the better-known instances in which academics have been attacked by right-wing interests through highly organized campaigns of intimidation, which taken collectively suggest an all-out assault on academic freedom, critical scholarship, and the very idea of the university as a place to question and think (see also Giroux 2006c). Ward Churchill, in particular, provides an instance of the expanding web of attacks against leftist academics whose political views are represented by right-wing media as symptomatic of most professors in academia. For instance, Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House, argued with reference to Churchill: “We are going to nail this guy and send the dominoes tumbling. And everybody who has an opinion out there and entire disciplines like ethnic studies and women’s studies and cultural studies and queer studies that we don’t like won’t be there anymore” (quoted in Smallwood 2005). Responding to the intense pressure placed on the University of Colorado at Boulder to fire Churchill, a faculty panel was formed to investigate the incident. Recognizing that Churchill could not be fired for his infamous remarks comparing some victims of the 9/11 attacks to Nazi bureaucrats since such commentary was protected by the First Amendment, the panel searched for other acts of wrongdoing, which, in this case, eventually amounted to a charge of “research misconduct.” John Wilson, who has published widely on the issue of academic freedom, argued that Churchill was accused of “making broad claims without adequate evidence” (Wilson 2006; see also Wilson 2008), a far cry from what could reasonably be called research misconduct. Not only did the committee allege that such “misconduct” took place on the basis of a footnote reference, among other minor charges, but it proceeded to issue a “notice of intent to dismiss” (University of Colorado 2006). Churchill was fired on July 24, 2007 (see Frosch 2007). Clearly this is an instance in which the University of Colorado succumbed to the concerted pressures of various reactionary organizations and the then governor of Colorado, Bill Owens, who was a right-wing activist for ACTA. Shockingly, the university committee actually affirmed in its report that academics who take unpopular positions can expect “to have their scholarship as well as their politics scrutinized” (Baron 2006). What is crucial about Churchill’s case is that the research investigated by the Colorado panel was work that had actually been in circulation for many years, but became the subject of a formal inquiry only after Churchill’s ill-tempered comments about 9/11. This sends a chilling message to faculty in Colorado and across the nation, especially to young, non-tenured faculty who are doing critical scholarship and who want to participate in public life by making their work politically relevant – a warning that was further reinforced when the Colorado committee reminded Churchill that he might not have

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been investigated if he had just kept his head down and remained quiet (Baron 2006). No less chilling is the message sent out more recently by “Bud” Peterson, chancellor of the Boulder campus, who in the aftermath of Churchill’s firing insisted that the classroom is a place where the truth should not be bracketed by relativism – right-wing code for faculty to teach the facts, keep quiet, and never question authority. Undaunted by his own hypocrisy, Peterson recently made it clear how serious he is about the importance of introducing the search for non-partisan truth in the classroom by announcing that he plans “to raise \$9 million to create an endowed chair for what is thought to be the nation’s first professor of Conservative Thought and Policy” to counter what the *Wall Street Journal* calls the Boulder campus’s left-wing politics (empirically determined by a voter registration analysis that revealed that the 800-strong faculty includes just 32 registered Republicans, which, of course, has nothing to do with determining how one actually performs in a classroom) (Simon 2008; see also Fish 2008).

While Gingrich was honest enough to reveal that Churchill was just a pawn in a much larger war being waged by right-wing extremists in order to divest the university of its critical intellectuals and critically oriented curricula, programs, and departments, ACTA subsequently produced a booklet titled *How Many Ward Churchills?*, in which it insisted that the space that separated most faculty from Ward Churchill was small indeed, and that by protecting such individuals colleges and universities now “risk losing their independence and the privilege they have traditionally enjoyed” (Neal et al. 2006: 22). And how do we know that higher education has fallen into such dire straits? These apocalyptic conditions were revealed through an inane summary of various course syllabi offered by respected universities that allegedly proved “professors are using their classrooms to push political agendas in the name of teaching students to think critically” (Neal et al. 2006: 2). Courses that included discussions of race, social justice, gender equality, and whiteness as a tool of exclusion were dismissed as distorting American history, by which ACTA meant consensus history, a position made famous by the tireless efforts of Lynne Cheney, who has repeatedly asserted that American history should be celebratory even if it means overlooking “internal conflicts and the non-white population” (Schrecker, qtd in Park 2005). Rather than discuss the moral principles or pedagogical values of courses organized around the need to address human suffering, violence, and social injustice, the ACTA report claimed that “[a]nger and blame are central components of the pedagogy of social justice” (Neal et al. 2006: 12). In the end, the listing of course descriptions was designed to alert administrators, governing boards, trustees, and tenure and hiring committees of the need to police instructors in the name of “impartiality.” Presenting itself as a defender of academic freedom, ACTA actually wants to monitor and police the academy, just as Homeland Security monitors the reading habits of library patrons and the National Security Agency spies on American citizens without first obtaining warrants. In 2007, ACTA supported a Bill passed by the Missouri House of Representatives stating that its public

universities must protect religious freedom and “the teaching that the Bible is literally true” (Jaschik 2007b). In response, Cary Nelson, the president of the American Association of University Professors, “called the bill . . . ‘one of the worst pieces of higher legislation in a century!’” (Jaschik 2007b).

Despite its rhetoric, ACTA is not a friend of the principle of academic freedom or diversity. Nor is it comfortable with John Dewey’s insistence that education should be responsive to the deepest conflicts of our time. And, while the tactics to undermine academic freedom and critical education have grown more sophisticated, right-wing representations of the academy have become more shrill. For instance, in the conservative *Weekly Standard*, James Pierson (2005) claimed that when 16 million students enter what he calls the “left-wing university,” they will discover that “[t]he ideology of the left university is both anti-American and anticapitalist.” And for Roger Kimball (2005), editor of the conservative journal *The New Criterion*, the university has been “corrupted by the values of Woodstock . . . that permeate our lives like a corrosive fog.” He asks, “Why should parents fund the moral de-civilization of their children at the hands of tenured antinomians?” Another example of these distortions occurred when former Republican presidential candidate Reverend Pat Robertson proclaimed that there were at least “thirty to forty thousand” left-wing professors or, as he called them:

termites that have worked into the woodwork of our academic society . . . They are racists, murderers, sexual deviants and supporters of Al-Qaeda – and they could be teaching your kids! These guys are out and out communists, they are propagandists of the first order. You don’t want your child to be brainwashed by these radicals, you just don’t want it to happen. Not only be brainwashed but beat up, they beat these people up, cower them into submission. (CBN News 2006)

Inflated rhetoric aside, the irony of this rallying cry against propaganda is that it supports a conservative project designed to legislate more outside control over teacher authority, enact laws to protect conservative students from pedagogical “harassment” (that is, views differing from their own), and pass legislation that regulates the hiring process. But most right-wing ideologues are more subtle and more insidious than Robertson, having dressed up their rhetoric in the language of fairness and balance, thereby cleverly expropriating, as Jonathan Cole (qtd in Jacobson 2005: A9) suggests, “key terms in the liberal lexicon, as if they were the only true champions of freedom and diversity on campuses.”

One of the most powerful and well-known spokespersons leading the effort for “academic balance” is David Horowitz, president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture and the ideological force behind the online magazine *Front-PageMag.com*. A self-identified former left-wing radical who has since become a right-wing conservative, he is the author of over 20 books and the founder of Students for Academic Freedom, a national watchdog group that monitors what professors say in their classrooms. He is also the creator of DiscovertheNetworks.org, an

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online database whose purpose is to “catalogue all the organizations and individuals that make up” what he loosely defines in sweeping monolithic terms as “the Left” (qtd in Jacobson 2005: A9). As one of the most forceful voices in the assault on higher education, Horowitz has used the appeal to intellectual diversity and academic freedom with great success to promote his Academic Bill of Rights (ABOR), the central purpose of which, according to Horowitz (2004b), is “to enumerate the rights of students to not be indoctrinated or otherwise assaulted by political propagandists in the classroom or any educational setting” (B12). Horowitz’s case for the ABOR (see 2004b) rests on a series of faulty empirical studies, many conducted by right-wing associations, which suggest left-wing views completely dominate the academy (see Plissner 2002; Furuhashi 2005; Wilson 2006; Jacoby 2006). The studies look compelling until they are more closely examined (see Lewis 2005). For example, they rarely look at colleges, departments, or programs outside of the social sciences and humanities, thus excluding a large portion of the campus. According to the *Princeton Review*, four of the top ten most popular subjects are Business Administration and Management, Biology, Nursing, and Computer Science, none of which is included in Horowitz’s data (Younge 2006). While it is very difficult to provide adequate statistics regarding the proportion of liberals to conservatives in academe, a University of California at Los Angeles report surveyed over 55,000 full-time faculty and administrators in 2002–3 and found that “48 percent identified themselves as either liberal or far left; 34 percent as middle of the road, and . . . 18 percent as conservative or far right” (Jacobson 2004: A8–A11). All in all, 52.3 percent of college faculty either considered themselves centrist or conservative, suggesting that balance is far less elusive than Horowitz would have us believe. Furthermore, a 2006 study published in the journal *Public Opinion Quarterly* argues that “recent trends suggest increased movement to the center, toward a more moderate faculty” (Zipp and Fenwick 2006). But there is more at stake here than the reliability of statistical studies measuring the voting patterns, values, and political positions of faculty. There is also the issue of whether such studies tell us anything at all about what happens in college classrooms. What correlation is to be correctly assumed between a professor’s voting patterns and how he or she teaches a class? Actually, none. How might such studies deal with people whose political positions are not so clear, as when an individual is socially conservative but economically radical? And are we to assume that there is a correlation between “one’s ideological orientation and the quality of one’s academic work?” (Fish 2005). Then, of course, there’s the question that the right-wing commissars refuse to acknowledge. Who is going to monitor and determine what the politics should be of a potentially new hire, existing faculty members, and departments? How does such a crude notion of politics mediate disciplinary wars between, for instance, those whose work is empirically driven and those who adhere to qualitative methods? And if balance implies that all positions are equal and deserve equal time in order not to appear biased, should universities give equal time to Holocaust deniers, to work that

