

The Ends of New Americanism

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IN HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THIS SPECIAL FORUM on “The State of American Studies,” Winfried Fluck tracks the field’s latest critical revolution by explicating the paradigmatic investments and affective allegiances that accompany what is now widely heralded as its transnational turn. By identifying two dominant formulations—the aesthetic and the political—he seeks to counter the optimistic reception of the transnational by revealing the occlusions on which its celebration depends. The first occlusion is conceptual, as Fluck discusses how the transnational has been deployed in Americanist scholarship to emphasize postnational influences without comparative attention to the circulation of “America” as the icon of capitalism’s global achievement. The second occlusion Fluck discerns is methodological, as the very claim to be new revives familiar Americanist tropes, reiterating the exceptionalist legacies that link Americanization, modernity, and progress. Under the auspices of the discourse of the new, aesthetic transnationalism excavates the lost transnational origins of U.S. culture in order to generate new Americanist futures no longer mired in nationalist chauvinism and historical provincialism.

In contrast, Fluck explains, political transnationalism forges the new by studying the trauma of national failure in the name of a future no longer beholden to the imperial ambitions of the past; its scholarship figures the transnational as the analytic perspective that can transcend the violence of nation formation by coming to historical terms with it.

For Fluck, these divergent approaches render “the state of American studies” in its transnational locution repetitive, not transformative, as the critical operations of rejuvenation and (post)traumatic repossession are not reconfigurations of the field but extensions of the hegemonic project that “has dominated American Studies over the last decades” (TK). That project, Fluck provocatively contends, is beholden to the “agenda of the new social movements” and links “questions of power to questions of identity formation” without engaging how both the emphasis on, and definition of, identity arise from U.S. historical frameworks. In the end, Fluck does not dismiss the critical aspiration to study the U.S. “in terms of [its] international embeddedness,” but he does lament the

failure of the transnational turn to provide an adequate critical practice for doing so.

My contribution to this special forum in *New Literary History* follows Fluck's lead, even as I depart from his primary focus. For while I agree that the transnational is currently the field's privileged sign for radical self-transformation, there has never been a moment in the past twenty-five years when practitioners failed to confer such agency on *one critical discourse or another*.¹ Indeed, American Studies has been so thoroughly engulfed in the method of self-reflexive critical assessment that it is possible to claim that the very discussion of the "state of the field" is the state of the field. Why is this the case? In what follows, I seek to answer this question by offering my own reading of how Americanist critical practice has been committed to finding a way to differentiate itself from the geopolitical power of its central object of study, which has set it on a course of persistent reinvention by casting the political agency at stake as the critic's own. Hence, I will read the very contestation over the transnational turn as a generative feature of Americanist scholarship since the late 1980s, when the field was redefined from within by the fraught convergence of identity knowledges and critical theory as they were reshaping the U.S. university as a whole. In that context, which crucially coincided with the end of the Cold War, the field split along generational lines and the entity that figures in my title was born: New American Studies. While initially deployed as a pejorative, the name was quickly embraced by practitioners as a figure of critical transgression, committed most centrally to countering the vestiges of American exceptionalism taken to sustain the field's then-dominant formation.² Today it is difficult to find work that studies the United States from a perspective not configured by this approach. Even Fluck's attempt to challenge the transnational turn reflects New Americanism's own penchant for measuring the gap between critical aspiration and the failure that routinely accompanies efforts to fulfill it. It is this gap—or more precisely, its ongoing critical discernment—that is central to the operations of New Americanism, where the priority of reflecting on the state of the field is not simply one of its most familiar gestures but the engine of its disciplinary reproduction.³ In this way, interpellation by one's object of study is resisted as the means to differentiate critical practice from complicity with the ideological and material histories that sustain "America's" imperial pursuits.⁴

Elsewhere, I have used the concept of *refused identification* to explore the subject-forming consequences of these disciplinary operations, locating the work of refusal across the many critical idioms that currently comprise the New Americanist archive.⁵ I build on that discussion here

by considering not only the centrality of the discourse of the new but the temporal paradox that attends its critical performance. For while this discourse works hard to identify interruption and transformation, its reiteration across New Americanist critical practice generates continuity for the disciplinary reproduction of the field. In the competition that ensues between rupture and repetition, the New Americanist field imaginary inhabits a perpetual present, one in which political urgency is the defining impetus for critical action. In this context, the present is simultaneously overdetermined and foreclosed: overdetermined because its description must conform to the wish for supersession that defines it; foreclosed because it must be rendered coherent for the critical authority of the new to emerge.

In what follows, I explore the narrative practices and disciplinary effects of this temporal conundrum, paying attention to the New Americanist project and its steady and indeed studied sense that a pedagogy of refusal will change the calculus, if not subvert the interpellative force, of "America." What kind of subject does New Americanism assume is necessary not only to learn from its critical dissension but to be remade by and for it? Let me emphasize that the resonant question here concerns not *which* subject is required by and cultivated within New Americanist practices of critical discipline, but *what kind* of subject—and further, what critical capacity this subject is thought to wield in relation to the social order she studies in order to transform.