supported apartheid in South Africa, or to pro-slavery advocates, to name but a few? Moreover, as Russell Jacoby (2005) points out with a degree of irony, if political balance is so important, then why isn't it invoked in other commanding sectors of society such as the police force, Pentagon, FBI, and CIA? (13).

The right-wing demand for balance also deploys the idea that conservative students are relentlessly harassed, intimidated, or unfairly graded because of their political views, despite their growing presence on college campuses and the generous financial support they receive from over a dozen conservative institutions. One place where such examples of alleged discrimination can be found is on the website of Horowitz's Students for Academic Freedom (SAF), whose credo is "You can't get a good education if they're only telling you half the story" (see Horowitz 2004b). SAF has chapters on 150 campuses and maintained a website where students could register complaints. Most complaints expressed dissatisfaction with teacher comments or assigned readings that have a left-liberal orientation. Students complained, for instance, about reading lists that include books by Howard Zinn, Cornel West, or Barbara Ehrenreich. Others protested classroom screenings of Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, or of other documentary films such as *Super Size Me* and *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Living*. Here was one student's complaint: "This class was terrible. We were assigned 3 books, plus a course reader! I don't think that just because a professor thinks they have the right to assign anything they want that they should be able to force us to read so much. In fact, I think the professor found out my religious and political beliefs and this is why he assigned so much reading." Another student felt harassed because she had to read a text in class titled *Fast Food Nation*, which was faulted for arguing in favor of government regulation of the food industry and was labeled "left indoctrination" (Ivie 2005).

What is disturbing about these instances is that aggrieved students and their sympathizers appear entirely indifferent to the degree to which they not only enact a political intrusion into the classroom but also undermine the concept of informed authority, teacher expertise, and professional academic standards that provide the basis for what is taught in classrooms, the approval of courses, and who is hired to teach such courses. The complaints by conservative students often share the premise that because they are "consumers" of education, they have a right to demand what should be taught, as if knowledge is simply a commodity to be purchased according to one's taste. Awareness of academic procedures, research assessed by peer review, and basic standards for reasoning, as well as an understanding that professors earn a certain amount of authority because they are familiar with a research tradition and its methodologies, significant scholarship, and history, is entirely absent from such complaints that presuppose students have the right to listen only to ideas they agree with and to select their own classroom reading materials. Because students disagree with an unsettling idea does not mean that they should have the authority, expertise, education, or power to dictate for all their classmates what should be stated, discussed, or taught in a classroom. What is lost

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in these arguments is the central pedagogical assumption that teaching is about activating and questioning all forms of knowledge, providing students with the tools to critically engage with what they know and to recognize the limits of their own knowledge. It is also about learning to think from the place of the other, to “raise one’s self-reflexiveness to the highest maximum point of intensity” (Hall 2007a: 270).

Defending higher education from this brand of anti-intellectualism is not motivated by “political bias” on the part of so-called left-wing universities. It is motivated, quite simply, by a principle informing all academic inquiry and education: intellectual responsibility involves an ongoing search for knowledge that enables a deeper and better understanding of the world. Neither academics nor students can ignore the conditions that make such knowledge available or even possible, that is, the conditions that enable critical scholarship and critical pedagogy both to survive and to flourish. Critical pedagogy is about teaching students how to hold authority and power accountable, providing them with the tools to make judgments freed from “the hierarchies of [official] knowledge” that attempt to shut down critical engagement. Such pedagogical tools are necessary for what Jacques Rancière calls “dissensus” or taking up a critical position that challenges the dogma of common sense (qtd in Carnevale and Kelsey 2007: 259). As he puts it, “the work of dissensus is to always reexamine the boundaries between what is supposed to be normal and what is supposed to be subversive, between what is supposed to be active, and therefore political, and what is supposed to be passive or distant, and therefore apolitical” (Carnevale and Kelsey 2007: 267). Dissensus does more than call for “a modification of the sensible”; it also demands a utopian pedagogy that “provides names that one can give to . . . the landscape of the possible,” a landscape in which there is no room for the “machine that makes the ‘state of things’ unquestionable” while capitalizing on a “declaration of our powerlessness” (Carnevale and Kelsey 2007: 260, 265, 267). In this way, critical pedagogy is about providing the conditions for students to be agents in a world that needs to be interrogated as part of a broader project of connecting the search for knowledge, truth, and justice to the ongoing tasks of democratizing both the university and the larger society.

For many conservatives, the commitment to critical thinking and the notion of pedagogy as a political and moral practice rather than a disinterested technical task is simply a mode of indoctrination. For instance, Horowitz advocates in his book, *The Professors* (2006), for a system of higher education that effectively depoliticizes pedagogy, deskills faculty, and infantilizes students, and supports this position through the charge that a number of reputable scholars who take matters of critical thinking seriously in reality simply indoctrinate their students with political views. The book, as detailed by a 2006 report of the Free Exchange on Campus organization, is an appalling mix of falsehoods, lies, misrepresentations, and unsubstantiated anecdotes. Not only does Horowitz fail to include in his list of “dangerous” professors one conservative academic, but many professors are condemned simply for what they teach, as Horowitz actually has little or no

ammunition against *how* they teach. For example, Professor Lewis Gordon is criticized for including “contributions from Africana and Eastern thought” in his course on existentialism (Horowitz 2006: 200). An utterly baffling criticism since Lewis Gordon is the world’s leading African existential philosopher, a philosopher moreover who recognizes that “the body of literature that constitutes European existentialism is but one continent’s response to a set of problems that date from the moment human beings faced problems of anguish and despair” (Gordon 2000: 4). Horowitz’s endless invective against critical intellectuals, all of whom he seems to consider left-wing, is perfectly captured in a comment he made on Dr Laura’s talk show in which he told the listening audience that “campus leftists hate America more than the terrorists” (qtd in Berkowitz 2004: 1–6). How does one take seriously Horowitz’s call for fairness when he labels the American Library Association in his online magazine as “a terrorist sanctuary” (qtd in Rose 2005), or describes Noam Chomsky, whom the *New Yorker* named “one of the greatest minds of the 20th century” (Macfarquhar 2003), as “demonic and seditious” and claims the purpose of Chomsky’s work is “to incite believers to provide aid and comfort to the enemies of the U.S.” (Horowitz 2004a: 56)? Indeed, what is one to make of Horowitz’s online “A Guide to the Political Left” in which the mild-mannered film critic Roger Ebert occupies the same ideological ground as Omar Abdel Rahman, the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing? Can one really believe that Horowitz is a voice for unbiased and open inquiry when he portrays as activists for “left-wing agendas and causes” the late Peter Jennings, Supreme Court Justice Ruth B. Ginsburg, Garrison Keillor, and Katie Couric? But apparently politicians at all levels of government *do* take Horowitz seriously. In 2005, Florida legislators considered a Bill inspired by the ABOR that would provide students with the right to sue their professors if they felt their views, such as a belief in Intelligent Design, were “disrespected” in the classroom (Vandlandingham 2005). At the federal level, the ABOR legislation made its way through various House and Senate Committees with the firm backing of a number of politicians, and was passed in the House of Representatives in March 2006, but went no further. In 2007, a Senate committee in Arizona passed a Bill in which faculty could be fined up to \$500 for “advocating one side of a social, political, or cultural issue that is a matter of partisan controversy” (Jaschik 2007a).

As Stanley Fish (2005) has argued, “balance” is a flawed concept and should be understood as a political tactic rather than an academic value. The appeal to balance is designed to do more than get conservatives teaching in English departments, promote intellectual diversity, or protect conservative students from the horrors of left-wing indoctrination; its deeper purpose is to monitor pedagogical exchange through government intervention, calling into question the viability of academic integrity and undermining the university as a public sphere that educates students as critically engaged and responsible citizens in the larger global context. The attack by Horowitz and his allies against liberal faculty and programs in the social sciences and humanities, such as Middle Eastern Studies,

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Women's Studies, and Peace Studies, has opened the door to a whole new level of assault on academic freedom, teacher authority, and critical pedagogy (see Beinin 2006). These attacks, as I have pointed out, are much more widespread and, in my estimation, much more dangerous than the McCarthyite campaign several decades ago.

In response to this attack on academic freedom, unfortunately, even the most spirited defenders of the university as a democratic public sphere too often overlook the ominous threat being posed to what takes place in the classroom, and, by extension, to the very nature of pedagogy as a political, moral, and critical practice (see also Giroux 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). The concept of balance demeans teacher authority by suggesting that a political litmus test is the most appropriate consideration for teaching, and it devalues students by suggesting that they are happy robots, interested not in thinking but in merely acquiring skills for jobs. In this view, students are rendered incapable of thinking critically or engaging knowledge that unsettles their worldviews, and are considered too weak to resist ideas that challenge their common-sense understanding of the world. And teachers are turned into instruments of official power and apologists for the existing order. Teacher authority can never be neutral; nor can it be assessed in terms that are narrowly ideological. It is always broadly political and interventionist in terms of the knowledge effects it produces, the classroom experiences it organizes, and the future it presupposes in the countless ways in which it addresses the world. Teacher authority suggests that as educators we must make a sincere effort to be self-reflective about the value-laden nature of our authority while rising to the fundamental challenge of educating students to take responsibility for the direction of society.

It should come as no surprise that many religious and political conservatives view critical pedagogy as dangerous, often treating it with utter disdain or contempt. Critical pedagogy's alleged crimes can be found in some of its most important presuppositions about the purpose of education and the responsibility of educators. These include its central tenet that at the very core of education is the task of educating students to become critical agents who actively question and negotiate the relationships between theory and practice, schooling and everyday life, and the larger society and the domain of common sense. Also at stake here is the recognition that critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critical agents; that is, it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and take a stance is central to the purpose of the university, if not also to democracy itself (Derrida 2001: 233). In this discourse, pedagogy always represents a commitment to the future, and it remains the task of educators to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which the discourses of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to better, as part of a broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived. This is hardly a prescription for political indoctrination, but it is a project

that gives education its most valued purpose and meaning. In other words, critical pedagogy forges both critique and agency through a language of skepticism and possibility and a culture of openness, debate, and engagement – all elements that are now at risk in the latest and most dangerous attack on higher education. Not only is academic freedom defended in the justification for critical pedagogical work, but it is also importantly safeguarded through the modes of academic labor and governance that connect the search for knowledge with a capacity for mutual criticism among teachers and students that is “based in the quality of their ideas, rather than in their social positions” (Angus 2007: 67–8).

While liberals, progressives, and left-oriented educators have increasingly opposed the right-wing assault on higher education, they have not done enough either theoretically or politically. While there is a greater concern about the shameless state of non-tenured and part-time faculty in the United States (actually, an under-the-radar parallel alternative to the traditional tenure system), such concerns have not been connected to a full-spirited critique of other anti-democratic forces now affecting higher education through a growing managerialism and neoliberal approach to university governance. Contingent academic labor is clearly part of the process of the subordination of higher education to the demands of capital and corporate power (see Bousquet 2008). Neoliberalism makes possible not only the ongoing corporatization of the university and the increasing militarization of knowledge, but also the powerlessness of faculty who are increasingly treated as disposable populations. The three major academic unions in the United States have neither waged a spirited defense of higher education as a democratic public sphere nor have they moved beyond a limited defense of academic freedom to a restructuring of university power and the restoration of democratic decision-making to benefit students and faculty. Moreover, as students increasingly find themselves part of an indentured generation, there is a need for educators and others to once again connect matters of equity and excellence as two inseparable freedoms. Why aren't the unions producing their own forms of public pedagogy, educating the larger public about the nature of the crisis of higher education, particularly as it translates into a crisis of opportunity, public life, and democracy itself? What responsibility do the unions have to connect the work of higher education to a broader public good, defend the rights of academics as public intellectuals, and take seriously academic freedom as a discourse and set of freedoms that not only engage in the search for truth but also affirm the importance of social responsibility and civic commitment? Perhaps they are quiet because they are under the illusion that tenure will protect them, or they believe that the attack on academic freedom has little to do with how they perform their academic labor. If so, then they would be wrong on both counts, and unless the unions and progressives mobilize to protect the institutionalized relationships between democracy and pedagogy, teacher authority and classroom autonomy, higher education will be at the mercy of a right-wing revolution that views democracy as an excess and the university as a threat to society at large.

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Pedagogy must be understood as central to any discourse about academic freedom, but, more importantly, it must be understood as the most crucial referent we have for understanding politics and defending the university as one of the very few remaining democratic public spheres in the United States today. As Ian Angus (2007) rightly argues, “The justification for academic freedom lies in the activity of critical thinking” and the pedagogical and political conditions necessary to protect it (67–8). I believe that too many notions of academic freedom are defined through a privatized notion of freedom, largely removed from the issue of democratic governance, which is the primary foundation enabling academic freedom to become a reality. Right-wing notions of teaching and learning constitute a kind of anti-pedagogy, substituting conformity for dialogue and ideological inflexibility for critical engagement. Such attacks should be named for what they are – an affirmation of thoughtlessness and an antidote to the difficult process of self and social criticism (see Young-Bruehl 2006). In spite of what conservatives claim, this type of pedagogy is not education, but a kind of training that produces a flight from self and society. Its outcome is not a student who feels a responsibility to others, but one who feels the presence of difference as an unbearable burden to be contained or expelled. In this way, it becomes apparent that the current right-wing assault on higher education is directed not only against the conditions that make critical pedagogy possible, but also against the possibility of raising questions about the real problems facing higher education and society today, which include the increasing role of part-time labor, the instrumentalization of knowledge, the rise of an expanding national security state, the hijacking of public spheres by corporate and militarized interests, and the increasing attempts by right-wing extremists to turn education into job training and public pedagogy into an extended exercise in patriotic xenophobia. All of these efforts undermine the idea of the university as central to a functioning democracy in which people are encouraged to think, to engage knowledge critically, to make judgments, to assume responsibility for what it means to know something, and to understand the consequences of such knowledge for the world at large.

Higher education has become part of a market-driven and militarized culture, imposing upon academics and students new modes of discipline that close down the spaces to think critically, undermine substantive dialogue, and restrict students from thinking outside of established expectations. The conservative pedagogical project, despite paying lip service to the idea of “balance,” is less about promoting intellectual curiosity, understanding the world differently, or enabling students to raise fundamental questions about “what sort of world one is constructing” (Jacques Rancière, qtd in Carnevale and Kelsey 2007: 263). On the contrary, its primary purpose is to produce dutiful subjects willing to sacrifice their sense of agency for a militaristic sense of order and unquestioning respect for authority. This is more than a pedagogy for conformity; it is also a receipt for a type of thoughtlessness that, as Hannah Arendt (2001) reminds us, is at the heart of totalitarian regimes.

In light of this right-wing assault on critical thought, educators have a political and moral responsibility to critique the university as a major element in the military-industrial-academic complex. At the very least, this means being attentive to the ways in which conservative pedagogical practices deny the democratic purposes of education and undermine the possibility of a critical citizenry. Yet such a critique, while important, is not enough. Academics also have a responsibility to make clear higher education's association with other memories, brought back to life in the 1960s, in which the academy was remembered for its "public role in developing citizenship and social awareness – a role that shaped and overrode its economic function" (Angus 2007: 64–5). Such memories, however uncomfortable to the new corporate managers of higher education, must be nurtured and developed in defense of higher education as an important site of both critical thought and democratization. Instead of a narrative of decline, educators need a discourse of critique and resistance, possibility and hope. Such memories both recall and seek to reclaim how consciousness of the public and democratic role of higher education, however imperfect, gives new meaning to its purpose and raises fundamental questions about how knowledge can be emancipatory and how an education for democracy can be both desirable and possible. Memories of educational resistance and hope suggest more than the usual academic talk about shattering the boundaries that separate academic disciplines, or making connections to students's lives, however important these considerations might be. There is also, as Stuart Hall (2007b) points out, the urgent need for educators to provide students with "Critical knowledge [that is] *ahead* of traditional knowledge . . . *better* than anything that traditional knowledge can produce, because only serious ideas are going to stand up"; moreover, for Hall, there is the need to recognize "the social limits of academic knowledge. Critical intellectual work cannot be limited to the university but must constantly look for ways of making that knowledge available to wider social forces" (113–14). If Hall is right, and I think he is, educators have a pedagogical responsibility to make knowledge meaningful in order to make it critical and transformative. But such knowledge should be more than a provocation that takes students beyond the world they already know; according to Zygmunt Bauman, it should also expand the range of human possibilities by connecting what students know and how they come to know to instilling in them both "a disgust for all forms of socially produced injustice" and the desire to make the world different from what it is (qtd in Bauman and Tester 2001: 4).