In many ways, these questions are not ones that belong to New Americanism alone. They are alive in any (inter)disciplinary domain that stakes its critical definition on a contribution to politicized knowledge production, including those that have emerged from the historical turn in the U.S. university toward identity as a contested form of value, such as Women's Studies, African American Studies, Queer Studies, and similar fields. At the heart of these projects has been a subject armed with the capacity not simply to be engaged by what she comes to know, but to be transformed in the process by the critical agency such a capacity is taken to deliver. This capacity often goes by the name of "critical thinking" and is bound to some version of critique as a political rhetoric, analytic practice, and/or mode of interpretation.⁶ In recent years, scholars have sought to challenge critique's ubiquity by revisiting both the hermeneutics of suspicion that formally underwrites it and the conception of the political that it holds in place.⁷

For New American Studies, where an emphasis on critique developed from a broad engagement with cultural studies, these conversations unsettle the disciplinary equation between a refusal to identify with America and counterinvestments in the study of ideology, represen-

tation, and subcultural formation. If, as Eva Cherniavsky contends, neoliberalism has contracted the role of civil society and displaced the centrality of the political subject—the citizen—inaugurated there, the general effect is to undermine the very social sphere in which critique has waged battle. In “Neocitizenship and Critique,” Cherniavsky argues against the conception of governance that organizes critique’s political compass, where citizenship is conceived as a mode of interpellation and hegemony operates by cultivating the citizen’s consent to be governed. In her terms, “neocitizenship” entails governance without hegemony, as there is no formal state dependence on the cultural sphere (what some have called the national form) precisely because state power no longer bears the burden of justifying itself in the cultural realm. Hence, critique’s capacity to expose the contradictions and mystifications of dominant power loses its counterhegemonic force, not because there is no need for opposition, but because the struggle over interpretation has been thoroughly subordinated by neoliberal processes of governance. For Cherniavsky, then, the ongoing investment in critique as “a mode of defamiliarization or estrangement” mistakes the very condition of the political in which it speaks by assuming that “power sustains itself by producing a readable social and political world, one that appears coherent, insofar as it adheres to the laws and the norms in which its readers are already interpellated” (2).⁸

While Cherniavsky’s anatomy of neoliberal governance is surely contentious, her essay is useful in foregrounding a slim but telling distinction between analyses of the political conditions of the present and those engaged with the present conditions of the political. The subtle force of this distinction shapes the deliberations that follow, in which I consider both the ends to which New Americanism’s disciplinary practices are aimed and the understanding of the political and the productivity of power that underlie the field’s dominant critical self-conception—in other words, the way it routes itself toward national imperial endings by cultivating forms of critical subjectivity that repeat a tactical relation between critique and power, and between the agency of critical analysis and political transformation. In tracking this tactical relation, I will not be proclaiming that New Americanism is at an end or that the political endings it seeks are not worthy of critical attention. Nor will I discuss its disciplinary habits in order to offer a new vision of critical transgression. While it is certainly true that my own analytic attachments were born and bred under the auspices of New Americanism, the aim of my contribution is not to occupy the discourse on the state of the field in order to interrupt, reroute, or even refuse the critical authority it has secured. Each of these stances would merely perform another allegiance to New Americanism in the very instance of trying to come to terms with the

power and pleasure of its critical allure. Instead, I want to grapple with the conundrum that New Americanism stages in its promise to render institutionalized knowledge a practice of political transformation. In the end, what interests me most is how thoroughly unexceptional New Americanism is, as it works to satisfy the hope for a form of agency scholars can conceive of as their own.

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As its name indicates, New Americanism is a generational discourse of critical succession, one that marks the new as the scene and sign of both intellectual renovation and political transgression. But the New Americanists did not name themselves. In a caustic 1988 review essay in the twenty-fifth anniversary issue of the *New York Review of Books*, Frederick Crews invented the term to lament that decade's turn toward politicized scholarship.⁹ For Crews, this "New American" scholarship was characterized by "self-righteousness," a "tendency to conceive of American history only as a highlight film of outrages," an "impatience with artistic purposes," and a commitment to "critical principles according to the partisan cause at hand." The ending of the review was especially acerbic: "The New Americanists," Crews wrote, are "destined to become the next establishment in their field. They will be right about the most important books and the most fruitful ways of studying them because, as they always knew in their leaner days, those who hold power are right by definition."