While Hannah Arendt (2003) did not address directly the importance of critical pedagogy, she understood that in its absence monstrous deeds often committed on a gigantic scale had less to do with some grand notion of evil than with a "quite authentic inability to think" (159). For Arendt, the absence of a capacity for thinking, making judgments, and assuming responsibility constituted the conditions not merely for stupidity but for a politics exemplified in old and new forms of totalitarianism. The current right-wing assault on higher education

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is in reality an attack on the most rudimentary conditions of democratic politics. Democracy cannot work if citizens are not autonomous, self-judging, curious, reflective, and independent – qualities that are indispensable for students if they are going to make vital judgments and choices about participating in and shaping decisions that affect everyday life, institutional reform, and governmental policy in their own country and around the globe. This means educators both in and outside of the university need to reassert pedagogy as the cornerstone of democracy by demonstrating in our classrooms and also to the broader public that it provides the very foundation for students to learn not merely how to be governed but also how to be capable of governing.

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Popular, Mass, and High Culture

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It is difficult to theorize popular, mass, and high cultures without considering the relationships among them. It is also important to remember that they are concepts rather than things. Each of the keywords that modify culture – popular, mass, and high – brings with it a cluster of meanings, questions, and problems that have been shaped by particular historical conditions, struggles, and debates. Although each term has a distinct genealogy, the meanings of popular, mass, and high culture are also entangled, since the definition of each often depends upon comparisons to the other two.

“Popular culture” is the most capacious of the three categories, and in American Studies its usage has often depended upon a broader, anthropological sense of culture; it has also been a keyword in debates about the national-popular, especially in the Popular Front and Cold War eras. In more recent years, however, global flows of culture have pushed American Studies scholars to theorize the popular in new ways that move beyond national frameworks. The category of “mass culture,” on the other hand, is inseparable from a long history of debates about culture, democracy, and industrial society, as well as from the emergence of modern forms of mass media such as cinema, radio, advertising, and television. Although the term continues to be used in American Studies, it is much less common than it used to be. While mass culture was a specter that haunted the moderns, drawing the fire of Marxists, conservative critics of democracy, and theorists invested in elite culture alike, more recently it has receded as a keyword, perhaps because the adjective “mass” is too tied to modernist antinomies, too pejorative in its historical associations and usages, and too imprecise in a digital era of niche marketing, narrowcasting, and multiple media platforms. Finally, theories of “high” culture, though implicit in modernist canons, were rarely explicitly articulated in American Studies scholarship until the late 1980s and 1990s, when work on cultural hierarchies examined both the interconnections and the institutional construction of boundaries between “high” and “low” cultures. From the 1940s through the mid-1960s, American Studies scholars were much

more likely to use words such as “great” or “classic” to characterize their objects of study, or to simply assume the importance of those objects rather than to make a case for them, perhaps because there were real questions about whether such a thing as high culture was possible or desirable in the United States, but also because there was widespread agreement over what counted as major works of literature, politics, philosophy, and art in American Studies in its institutionalized forms during this era.

In tracking debates over popular, high, and mass culture in American Studies, much depends upon how the field is defined. This essay begins in 1949, the year that the journal *American Quarterly* first appeared, just two years before the American Studies Association was founded in 1951. One way to understand the changing significance of theories of popular, mass, and high culture in American Studies is to trace the appearance, disappearance, and reappearance of these keywords in the ASA’s journal and in other official publications, in order to reconstruct discussions and debates around them. But it is also important to consider the connections and disconnections between American Studies in the narrow sense, as a post-World War II project in US colleges and universities, and what George Lipsitz (2001: 27) calls the “other American Studies, the organic grassroots theorizing about culture and power that has informed cultural practice, social movements, and academic work for many years.” Theories of popular, mass, and high culture in the academic, institutional version of American Studies have often been inspired by or formulated in response to the “grassroots theorizing” of the other American Studies, but there have also been many missed opportunities. Until the early 1970s, most of the contributors to *AQ* and all of the members of the editorial board were men, and it was not until at least the late eighties that work by scholars of color began to appear on a fairly regular basis in the journal. From the late forties through the mid-sixties, from the post-World War II to the Vietnam War era, debates about mass, popular, and high culture in institutional American Studies therefore took place largely between white men and were inextricable from debates over national character, middle-class consensus, totalitarianism and pluralism, capitalism versus socialism, and the place of the US in the world. By the late 1960s, however, the Vietnam War, struggles over civil rights and decolonization, and urban uprisings and campus protests made visions of conflict rather than consensus central to American Studies, and in these years and throughout the seventies, scholars who elaborated theories of popular, mass, and high culture often connected their discussions to issues of war, violence, gender, and race. Women and people of color participated in greater numbers in institutionalized American Studies beginning especially in the mid-1980s, a period that was also marked by the cultural turn, as European cultural theory was taken up by American Studies scholars, partly in response to the right’s success in using popular and mass culture to hold together the national coalitions that supported Ronald Reagan’s two terms as president. By the nineties, the impact of Cultural Studies on American Studies was unmistakable, as articles and review

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essays on music, film, television, and other forms of popular culture proliferated, provoking some to wonder whether culture was being overvalued in American Studies scholarship and whether Cultural Studies work was more depoliticized in the US than it was in other parts of the world. These debates lingered in the early twenty-first century, especially in the wake of the first Gulf War, the Columbus quincentennial, the 100th anniversary of 1898 and the 150th anniversary of 1848, and the international crisis around 9/11, all of which made questions of empire, international power relations, and globalization more pressing for American Studies scholars of mass, popular, and high culture.

In its institutional forms, American Studies was a post-World War II project, a form of Area Studies, and ideas about popular culture, mass culture, and high culture were often entangled with the larger project of defining and promoting a distinctive and exceptional national identity and culture. But although the interdisciplinary impulse of American Studies meant that scholars sought to understand diverse strands of national culture, there were still many more essays on poetry, philosophy, art, intellectual history, and politics than there were on popular or mass culture. Many influential American Studies scholars during this period sought to encompass both popular culture and the “classics” in their analysis, but these efforts usually reinstated cultural hierarchies. For example, Henry Nash Smith, the author of *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950), a study of dime novels as well as canonical literature, was on the first editorial board of *AQ* and also published several articles and review essays in the journal. *Virgin Land* was one of the key texts of the “Myth-and-Symbol” School of American Studies scholars in this period. Smith argued that the idea of America as a virgin land, “a vacant continent drawing population westward” (4), was a central symbol and myth that fundamentally shaped “American life and character,” and he supported this thesis not only through readings of major figures of intellectual and literary history such as Thomas Jefferson, James Fenimore Cooper, Walt Whitman, and others, but also through analysis of dime novels and other forms of popular and mass culture. Smith called dime-novel publisher Beadle one of “the industrial giants of his day” (100) and suggested that the firm’s Orville Victor was a “mass” editor, who established a uniformity in the stories that appealed to “popular tastes,” though it was “entirely subliterate” (101). Smith admitted that these remnants of nineteenth-century mass culture were valuable “to the social historian and the historian of ideas,” as well as for his own interdisciplinary analysis, because they represented “an objectified mass dream, like the moving pictures, the soap operas, or the comic-books that are the present-day equivalents of the Beadle stories.” But ultimately he concluded that the dime novel’s and mass culture’s “close fidelity” (100) to the “dream life of a vast inarticulate public” meant that the “individual writer” was required to “abandon his own personality” in the service of a culture industry, an “industrial revolution in publishing” which “strips from the writing every vestige of the interest usually sought in works of the imagination” (101).

Many literary critics in postwar American Studies circles would have endorsed Smith's understanding of mass culture as an inferior by-product of nineteenth-century industrial society which might contribute to an analysis of national "character," but which was of distinctly less value than the elite literature and culture they privileged. Although Leo Marx warned readers of *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) that his book included "examples which have little or no intrinsic literary value" (4), he also recognized his "theme of withdrawal from society into an idealized landscape" in what he somewhat uneasily referred to as "high" literary culture, "the classical canon of our literature – the American books admired most nowadays" (10), a canon which included Cooper, Thoreau, Melville, Faulkner, Frost, and Hemingway. While the "best writers" used the idea "to enrich and clarify our experience," Marx argued, in mass culture it was "the starting point for infantile wish-fulfillment dreams, a diffuse nostalgia, and a naïve, anarchic primitivism" (11). But although Marx and others clearly shared Smith's rather pejorative view of mass culture, this perspective was still fairly uncommon in the pages of *American Quarterly*. One of the reasons for this, despite the hierarchies that structured literary and intellectual history, was that the critique of mass culture became associated with Marxism, which was dangerous territory to inhabit during the Cold War years. Another reason was that the United States was often characterized as the example par excellence of an industrial, mass society, and many American Studies intellectuals in the postwar era, especially before the mid-sixties, were deeply invested in the project of cultural nationalism and were therefore disinclined to take a bleak view of US mass culture.

This was especially true of the significant minority of the pieces published in *American Quarterly* on film, popular music, television, and other forms of modern media. The first article that included one of these categories in the title was Leon Reisman's "Cinema Technique and Mass Culture" (1949), which appeared in the journal's fourth issue. Reisman identified "mass culture" as one of the defining features of US modernity and analyzed movie-making as a culture industry that was a crucial part of the burgeoning "communications field" and which was driven by efforts to reach a "mass audience" (316). Rather than understanding mass culture only in pejorative terms, Reisman suggested that efforts to attract a mass audience "testified to the power and richness of this medium" (324) and that instead of tending toward homogeneity, these efforts revealed "the diversified patterns of our fundamentally heterogeneous culture" (325). Reisman occasionally substituted the word "popular" for "mass" in the article and made no distinctions between the two terms. This conflation of "mass" and "popular" was common in the journal during the 1950s and through the mid-1960s. Theories of US mass and popular culture as heterogeneous and diversified, rather than homogeneous and monolithic, departed from modernist understandings of mass and popular culture as debased, inauthentic, and inferior. At the same time, however, in the context of the Cold War, the emphasis on the heterogeneity of popular and mass

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culture also supported theories of the unique cultural pluralism of the United States, which Cold War critics contrasted with fascist and communist cultures.

While scholars from a variety of disciplines wrote essays on popular and mass culture for the journal, in the early years University of Chicago sociologist David Riesman and his students were among the most frequent contributors. Riesman was also the primary author of the best-selling book *The Lonely Crowd* ([1950] 1953), which imagined and critically analyzed a distinctive “American character” who was being transformed, in both troubling and good ways, by “the mass media of news and opinion” into an “other-directed” personality type. Instead of distinguishing between popular and mass culture or deploring either, Riesman, his students, and other social scientists blurred the boundaries between the two categories, using both while making “popular culture” the preferred term. In his first article for the journal, “Listening to Popular Music” (1950), Riesman declared that the “study of popular culture – radio, movies, comics, popular music, and fiction – is a relatively new field in American social science.” Much of this studying, he noted, had been done by or on behalf of the communications industry, partly because at the “theoretical level,” the most prominent response was “dismay and dislike.” Riesman singled out three types of theorists who were horrified by US popular culture: first, Europeans who were disgusted by “the alleged vulgarization of taste brought about by industrialization”; second, “left-wing critics in the traditions of Marx or Veblen who see popular culture as an antirevolutionary narcotic”; and third, “high-brows” who fear middle-brow “culture diffusionists.” Riesman advised the researcher of popular culture that there were two options: he could “question listeners and readers to see what uses they make of popular culture materials” (359) or he could engage in “content analysis,” like T. W. Adorno’s “essays on radio music.” Riesman defended his commitment to the first approach by warning that those who abjured fieldwork risked “assuming that the *other* audience, the audience one does not converse with, is more passive, more manipulated, more vulgar in taste, than may be the case” (360). Riesman’s preference for the category of popular culture was partly a response to the ways that mass culture was increasingly being identified by scholars such as Adorno precisely with a passive, manipulated, and vulgar audience, but it was also shaped by Cold War debates over national character, national culture, capitalist versus communist societies, and distinctions between the US and Europe. Nonetheless, his classification of Popular Culture Studies as a new field in the social sciences reminds us of an earlier and often forgotten generation of American Studies scholars who believed that fieldwork and interviews, rather than close readings and textual analysis, were indispensable for an understanding of the significance of popular and mass culture in the United States.

By 1958 and through the mid-1960s, articles and review essays on popular and mass culture appeared fairly frequently in *American Quarterly*. Indeed, in a 1958 review essay called “The Popular Cult of Pop Culture,” Eric Larrabee remarked that “America . . . cannot now be approached without making a deferential bow

to its most lowbrow arts: jazz, the movies, comic strips, or nearly anything one chooses to include. These indigent relatives, nurtured on crumbs from the high-culture table, have come to stay” (372). Larrabee’s distinction between the “lowbrow arts” and the “high-culture table” marks the inextricability of theories of popular, mass, and high culture, and the persistence of cultural hierarchies even as the critic announces their overturning. One of the books Larrabee was responding to in this review essay was *AQ* contributor Reuel Denney’s *The Astonished Muse: Popular Culture in America* (1957), a study of what Larrabee called “such disparate objects as Pogo, science fiction, hot-rodding, [and] football” (373). In 1951, Denney and Riesman, who collaborated on *The Lonely Crowd*, had co-authored an article for the journal on football, and as late as 1964 Denney contributed a review essay on sports. During the 1950s and 1960s, a host of other essays on popular and mass culture were published in *AQ*, including articles on hot-rod culture, Halloween and the mass child, TV and middle-class life, the motion picture and the novel, jazz, the lithographs of Currier and Ives, the “Yinglish” (Yiddish and English) popular culture represented by musician Mickey Katz, the American rodeo, and romance comics. In much of this work, the focus is on middle-class culture, which is often conflated and made interchangeable with mass and popular culture. While the word “popular” was more prominent in the pieces published during these two decades, however, beginning in 1956 “mass culture” was the category the journal used in its annual annotated interdisciplinary bibliography of articles in American Studies. In general, during the 1950s and through the mid-1960s, *AQ* abjured bleak assessments of popular and mass culture as contributors conducted interviews and engaged in fieldwork or developed close readings and content analysis of music, film, journalism, TV, and other popular texts, practices, performances, institutions, and activities.

But the defense of the mass audience and the frequent conflation of mass and popular in these studies were also entangled with the Cold War project of theorizing the exceptionality of American culture, its distinctive cultural pluralism and heterogeneity. This project is specifically named at the end of an article by Stuart Levine entitled “Some Observations on the Concert Audience” (1963). In this essay, Levine, a former professional concert musician who went on to become the editor of the journal *American Studies*, agreed with Daniel Bell’s critique of the idea that “western society,” and especially US society, could be understood as a “mass” culture.” A society could be “under the influence of the mass media” (152), Levine insisted, without becoming a mass culture in the sense meant by critics such as Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who posited a European split between elite culture and mass culture that imperiled the values of the former. Levine doubted that this analysis fit “the American experience,” for he agreed with Bell that “American society and the American social structure are radically different from what exists in Europe” (153) and that the US lacked a “rigid class structure” (159). Bell’s rejection of the adjective “mass” because of its “implications of sameness,” Levine suggested, supported what he characterized

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as the “liberal” argument, which Levine seems to endorse here as well, that “ours is a pluralistic society, and indeed that is this pluralism that we are fighting to maintain in the Cold War” (153).

Bell and other American Studies theorists of consensus rejected the category “mass culture” as inadequate to the exceptional America that they imagined as essentially different from Europe and Russia. They believed that Americans shared a unifying set of myths and values that supported a culture of consensus: a flexible, essentially middle-class culture based on basic agreement about economic and political liberalism. This pluralist, middle-class consensus was often contrasted with the conflicts provoked by the relatively inflexible hierarchies of class and status confronted by Europeans as well as with the rigidity, homogeneity, and totalitarianism that the consensus theorists ascribed to the Russians. Yet it is important to recognize that not all contributors to *American Quarterly* endorsed a monolithic interpretation of US culture and consensus, and that even those who supported the theory of a middle-class consensus could disagree about methodology as well as about the significance of perceived differences between national popular cultures.

By the late 1960s, however, theories of consensus were seriously under pressure, as the social movements of the era, notably including the civil rights, women’s, labor, anti-colonial, and anti-war movements, exposed the enduring hierarchies and fundamental conflicts in US society. As Gene Wise suggested in an influential essay, “Paradigm Dramas in American Studies” (1979), which appeared in the 30th anniversary issue of *AQ*, “After the middle of the sixties, it was hard to assume without question that America is an integrated whole; division and conflict, not consensus, seemed to characterize the culture. It was also difficult to assume the privileged position of elite ideas as a window into the culture” (314). Wise argued that the formation of the ASA’s Radical Caucus in 1969 and the workshops the caucus organized helped to focus attention on “cultural experience made visible in the sixties,” including “black studies, popular culture studies, folklore studies, women’s studies, ecology studies, film studies, material culture studies, ethnic studies, education studies, youth studies, Third World studies, and Native American Studies, among others” (313). But as African American Studies scholar and the first elected African American ASA President, Mary Helen Washington, would recall in her 1997 presidential address, there were no African American members of the Radical Caucus in 1969, and American Studies and African American Studies were not “natural collaborators,” despite “the extraordinary experimental work that was being done in African American Studies,” notably including “the loosening of disciplinary boundaries, opening up the traditional disciplines to fields like folklore, music, and art as part of a synthesis of disciplines” (1998: 3). Although from the mid-sixties through the seventies several *AQ* articles and review essays focused on the folklore, music, and art of communities of color, few scholars of color were published in the journal or participated in the ASA’s meetings, and American Studies and African American Studies, Chicano Studies, Asian

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American Studies, Native American Studies, and Ethnic Studies proceeded along mostly separate if parallel tracks until at least the mid-eighties.