By spring of 1990, Donald E. Pease, who had two books under review by Crews, had commissioned a set of essays in response, and published them as the now signatory statement, "New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon."¹⁰ His introduction to the volume—what might properly be called the founding manifesto of New Americanism—repudiated Crews's repudiation and set forth the critical and political contours of the emergent field. As he put it, a New Americanist "makes explicit the relationship between an emancipatory struggle taking place outside the academy and an argument she is conducting within the field"; hence New Americanists "occupy a double relation": "For as *liaisons between* cultural and public realms, they are at once within the field but external to it. Moreover, as representatives of subjects excluded from the field-Imaginary by the previous political unconscious, New Americanists have a responsibility to make these absent subjects representable in their field's past and present" (31). The field was thus cast by Pease as a critical agency capable of "chang[ing] the hegemonic self-representation of the United States' culture" (19, 32).

To be situated in the mobility of “outside/in,” as Pease called it, enabled New Americanism to assert its authority from within the political imaginaries and insurgent agencies established by U.S. social movements, thereby placing it outside the field of American Studies or in contemporary terms, outside American American Studies, conceived not as a territorial or identity formation but as the field’s fundamental syntax in the Cold War period—the period in which Crews had established his career (15).¹¹ As New Americanism would tell it, Cold War American Studies was a protonationalist formation, beholden to the ideologies emanating from the security state and dedicated to forging an entire symbolic vocabulary to accompany the worldwide defense of capitalism that the Cold War period spawned.¹² By attending to the complicity of the Cold War project, New Americanism generated its own identity through a practice of critique and disidentification, both with its predecessor and with the primary object of its field, “America,” whose mythic narrative of democratic progress and self-possession was resolutely countered by scholarship that unmasked the contradictions and violence of the American promise as a history of democratic failure. Instead of emphasizing individualism, consensus, and the open wilderness, for instance, New Americanism prioritized community, social struggle, and historical dispossession, making clear that the white masculine subject at the heart of Cold War exceptionalism was evidence of just how profoundly the national story and the historical record were violently askew. By foregrounding what the Cold War apparatus was taken to disavow, New Americanism countered dominant historical traditions in a self-conscious performance of its own anti-institutional and devoutly left critical commitments.

While its critical idioms have changed over the years, such that today the field is collated around the international, transnational, diasporic, postcolonial, and border, all these idioms situate themselves in the double relation of exteriority described by Pease, an exteriority conferred not by geopolitical location but by the disciplinary disidentifications with America that the New Americanist field imaginary simultaneously offers and demands. For Alan Wolfe, the author of the latest dismissal of New Americanism, the mainstream of the field evinces a proud but intellectually vacuous anti-Americanism, one predicated on a “hatred for America so visceral” that the point of its scholarly practice is now lodged, as he sees it, in a collective aim to prove that “nothing makes [America] great.”¹³ While I will discuss Wolfe’s dismissal of New Americanism more fully below, the point to be made here is how decisively his discussion of “Anti-American Studies” remains oblivious to the fact that the field does not refuse identification altogether, but carries with it an impetus toward loving other objects. Indeed, under the sign of the new,

the field cultivates identificatory investments in objects of study whose historical relation to “America” is marked by subordination, exploitation, abjection, and disdain—objects whose seeming exteriority to the exceptionalist dramas of both U.S. nationalism and its imperialist imaginary provide a different “map” of the terrain of the field and engage the kind of affective attachments that are disallowed by the commitment to critique. These are the objects of study that Fluck disparages in his gloss of the impact of social movements, which he sees as binding the field too narrowly to contestations over identity as the centerpiece of its critical agenda. But for Pease, as for other New Americanists, the political imaginary offered by social movements, no less than the engaged activism they represent, is crucial to the field’s foundational claim to be within America but outside, indeed against, its ideological and material reproduction. In this way, exteriority evokes not simply political but methodological value, as it serves to reference the cultural forms, texts, and practices that are taken to counter the exceptionalist logics against which New Americanism defines itself.

In schematic terms, then, New Americanism puts into play a disciplinary syntax that positions its own critical activity as outside the historical and epistemological power that “America” is taken to wield, thereby establishing a critical subjectivity dedicated to the pursuit of noncomplicity with the object of study.¹⁴ Such a pursuit is more than overburdened by contradiction, given not only the disparity between the critical act and the world-historical power of “America,” or the sheer incongruity of trying to dislodge the authority of an object while training one’s attention on it, but also the genuine risk of rehabilitation that resides in efforts to revalue the discourses, identities, and histories of what has been excluded. At the center of efforts to overcome these obstacles is critique, which paradoxically reinforces the belief that the human subject can be made congruent with the field’s conscious political intentions by attending to all the ways in which the field—and various individuals who come to represent it—have failed. This is the model of a critical subjectivity steeped in Enlightenment rationalities, where critical thought and social emancipation congeal in the heady assumption that, by critically discerning the operations of power, one secures the very exteriority taken as the means to transform them. Such a subject is historically beholden to the political culture of revolution that brought monarchical power in the Christian West to an end and inaugurated a vast array of contradictions in the multiple forms of exclusion that accompanied “freedom,” as New Americanist grammar would write it.