Wise also observed that “the one field which we might claim as an American Studies creation – popular culture – has broken away to form a separate movement of its own” (1979: 315–16). Although three past ASA Presidents, Carl Bode, Russell Nye, and John Cawelti, had written studies of popular culture – *The Anatomy of American Popular Culture, 1840–1861* (1960), *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America* (1970), and *The Six-Gun Mystique* (1971) respectively – Wise reported that a “strain” developed “between the two movements” (316). In 1967, Bowling Green State University Professor Ray Browne began publishing a competing journal, the *Journal of Popular Culture*, and soon established a Center for the Study of Popular Culture at BGSU. In 1969, he also organized the Popular Culture Association and, in 1978, founded a competing American Culture Association. Brown, Bode, Nye, and Cawelti all participated in these new organizations and institutions. According to the ACA/PCA website, the PCA was founded by ASA members who found “tiresome and repetitive” the endless “studies of Melville, Hawthorne, and Whitman” that they believed dominated ASA scholarship. In other words, the split between the ASA and the PCA/ACA responded to a perceived privileging of “high” and especially high literary culture by the ASA and its official journal. Dedicated to “popular culture in the broadest sense of the term,” the journal has published essays on all things popular since 1967 in an effort to “break down the barriers between so-called ‘low’ and ‘high’ culture” and fill “in the gaps a neglect of popular culture has left in our understanding of the workings of society.” Much later, in a 1991 *AQ* review essay, Lauren Rabinovitz would claim that the founding of the PCA in 1979 “institutionalized the study of television and other examples of mass-produced culture, as the equal of ‘highbrow’ culture” (1991: 359), and thereby supported new work in the 1980s that theorized TV as a “site for social struggles over textual/cultural meanings” (361).

Although the scholars who broke from the ASA believed the organization was “neglecting” popular culture and ratifying hierarchies that isolated “high” from “low culture,” from 1949 through the mid-1960s the contributors to *AQ* rarely used the language of “high” culture or were entirely dismissive of popular or mass culture. However, this would change somewhat in the next period, from the late 1960s through the 1970s, when a more explicit critique of mass and popular culture re-emerged in American Studies work on the culture of sentiment, the mythology of the frontier, and race and popular culture. But while during the late 1960s and 1970s, issues of gender, race, violence, and, to a lesser extent, class, became more central to the studies of popular and mass culture that appeared in the pages of *AQ*, readers were only infrequently exposed to work in African American Studies and other emerging Ethnic Studies fields that, like American Studies, also crossed disciplinary boundaries to formulate theories of folklore and popular and mass culture. The work that innovative intellectuals such as

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C. L. R. James, W. E. B. Du Bois, Américo Paredes, and many others had done and were doing on popular and mass culture is largely invisible or exists only on the margins of the debates that took place over these categories in the pages of the journal, which began to reflect the choices and ideas of women in the 1970s but which was much slower to include the perspectives of scholars of color.

Indeed, a sea change with respect to women's participation in American Studies quickly took place during the 1970s, and this coincided with the appearance in *AQ* of a diverse set of pieces on the "culture of sentiment" of the antebellum era, especially best-selling literature written by women, which made definitions of and questions about popular and mass culture newly relevant. In 1972, Mary Turpie became the first woman to serve on the board, and just a few months later the Council of the American Studies Association endorsed several "Resolutions on the Status of Women," including one that required that "appropriate steps" be taken "to have women represented on the editorial board of the *American Quarterly* and the major committees of the organization in approximate proportion to the number of women in the Association" (1972: 552–3). Within a few years, Nina Baym, Anne Scott, Ann Douglas, Kathryn Sklar, Nancy Cott, and others were appointed to the board. Many of these women were scholars of the culture of sentiment, and several contributed essays on this topic to the journal. Their assessments of the significance of this culture were diverse, however. In 1971, Anne D. Wood suggested, in an article entitled "The 'Scribbling Women' and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote," that writing popular fiction and other types of popular literature "provided for women a way *out of* the home, and a campaign, even a crusade, against the men who wanted to keep them there" (24). But Ann Douglas offered a very different perspective on popular sentimental literature, which she understood as a form of mass culture, in several essays she published in *AQ* as well as in her influential book, *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977). While much of the 1970s critical literature on sentimentalism viewed it as an important archive of the overlooked activities, writings, and ideas of nineteenth-century women, Douglas emphasized its connections to consumer society and competitive capitalism. Thus, an earlier critique of mass culture as a debased form of capitalist culture, which had previously been muted in the journal, partly because of its associations with Marxism, re-emerged in Douglas's analysis of how popular sentimental Victorian women writers prepared the way for twentieth-century mass culture. If anyone wondered what Douglas thought of twentieth-century mass culture, she made it clear in a 1977 *AQ* essay in which she argued that mass culture is the "indispensable agent and analogue of our vanishing historical consciousness" and that "in protecting people from the pain of historical awareness, it also deprived them of experience and of history itself" (489). But Douglas's emphasis on the connections between the antebellum culture of sentiment and twentieth-century mass culture, as well as her dismay over those connections, was relatively unusual in this emerging body of American Studies work on gender, sentimentalism, and popular culture, which generally made the

case for the significance of such popular material despite its neglect or disparagement by most previous critics.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, other American Studies scholars who wrote about the popular and mass cultures of pre-twentieth-century eras also regretted their enduring effects, and traced continuities between the moments they studied and the present. Like the Myth-and-Symbol scholars of an earlier era, Richard Slotkin argued for the significance of mythology in the shaping of national character, but he emphasized the centrality of racism and violence in that mythology, thereby turning a more celebratory exceptionalist strain of Myth-and-Symbol scholarship on its head. Popular culture was an important part of his project, and in later books like *The Fatal Environment* (1985) and *Gunfighter Nation* (1992), Slotkin turned his attention to modern culture industries such as dime novels, popular Westerns, detective stories, and film. In the late 1960s and 1970s, however, his main focus was on colonial and US culture before 1860. In an *AQ* essay entitled “Narratives of Negro Crime in New England, 1675–1800” that appeared in 1973, Slotkin examined sermons and popular narratives about “the racially alien and lower class criminal: the Indian, the non-English immigrant, and the black” (1973a: 4) in order to gain insight into the “myth and value structures that informed the minds of both the official spokesmen of colonial authority and the popular audience” (4). Drawing connections between past and present, he suggested that the distinctive feature was the role played by “the association of crime with social revolution” (15), as he critically interrogated the conception of black revolutionary or political activity as a crime, which he argued was “an idea that trivializes, defuses movements like the Haitian Revolution of 1791, sabotage and insurrection by 19th century slaves, the boycotts and sit-ins of the 1950s and 1960s, or the activities of the Black Panthers in 1970” (27). Instead of emphasizing middle-class consensus as a defining feature of national character, he focused on the persistence and recurrence of racial conflict and the criminalization of black revolutionary and political activity in US popular narratives. And, in *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (1973b), Slotkin canvassed a wide variety of sources, including many popular narratives as well as standard works of canonical literature and intellectual history, to trace how “the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience.” He once again connected the past to the present by interpreting the “violence, racism, and civil disorder” in the world around him as evidence of how “myths reach out of the past to cripple, incapacitate, or strike down the living.” Linking “the murderous violence that has characterized recent political life” to frontier psychology, Slotkin concluded that the myth of the frontier – “the conception of America as a wide-open land of unlimited opportunity for the strong, ambitious, self-reliant individual to thrust his way to the top – has blinded us to the consequences of the industrial and urban revolutions and to the need for social reform and a new concept of individual and communal welfare” (5). Like Douglas, he traced continuities between

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twentieth-century popular and mass culture and the cultures of earlier periods, but he deplored contemporary “violence, racism, and civil disorder” rather than worrying over the narcissism and the amnesiac effects of modern mass culture.

Historian Alexander Saxton’s essays in the journal, three of which were later incorporated into *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (1990), were also important interventions in 1970s debates about mass culture in American Studies. In 1975, just a few years after finishing *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (1971), a groundbreaking contribution to the emerging field of race and labor studies, Saxton published the first of these essays on mass culture, “Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology.” Saxton focused on blackface minstrelsy as “the most popular form of entertainment in the US” in its time and argued that its “spread coincided with the rise of mass political parties and mass circulation newspapers” (3–4). While consensus theorists such as Bell had announced the end of ideology, Saxton emphasized the persistence of white supremacy and raised questions about the “ideological significance” (4) of blackface minstrelsy. Saxton suggested that blackface, the first mass circulation papers, and the first mass political parties all held together “a loose amalgam of class and interest groups” (17) by appealing to cross-class and transregional bonds between white men, often at the expense of people of color, an appeal that Saxton would call “white egalitarianism” (1984: 234) in his 1984 *AQ* essay “Problems of Class and Race in the Origins of the Mass Circulation Press.” Like Douglas and Slotkin, Saxton traced continuities between past and present as he observed that blackface “merged through variety and vaudeville into the modern era of film” (1975: 4), thereby communicating through modern popular forms more than a century of “inurement to the uses of white supremacy” (27). Like Slotkin, Saxton focused on how popular and mass culture both “created” and “transmitted” the racial conflicts that persistently erupted in US history, but instead of attributing these continuities to a collective national psyche or “frontier psychology,” he situated popular forms in relation to the new mass political parties and the mass circulation press of the Jacksonian era, and to what he called “a major ideological construction”: the “theory of white racial superiority” that “continued to meet justificatory needs of dominant groups in the changing class coalitions that have ruled the nation” (1990: 1).