While the New Americanist project has been dedicated to revealing these contradictions at the level of their ideological determinations, it has been less invested in examining the modern terrain of knowledge,

power, and critical agency on which its own proclaimed exteriority depends. To do so would entail at least three considerations. First, that the insistence on exteriority as the critical location for a relation of non-complicity with the object of America is in fact internal to the political economy of knowledge that characterizes the modern organization of the disciplines in its distinctly humanist array. Hence, the New Americanist pursuit of exteriority is less a challenge to disciplinary authority than a manifestation of the belief in critical transcendence that accompanies it. Second, that the critical locations that New Americanism prioritizes from the vantage point of the exterior—exclusion, subordination, and exploitation—are not themselves outside of modern forms of governance but absolutely central to them, as they serve to reference the priority of the citizen and the civic as the imaginary locus of inclusive sociality. This means, third, that while exclusions have particular histories, exclusion as a category of politics and knowledge—and as a mode of critical interpretation—is *historical*. Any recognition of its centrality to the rise of the nation-state and the liberal constitutional forms that have attended it would require not simply an account of who and what is excluded, but an engagement with why and how “exclusion” has become such a singularly important affective discourse, interpretative strategy, and political idiom in modern U.S. life.

To collectively organize these points, we might say that while New Americanism has mobilized its investments in exteriority as an alternative political imaginary, its project is staked to the *political imaginary of the alternative* that has been central to Western modernity as a whole, where revolutionary rupture defines not only the modern’s origin, but the very framework in which origin and rupture become central features of modernity’s cultural syntax. In a recent essay, Bryce Traister parses from a different angle what I am explicating here as the progressive modernism of American Studies by likewise engaging the discourse on the state of the field *as* the state of the field. In “The Object of Study; or, Are We Being Transnational Yet?” he analyzes the persistent Americanist search for “a non lapsarian critical utopia” by taking the transnational turn as the latest instance of Americanist critical exceptionalism.¹⁵ As he puts it, in language that aligns closely with Fluck’s, “While transnationalism offers us a paradigmatic shift in perspective, it is clearly part of the narrative of the study of the United States, exceptionalist in both its origin and outcome regardless of the object(s) it studies or claims not to study. The transnational claim of critical emancipation from ‘America’ is the sign of America itself” (21). For Traister, this repetition is bound to the discourse of the new and its promise of rupture and transformation, heralding the kind of future I describe above in which the political imaginary of the alternative can be materialized.

In tracking the narrative structure of this repetition, Traister offers an exacting reading of New Americanism, which he specifies as the critical predecessor to the transnational, not as I would have it, as the latest embodiment of the New Americanist impulse.¹⁶ One of his most important textual examples is the 2002 introduction to *The Futures of American Studies* anthology I edited with Pease. Reading our refusal of identification as the formulaic preamble to various declarations of post-American critical agency, Traister rightly says that our “desire to release the present from the burden of the past in order to create unanticipated possibilities for [the future] . . . reanimates one of the oldest and most familiar narratives of American national self-fashioning, a story told from the American Revolution to Civil Rights and beyond” (13). In explicating similar scholarly instances in which national tropes are reiterated even as the postnational is heralded, Traister’s aim is to reclaim the importance of the national as a framework for Americanist inquiry. For as he sees it, any critical rejection of the nation as form or framework merely exchanges one kind of complicity for another: “If an undisturbed nationalism and the regressive politics it inspires are the real monsters . . . then it only makes sense to take . . . the nation seriously enough to believe it: know it, study it, interpret it, challenge it, parry its attacks, disbelieve its feints, unravel its ruses. In short, keep the actual enemy in view” (23).

In the end, then, Traister justifies his own challenge to the transnational on the very terrain of the political that incites it, arguing that the construct of the nation is necessary to effect “the kinds of progressive political critique [that] the transnationalist agenda claims possible” (23). Without it, “the political value of Americanist inquiry loses far more than it gains” (23). While Traister goes farther than most scholars in defining what I am calling the characteristics of New Americanism’s institutionalized discipline and its transnational reconfiguration, he nonetheless fails to recognize the ascription of political agency to critical inquiry as a generative, indeed foundational aspect of the field’s disciplinary demand. From one perspective, this oversight is altogether understandable, as it is difficult to know how to frame a question about the way that Americanist practitioners repeat the field’s founding belief in the equation between political agency and critique without the question being read (and rejected) as an inherently conservative one. And yet, it is precisely because of the field-defining assumption that the critical value of Americanist inquiry is its “political value” that raising the question becomes so difficult. Indeed, as I see it, the difficulty of posing a question about critique as a political agency is a disciplinary effect—and a powerful one at that, since it demonstrates just how firmly its practitioners are entrenched in the imaginary progressivism of the

field. Critique's role is central in creating a subjectivity committed to the idea that exposing failure is not simply evidence of political commitment but the generative work of politics. Because these operations are now thoroughly institutionalized in American Studies, no less than across the humanities and interpretative social sciences as a whole, the claim to "progressive political critique" is not exterior to disciplinarity but a constitutive agency of its professional authority.

Let me be clear that the aim of this discussion is not to cite institutionalization as the real "enemy" of political critique, as if deinstitutionalization were an option we could choose or one that would make the issues at stake disappear. As I have been arguing, it is precisely in relation to the idea of the outside that the disciplinary commitment to the political emerges, which means that any attempt to cast institutionalization as the source of political undoing merely repeats the investment in exteriority that sustains New Americanism's self-definition. Nor do I want to say, as have others, that the conundrum I am tracking can be resolved through a more rigorous "politicization of the political," as if seeking the renewal of politics as an agency for institutional transcendence is a way to overcome a disciplinary apparatus that makes such a pursuit its primary goal.¹⁷ The point to be developed requires a different interpretative approach altogether, one that reads repetition as something other than a mistake or a failure. Indeed, as I hope to show below, the repetition that disciplinarity offers is not only alluring, but also reassuring, allowing practitioners to believe that the value of critical practice is its political value, and that the political agency it thereby lays claim to is finally the critic's own.

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In 2006, Donald E. Pease published an essay called "9/11: When Was 'American Studies After the New Americanists?'" Like his 1990 manifesto, this essay was a response to a prominent book review that took aim at the New Americanist project. Written by Alan Wolfe for the *New Republic*, the decisively titled review, "Anti-American Studies," surveys three texts published in 2002, including *The Futures of American Studies*, and offers this general assessment of the state of the field: scholars today "not only reject the writers who gave life to the discipline, they have also developed a hatred for America so visceral that it makes one wonder why they bother studying America at all" (26).¹⁸ In building his case against the "new" American Studies, Wolfe repeats the criticisms first leveled by Frederick Crews, accusing the "America-haters" of textual ignorance,

political dogmatism, leftist one-upmanship, and a detestable infatuation with critical theory and postmodernism (32). In his own refusal of identification with the field formation that made refusal its disciplinary guarantee, Wolfe seeks to restore the “old” American Studies which, in his terms, appreciated how “the power of [America’s] artistic imagination . . . liberated intellectuals from the Babbitry of those politicians and journalists who claimed that the greatness of America lay solely in its capacity to produce consumer goods” (30). To that end, he reassures his readers that “old-fashioned American studies is actually doing pretty well in America, even if it is under-represented at the American Studies Association” (32). More crucially, while the “bitter rejectionists” might applaud themselves for a singular devotion to the idea “that America, strictly speaking, does not exist,” Wolfe is certain that students at U.S. colleges and universities “will have enough good sense to ignore them” (32). These students still yearn for what the founding generation possessed and what the nation needs: “A curiosity about the society that they seek to understand and a capacity to convey both its possibilities and its pitfalls” (32). In offering this final calculus for ascertaining the political work of Americanist criticism, Wolfe applauds the fact that the U.S. people “have avoided turning American studies over to a propaganda arm of government and . . . allow[ed] those who appreciate their society so little to speak in its name. If only they themselves could rise above their own propaganda, and muster just a smidgen of gratitude in return” (32).

As one might expect, Wolfe’s essay was controversial in New Americanist circles. The bald framing in the tag to the headline—“The difference between criticism and hatred”—did more than beg for a critical response; it announced a new culture war that seemed poised to repeat, indeed to escalate, earlier struggles over the political life of intellectual dissent, manifested most tellingly in the traction accorded to “political correctness” as a phrase in the 1990s. In his lengthy rebuttal, Pease travels the distance between Crews and Wolfe, rearticulating the coordinates of the political order within which he first framed New Americanist scholarship, by turning from the Cold War context to the “ruptural events” of 9/11, which inaugurated, in his terms, a new “sociopolitical compact” that “required U.S. citizens to direct their instincts for hatred and violence against the violence that had been directed against their belief in the nation’s invulnerability.”¹⁹ By reading “Anti-American Studies” as a toxic regurgitation of this sociopolitical compact, Pease draws out the contours of the “new American exceptionalism” of the post-9/11 era, when all dissent was cast as a threat to the homeland security state and the rule of state lawlessness was naturalized through a highly spectacularized performance of national innocence.²⁰

From this perspective, Wolfe's condemnation of New American Studies becomes much more than an ideological replication of "the Bush administration's new symbolic-discursive pattern," in which patriots and terrorists serve as the twin poles of national affective life and justify domestic surveillance and geopolitical aggression. For Pease, Wolfe's essay is itself "an instrument of violence" that casts the New Americanist project "as posing the same threat to the Homeland State as had the terrorists on 9/11" in an effort to "effect a forcible change in the prevailing symbolic regime of American studies" (92). Such a change, as Pease defines it, is in fact a resurrection, as Wolfe's essay sets "old-fashioned" American Studies after the New Americanists—"after" not only in the sense of "following in time," but as an "aggressive targeting, as in going after an enemy" (77). In the political context in which Pease reads it, then, Wolfe attempts to make old-fashioned American Studies new again by turning the New Americanist project into an enemy of the state.