Douglas, Slotkin, and Saxton all located the origins of US mass culture in the nineteenth century, and all three made connections between the past and the present as they identified disturbing continuities in US history that they attributed partly or wholly to popular and mass culture. By the early eighties, however, European cultural theory was beginning to make an impact on American Studies, and in 1981 Janice Radway started an essay on popular literature by drawing on semiotics and the Marxist cultural theory of Fredric Jameson, especially his essay “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture” (1979), in order to complicate what she viewed as the dominant American Studies theory that “popular literature tends

only to reaffirm cultural convention.” Claiming that although “historical studies” of American popular literary forms had “proliferated” in recent years, “theories about the connection between mass-produced art and culture” had not, Radway adapted Jameson’s theory of reification and utopia in mass culture, as did many intellectuals of this era, as she insisted that “the power of popular literature’s conservatism rests with its ability to disarm, even if only temporarily, actual dissatisfaction with the social institutions and forms legitimated by those conventions” (1981: 140). Mass culture disarms such potentially subversive dissatisfactions, she suggested, by first expressing, and then managing and recontaining them. In this way mass culture “legitimizes” the social order but only because it also “embodies the materials of a historical protest” (141). In her influential book, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (1984), Radway further explored this theory by returning to earlier American Studies traditions of fieldwork and reception studies of popular culture as she interviewed 42 women, studied the organization of the romance culture industry, and then incorporated feminist and reader-response theory as well as semiotics in order to interpret how “the structures and features of romantic fiction address and resolve the problems these women must encounter in their ordinary lives” (14). For five years in the mid-eighties Radway also served as an editor of *AQ*, where she made it a priority to solicit more work on popular culture and media studies, especially scholarship that engaged theory as well as history.

Radway’s and other American Studies scholars’ interest in “the power of popular culture’s conservatism” responded to the Reagan eighties, a decade when the right in the US and Great Britain came to power partly through successful media campaigns and appeals to a national-popular culture. Some of the best American Studies work on popular and mass culture in the eighties addressed the question of Reagan’s public appeal quite directly, such as political scientist Michael Rogin’s *Ronald Reagan, the Movie, and Other Episodes in American Political Demonology* (1987), which was reviewed in *AQ*, along with Gary Wills’s *Reagan’s America*, in 1988. At this point, Rogin had already written influential books on intellectuals and McCarthyism, Andrew Jackson’s “subjugation of the American Indian,” and Melville’s politics and art; and during the nineties he would also complete *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (1996), a brilliant study of blackface minstrelsy, Jewish immigrants, and Hollywood film, as well as an incisive little book on the science fiction film *Independence Day*. In his late eighties work, Rogin argued for the “making of Ronald Reagan in 1940s Hollywood” as he traced the former actor’s confusion of public image and reality through readings of his films in order to show how the “presidential character” was “produced from the convergence of two substitutions that generated cold war countersubversion in the 1940s and underlie its 1980s revival – the political replacement of Nazism by Communism, from which the national-security state was born, and the psychological shift from an embodied self to its simulacrum on film” (1987: 3). These political and psychological shifts crucially

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depended on an anti-communist demonology, a “creation of monsters” (xiii) that Rogin understood as a “continuing feature of American politics,” one which worked not through consensus but rather through cultural constructions of “shared opposition to an alien or subversive force either within or outside of the body politic” (Corrado 1988: 278). Modern mass media such as film and television played crucial roles in the creation of monsters and the orchestration of politics as a mass spectacle, Rogin suggested, not only because they made “political demonology visible in widely popular and influential forms,” but also because they spoke to “the fundamental countersubversive impulse to ingest historical, physical, and personal reality,” to “appropriate history by image.” Rogin concluded that this project “continued in cold war movies and climaxed with the president who lives within them” (1987: 296).

While Rogin’s simultaneously materialist and psychoanalytic theories of popular and mass culture emphasized the connections between modern media and a politics of political spectacle and surveillance, other American Studies scholarship in the late eighties and early nineties on politics and popular culture drew on the work of British Cultural Studies scholar Stuart Hall and Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci to understand how the New Right was able to win “popular consent to that authority among key sectors of the dominated classes themselves” (1988: 53), as Hall put it. It did so, he concluded, by working “on the ground of a formed common sense” (49) and by tapping into “a deeper ground-work of emotional loyalties and moral sentiments and bits of knowledge and so on” (59). Gramsci called this kind of “common sense” shared across different sectors of society “hegemony,” and, especially after Hall’s essay, which used the concept to explain Thatcherism and Reaganism, appeared in the collection *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* in 1988, some American Studies scholars began to analyze modern forms of media, schools, and other institutions as key sites in which hegemony was struggled over in the past as well as in the present. This shift toward Marxist and other European cultural theory happened very slowly, however. In 1986, when in the pages of *AQ* Michael Denning echoed Janice Radway’s insistence on the relevance of cultural theory for American Studies in his essay “The Special American Conditions,” he clearly viewed it as a challenging task to convince American Studies scholars to engage a Marxist theoretical tradition that they had often regarded with deep ambivalence if not disdain. Nonetheless, at the same time, Denning suggested that such a revisionary return to Marxist cultural theory was already well under way in a wide range of new American Studies research, including, among a very long list of others, work on naturalism by June Howard and Rachel Bowlby, on romantic fiction by Radway, on the frontier by Rogin and Ronald Takaki, and on working-class culture by Kathy Peiss and George Lipsitz. Denning also included within this last category his own *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (1987), in which he drew on the theories of Gramsci, Jameson, and other Marxists to argue that dime novels, “a classic American Studies subject” (258) were part of a

“contested terrain at the intersection of the culture industry and the cultures of the working classes” (5). Later, in 1996, Denning would also complete *The Cultural Front*, a study of the Popular Front social movement of the 1930s as a “historical bloc” in Gramsci’s sense of the word, “an alliance of social forces and a specific social formation” (6) that was struggled over, built and rebuilt, formed and transformed over time, and in which popular and mass culture, as well as theories of both, played key roles.

In a 1990 *AQ* essay, “Listening to Learn and Learning to Listen: Popular Culture, Cultural Theory, and American Studies,” Ethnic Studies scholar George Lipsitz reflected on this eighties turn to cultural theory and the impact of British Cultural Studies on American Studies, as he argued for the usefulness of such theory in research on “the extraordinary creativity and ingenuity of grass roots artists and intellectuals” (626) as well as on “commercialized leisure and electronic mass media” (624). Urging American Studies scholars to listen to voices from outside the profession as well as from Europe, Lipsitz suggested that European theorists offered “radical interrogations of concepts too often undertheorized within American Studies: the utility of national boundaries as fitting limits for the study of culture, the reliability of categories that establish canons of great works or that divide ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, the ability of art and literature to mirror a unified culture” (617). Lipsitz cited a wide range of new American Studies scholarship to support his claim that many of the “most effective applications of European cultural theory” (623) focused on popular culture, including work on popular literature by Radway and Denning as well as many recent studies of television, film, music, and sports. Since problematizing representation was especially important for “scholars in feminist and ethnic studies” (629), Lipsitz suggested, part of this “revived interest in popular culture” was the result of “victories by women and racial minorities in winning access to university positions and their consequent interest in those voices silenced in ‘high’ culture but predominant within some realms of popular culture” (630). Partly because of his accessible and engaging writing style, his own books on popular and mass culture, especially *Time Passages* (1989), *Dangerous Crossroads* (1994), and *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (2001) became essential reading for scholars as well as many who were not academics. Lipsitz also contributed a review of historian Lawrence Levine’s *Highbrow/Lowbrow* (1989) to *AQ* that emphasized the “artificial and recent” (519) construction, in the course of the nineteenth century, of a separation between “high” culture and “popular” culture, thereby foregrounding a useful theory of “high” culture for a field that had rarely investigated its meanings. Lipsitz’s work provides a model of politically engaged scholarship that counters charges that the US version of Cultural Studies was depoliticized, for he always insisted that American Studies scholars should learn to listen and to “share the stage with artists, activists, and intellectuals who do not have the status in society to be regarded as intellectuals” (2004: 527), thereby connecting the university to the “voices, power struggles, and ideological conflicts outside it” (1990: 616).