The incendiary language of Wolfe's review is no doubt worthy of rebuttal, but what matters most for my purposes is not his charge or its refutation, but the work that such refutation performs for the disciplinary reproduction of the field. For by repeating the very form of criticism that shaped New Americanism's official origin—an essay written to counter a castigating review—Pease's latest essay is a telling instance of how the discourse of the state of the field functions as a mode of disciplinary revision and rejuvenation. Whereas his 1990 essay took national culture as its critical horizon, the 2006 essay depicts the field's founding in terms commensurate with the twenty-first century political context in which it has secured institutional dominance, marshaling its defense through the vocabulary of globalization, neoliberalism, the homeland security state, and the war on terror in a clear refusal to identify with the contemporary geopolitical contours of American exceptionalism. Such a retrospective reframing of the field presents New American Studies as a response to "the organic crisis that was precipitated by the *globalization* of the world economy when free-market fundamentalism and consumer populism posed grave threats to democratic institutions—unions, social movements, welfare apparatuses—across the *planet*. In responding to the neoliberalization of the *global* economic order, New Americanists turned culture into a site for the contestation and revaluation of social norms" (my emphasis, 78). Thus armed with a planetary purview, New American Studies is taken to secure its position of exteriority to its object of study through the political imaginaries and critical activisms of social movements, now defined in internationalist terms. "Because U.S. New Americanist scholarship was forged in the interstices between academic disciplinary movements and grassroots global resistance,"

Pease writes, “it is impossible to understand the New Americanists without understanding the international movements with which they were involved” (79). For Pease, these movements are represented through the academic fields they helped to spawn—“critical race theory, Black Atlantic studies, women’s studies, postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, and transnational feminist and queer studies”—and through their broad commitment to cultural justice, which undermined “the idea of a bounded national territory and a coherent national identity to which the field of American studies had formerly adhered” (79).²¹ In this way, Pease reaffirms his earlier emphasis on social movements as the political motive and identificatory impulse for New Americanist critiques of the Cold War American Studies project while revising the geopolitical dimensions of their articulation and influence.

My point here is not that Pease errs in retrospectively reading globalization as pertinent to the emergence of New American Studies, as its nomination by Crews in 1989 coincides with the fall of the Berlin Wall, which is now widely read as the inaugurating event for the economic and geopolitical conditions of contemporary globalization. But it is clear that a planetary perspective was not on the descriptive horizon of the New Americanist project in 1990, no matter how much it might be implicated in the field’s earliest articulation of its anti-imperialist critical intentions. Pease’s revision is compelling not for its narrative substance, then, but for the disciplinary effect it achieves as a powerful strategy for renewing New Americanist critical and political agency. For in reformulating the field’s founding narrative in relation to a present it could never have satisfactorily conceived, Pease demonstrates how the invocation of the discourse of the state of the field works to subdue the tension between the designation of the present as the locus of the new and the epistemological problem of deciphering the present in the midst of the indeterminacy that characterizes it. In this, repetition reflects, even as it seeks to correct, the temporal conundrum attending New American Studies, where the demand for the new is the engine of both the field’s transformation and its ongoing critical continuity.

This tactical achievement is perhaps most important when viewed from the perspective of the critical subjectivity it imparts, whereby the discourse of the state of the field performs a crucial transferential function. It allows the New Americanist to read her own construction of the object of study *as* her relation to the world-historical entity it represents. In doing so, the refusal of identification with the field’s primary object of study—what Wolfe disparages as the New Americanist’s anti-Americanism—becomes the prototypical emblem of noncomplicity, defined against not only dominant ideological formations, but the

political authority of the U.S. state as well. Hence, as we have seen, Pease reads Wolfe's replication of the symbolic discourse of the Bush administration as itself a form of state violence, while maintaining an identificatory relation to social movements that Pease sees as the definitive mark of the field's exteriority to the emergent globalizing forms of U.S. power. But critical noncomplicity and historical noncomplicity are not synonymous, no matter how intricately each is bound to an idealization of the subject's self-conscious relation to politics and power. The ease with which the one can be taken for the other says a great deal about how New American Studies has been institutionalized to perform a commitment to the political imaginary of the alternative, sustaining the hope as well as the belief that its critical agency is a world-transforming one. If, as I have been suggesting, the repetition of the discourse of the state of the field performs this transferential relation, casting the critical act as a form of political transgression against the state, the effect for the practitioner must be understood as deeply comforting. For this reason, the repetition to which the field is committed needs to be read as something other than a mistake or a failure, as it generates a critical subjectivity that is one of the most important, seductive, and gratifying ends of New Americanism's disciplinary disposition.

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It is no doubt simplistic to say that retrospective narration is central to New Americanist disciplinary reproduction, as most academic fields are endowed with field-forming coherence through the authority conferred by attention to their own narratives of origin. One might even argue that New Americanism brings the concept of Cold War American Studies into being at the very moment in which an emergent generation seeks to authorize its own intellectual formation as the central critical agenda of the field. A deconstructive syntax would figure the relation this way: that Cold War American Studies does not precede New Americanism but is *its* product, which it then casts as its predecessor. In generating the conceptual apparatus within which Cold War American Studies takes historical shape, New Americanist discourse consolidates various critical impulses into a coherent field in order to forge a legible and legitimating distinction from its predecessor. Its disciplinary reproduction is thus contingent, as I have been discussing, on the discourse of the state of the field as the means to claim a critical perspective of exteriority both to its predecessor and to the geopolitical power of the object of study that provides its institutional name.

In this final section, I want to consider how the concern for origins at the heart of New Americanism's disciplinary reproduction is refracted across the field as a whole, becoming a resource for its political definition in ways that say a great deal about the field-defining pursuit that equates critical with historical noncomplicity. My focus will be on the discourse of national origin—always a dicey affair for Americanist inquiry, as so much of the idiom of exceptionalism collates around a euphoric investment in the postcolonial uniqueness of the U.S. nation-state and the democratic ideals on which its political rhetoric is based. For the New Americanist, this founding narrative is a vexed primal scene whose ideological complicities with the contemporary U.S. imperial state must be critically deciphered and overcome. In what follows, I focus on a debate about the political writings of Thomas Jefferson in order to more fully attend to the affective complexities of identificatory refusal. Such a refusal, as I have noted, cannot be understood as a singular project of negation, as Wolfe would have it, but must be read in ways that attend to the affirmation residing in the political imaginary of the alternative that governs the field. For it is in the sustenance of what analytically and affectively collates the perspective of exteriority that New American Studies locates the new as the figure of the present's political undoing.

In his controversial 2007 essay in *American Quarterly*, the signature journal of the U.S. American Studies Association, critical theorist (and non-Americanist) Michael Hardt seeks to reread Jefferson's political writings as a "way to restore or reinvent the concept of democracy."²² Hardt is well aware, as he puts it, that in "most parts of the world when you hear the word *democracy*, it is a good idea to run in the opposite direction, because the bombs are sure to start falling soon" (41). Still, he argues that "we should struggle over the concept rather than abandon it" and he seeks to do so by returning to Jefferson's political philosophy to find "a democratic critique of U.S. democracy" that might be useful to present political struggle (41). Hardt stages his project as an intervention into an intellectual "division of labor" that currently attends "the dominant U.S. tradition, particularly with respect to its founders," where the Right "celebrate[s it] unquestionably" while the Left is devoted "entirely to critique" (42–43). As a consequence, he argues, the Left has not only "abandoned [any] claim to identifying its legacy in that tradition," but also reproduced "the dominant tradition as if it were a unified whole" (43). Against these divisions, Hardt offers a third approach, one bent on reinterpreting the dominant tradition of U.S. thought in order to "recognize the conflicts within it, and thereby identify the liberatory alternatives" that remain alive today (43). In the terms I have used above, Hardt engages retrospective narration to forge an interesting

compromise between the two impulses that underlie New Americanist identificatory refusal. On the one hand, he seeks to formulate a relation of noncomplicity with the antiprogressive and imperialist project of America sustained by the Right through its uncritical regurgitation of exceptionalism; on the other hand, he wants to locate the alternative within dominant traditions, thereby cultivating the resonant political purchase of exteriority by emphasizing its historical residence within long-standing contestations over the meaning and form of U.S. democracy.

In their responses, Betsy Erkkila extends the affirmative impulse at work in Hardt's approach by explicating the subaltern possibilities of "Radical Jefferson," while Barry Shank rejects the effort altogether in order to hold open a notion of democracy that does not inherit the contradictions of "Jefferson, the Impossible."²³ On the face of it, these responses offer opposite readings not only of Hardt's essay, but of the critical utility of national founding for the political imaginary of New American Studies. In Erkkila's account, Hardt opens a discussion already well figured in Americanist scholarship by considering the revolutionary period and its philosophical underpinnings from a critical perspective that rejects the elite nationalism of traditional historiography in order to highlight the agencies of ordinary persons and to restore the democratic potential alive in nondominant formations of community, personhood, and everyday life. Erkkila's goal is to reanimate a revolutionary sensibility capable of attending to the present of the Bush era—"a time when a real rather than an imaginary Ahab is leading the ship of America" (277).