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Lipsitz was the book review editor of *AQ* from 1991 to 1996, and during these years the journal began to review many more books on race, Ethnic Studies, and popular and mass culture, while reviewers included historian Robin D. G. Kelley, who had most recently authored *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (1994); comparative literature professor Raul Villa, who would soon publish *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (2000) and who would co-edit a special issue of *AQ* called “Los Angeles and the Future of Urban Cultures”; and sociologist Herman Gray, author of *Producing Jazz: The Experience of an Independent Record Company* (1988), and, just a little later, *Watching Race: Television And The Struggle For “Blackness”* (1995), a study of black cultural politics and commercial culture. This pattern continued when music scholar Barry Shank took over as book review editor in 1996, for in the next few years the journal included reviews of Rosa Linda Fregoso’s *The Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture* (1993), Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), Fatimah Rony’s *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle* (1996), José David Saldívar’s *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (1997), and other new work on race and Cultural Studies.

As Cultural Studies scholarship and especially research on popular and mass culture became more common in *AQ* and American Studies, however, debates emerged about Cultural Studies methodologies. In a 1993 review of Sut Jhally’s and Justin Lewis’s *Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences, and the Myth of the American Dream*, Herman Gray was partly sympathetic to the authors’ thesis that the show commodified blackness and normalized desire “during the reign of a political regime hostile to the aspirations and advancement of African Americans” (467), but he held out for “a more contradictory and contingent reading of the show and its ideological effects” (469) rather than a “top down reading of ideology where television is politically constructed as a totalizing discourse that inevitably serves the ideological interests of the powerful” (470). In a response, called “The Politics of Cultural Studies: Racism, Hegemony, and Resistance,” the authors replied that they were partly intervening in current debates that they believed overemphasized the “weakness of television or other cultural industries in the face of audiences who resist or evade dominant ideological meanings.” Contending that “television’s role is hegemonic” in Gramsci’s sense that “it is always about contest and negotiation (as well as complicity),” and insisting that “although there is ambiguity there is also widespread compliance” (1994: 115), they claimed also to be writing against “the general tendency in American cultural studies toward depoliticization” (116) by putting the question of “structural determination” back on the agenda in the face of a “turn toward polysemy and pluralism divorced from questions of power in American cultural studies” (117). In a response to the response, Gray replied that the charge that Cultural Studies was depoliticized depended upon a facile distinction between the “discursive” and “non-discursive” that supported “a zero sum game of real politics versus imaginary

politics.” Arguing that “discursive practices are political too,” Gray challenged Cultural Studies-based analyses of television and race to instead explore the “shifting relations between discursive and non-discursive practices and the politics they produce” (1994: 119).

Lipsitz’s comment in his 1990 “Listening to Learn” essay that European cultural theory might help American Studies scholars learn to question “the utility of national boundaries as fitting limits for the study of culture,” accurately predicted another direction in which studies of popular, mass, and high culture would go in the nineties and the twenty-first century, as scholars turned their attention to the global flows of culture, transnational movements, international power relations, and US Empire. They did so not primarily because of European cultural theory, however, but because they were responding to macro-political events such as the first Gulf War, the Columbus quincentennial, the commemorations of US imperial wars in 1848 and 1898, 9/11, and the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. ASA conference themes such as “Global Migration, American Cultures, and the State” (1996), “American Studies and the Question of Empire” (1998), “Crossing Borders/Crossing Centuries” (1999), “American Studies in the World/The World in American Studies” (2000), “The Local and the Global & Recovery Project/Redefining ‘Nuestra América’” (2002), “The United States from Inside and Out” (2006), and “América Aquí: Transhemispheric Visions and Community Connections” (2007) also encouraged this transnational and comparative turn. A flurry of new work on popular and mass culture in international and transnational contexts appeared in the journal during this period, including Melani McAlister’s “One Black Allah: The Middle East in the Cultural Politics of African American Liberation, 1955–1970” (1999), Curtis Marez’s “Signifying Spain, Becoming Comanche, Making Mexicans: Indian Captivity and the History of Chicana/o Popular Performance” (2001), and Adria Imada’s “Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits through the American Empire” (2004). McAlister’s essay was later incorporated into her book *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (2001), in which she argued against what she called a “mass communications model” that focuses on “negative stereotypes” for understanding US opinion about the Middle East. Instead, she suggested that understanding the “political import of culture requires that we position texts in history, as active producers of meaning, rather than assuming that they merely ‘reflect’ or ‘reproduce’ some preexisting reality” (5). Marez’s *AQ* piece, on the other hand, explored “how transnational affiliations forged by the Comanche captive trade helped determine the emerging meanings of ‘Mexicanness’ in New Mexico” (2001: 277) by examining popular performances of plays as well as other forms of Chicana/o popular culture about the trade. Finally, Imada investigated “commercial cultural displays” of hula dancing in the 1930s and 1940s, and argued that they not only fostered an “imagined intimacy” between Hawai’i and the United States which reinforced US imperialism but also “enabled many Hawaiians in the islands and in American urban centers to secure a measure of freedom and

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pleasure” as performers “sustained cultural reproduction, pursued employment and education, and created intimate diasporic communities” (2004: 113). All of these essays positioned popular and mass cultural texts “in global and local contexts,” thereby exemplifying the journal’s policy, as reflected in a 2003 revision of *AQ*’s “mission statement,” that essays contribute “to our understanding of the United States in its diversity, its relations with its hemispheric neighbors, and its impact on world politics and culture.”

After *AQ* moved to the University of Southern California in 2003, the journal also began to feature more work at the intersections of American Studies and Visual Culture Studies, in part because of the research interests and expertise of Marita Sturken, a professor in the Annenberg School for Communication, who became the new editor, as well as those of Curtis Marez, a professor in the School of Cinematic Arts, who replaced her in 2006. As Sturken introduced a 2004 issue that showcased the “interdisciplinary approaches of American studies and visual culture,” she observed that over the past two decades “the study of images in relation to art history, the news media, and popular culture has been of increasing interest to scholars of American studies” (Sturken 2004: vi). Here, a discourse of “mass culture” would be too imprecise and too dystopian to capture Sturken’s interest in the complex ways that people respond to images in different spheres, such as the “news media” and “popular culture.” In television scholar Lynn Spigel’s essay in the issue, “Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11,” however, she did identify her object of analysis as “mass media,” a category which included “dramatic series, talk shows, documentaries, special ‘event’ TV, and even cartoons” (Spigel 2004: 238–9), but she also interrogated “the limits of nationalist myths in the postnetwork, multichannel, and increasingly global media systems” by questioning whether such myths could “sustain the ‘narrowcast’ logic” of such systems “and the more general movement of audiences across multiple media platforms” (239). Other recent work published in the journal has complicated nationalist models of mass culture by focusing on race, visual culture, and community in global contexts, including Christina Klein’s “Why American Studies Needs to Think about Korean Cinema, or, Transnational Genres in the Films of Bong Joon-Ho” (2008), which considers the “South Korean film industry’s critical engagement with the United States and its premier culture industry” (872), and Michelle Raheja’s essay “Reading Nanook’s Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and Atanarjuat (*The Fast Runner*)” (2007), which suggests that the film successfully addresses a dual Inuit and non-Inuit audience as it aims to operate in the service of the former’s home communities while forcing the latter to reconsider mass-mediated images of the Arctic.

Future American Studies work that aims to complicate older, nationalist models of popular and mass culture might usefully build on work in Queer Studies, such as José Esteban Muñoz’s *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999), which examines “queer performances that remake the world” (xiv), and Judith Halberstam’s *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Politics*,

Subcultural Lives (2005), which traces “queer counterpublics” as part of an effort to “rethink the definitions of advanced, subcultural, and mass cultural production in an age of diversified struggle and multiple hegemonies” (103–4). Although little of this work has appeared in *AQ* until relatively recently, one notable example is Ann Pellegrini’s award-winning 2007 essay, “‘Signaling Through the Flames’: Hell House Performance and Structures of Religious Feeling,” which examines “theater as a medium of evangelization,” as well as how theater “queers the pitch of the message,” thereby exposing “a glimpse of same-sex eroticism” as “perverse pleasure” as well as conveying “other possibilities” the young people in the audience “were not otherwise supposed to contemplate” (920). Other work might take as its inspiration George J. Sánchez’s and Raúl Villa’s co-edited special *AQ* issue on metropolitan Los Angeles’ “urban cultures,” which they “connect to wider practices of identity and community formation within broad networks of globalization” (2004: 500), or the forthcoming special issue “In the Wake of Hurricane Katrina: New Paradigms and Social Visions” (2009), which will be guest-edited by Kalamu ya Salaam and music and Black Studies scholar Clyde Woods, whose book *Development Arrested* (1998) examines the space of the Mississippi Delta as the “home of a blues tradition” of music and “working-class popular culture,” that is crucial to “African American attempts to create a new regional reality based on cultural freedom and economic and social justice” (25). Finally, although the 2006 *AQ* special issue “Rewiring the ‘Nation’: The Place of Technology in American Studies” begins to address the vital question of how electronic and digital media challenge older theories of popular, mass, and high culture, future work must take up the task of interrogating how new media present new problems as well as new possibilities for their users and for American Studies scholars.

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