In seeking to revive "some of the more politically radical, alternative, and utopian dimensions of the American Revolution," Erkkila endorses Hardt's retrieval project, finding "that the glaring contradictions in Jefferson's political thinking—his views of blacks, Natives, and women; his ownership of slaves; his expansionist vision of the West; and his appropriation of Native lands—are not necessarily flaws in Jefferson's concept of democracy," no matter how much these aspects of his life might be read as moral failures (277). She thus focuses her essay on parsing the differences between Hardt's interpretation of Jefferson's writings and the historical meanings and everyday resonances of the concepts that Jefferson uses, with particular emphasis on "equality," "liberty," and "happiness" (277). Hers is a project of retrospective reanimation, even anticipation, one that seeks to discern what possibilities in the past have been lost to the present that could inspire left critical and political struggle for a democratic future yet to come. Hence she emphasizes, against Hardt's theoretical "abstraction," the "flesh and blood people whose actions contributed to the radicalism of Jefferson's thought and made the American Revolution possible" (287). These people—"Phillis

Wheatley and other African Americans . . . Pennsylvania radicals . . . the thousands . . . who escaped slavery and joined the king's forces wearing sashes that read *Liberty to Slaves*" are the "ordinary people who carried and would continue to carry the Revolution further than Thomas Jefferson or the revolutionary founders ever intended or imagined" (287). In this restoration of the figures of the historically marginalized and excluded, Erkkila claims "the radicalism of the Revolution . . . as a living legacy and a daily practice of democracy in the present time" (287).

While Shank shares Erkkila's impassioned political commitment to the present as both the frame and impulse for critical action, he begins his response by resisting any approach to Jefferson "solely as a political thinker" (291). To abstract Jefferson "from his life as a statesman, a plantation owner, and a slave master," he argues, is the kind of decontextualized reading that "gives most American studies scholars the willies" (291). As he puts it, "The foundational critical imperative of our field is to insist on the deep contextualization of all cultural production" (291). Still, Shank recognizes that "at this moment of profound crisis, critical scholars of the United States could use a powerful progressive concept of democracy"; hence he endorses "holding our own methodological principles in abeyance for just a moment" in order to entertain Hardt's suggestion, one that requires giving critical attention to a man who violated "almost every political principle he ever articulated" (291). Shank's essay tracks the ways in which Hardt reads Jefferson through the theoretical idioms of the well-known trilogy that he authored with Antonio Negri, which emphasizes the linkages between empire, the multitude, and the global commons.²⁴ Unlike Erkkila, who rejects Hardt's framing of Jefferson in contemporary theoretical terms in order to emphasize a revolutionary syntax born from and dedicated to ordinary life, Shank is compelled by the postnational potential of the concept of the multitude, especially as a critical counter to the nation-state, which he reads with Hardt as a fundamentally "singular" model of sovereignty and hence as an essentially antidemocratic one (298).

But while Shank affirms Hardt's theoretical impulse for the purposes of left critique, he believes that Jefferson lacked the ability to imagine the kind of "real substantial equality" that the multitude requires, as Jefferson's American Revolution consecrated a "people" through acts of racialized exclusion and committed government to the protection of capitalism from its first breath (293). Hence for Shank there is no politically useful concept of democracy to be culled from Jefferson's thought, as the contradictions he set into motion between the democratic ideal and its impoverished reality are finally *too congruent* with the ongoing "perversions" of democracy that accompany the imperial "pursuit of

profit" in the world today (291). In the end, then, Shank rejects Hardt's attempt to revisit the U.S. dominant tradition as a source for democratic revitalization, refusing any identification with Jeffersonian complicity in order to preserve a more authentic model of democratic achievement as the political aim of, and identity for, New Americanist critique. The "new" is thus preserved not as retrospective animation but as a mode of prediction, a way of engaging the past in order to secure the kind of future that New Americanist inquiry hopes to realize.

In the terms that interest me, we might say that both Erkkila and Shank deploy retrospective narration as their primary strategy for negotiating the temporal conundrum of the new. Shank interprets the failure of the founding moment of the U.S. as a contamination that requires New Americanists to embrace a vision of political life disarticulated from the complicities of the nation-state; Erkkila plumbs the past for ordinary actors to generate a counter discourse of revolution that can evoke new possibilities for the present, affirming a critical position of exteriority to "America" by pursuing the objects and analytics jettisoned from its dominant political tradition. While each position is expressed in a vastly different affective language, both invest in the idea of an alternative future in which democracy can be achieved by crafting New Americanist knowledge as a transformative critical agency.

To read their projects as opposed—taking Shank's rejection of the nation-state form as a rebuttal to Erkkila's attempt at subaltern rescue—would be to miss the point I seek to make: not only is the refusal to identify with "America" the critical mechanism that authorizes both arguments, but the critical subjectivity they both generate is central to the political imaginary of the alternative that underwrites New Americanism as a whole. In their pursuit of a position of exteriority to the power of their object of study, these different renderings of the possibility of democracy in "our own time" work by seeing "inside" the object's self-aggrandizing ideations from a present whose own epistemological contingencies are systematically foreclosed. This strategy is, as I have suggested above, paradoxical, as New Americanist scholarship repeatedly stages its critical agency in relation to the political emergency of the present, where the discourse of the new functions in multiple, even contradictory forms, as refusal, revision, and/or transcendence. Through the disciplinary syntax that emerges, the utility of critical practice is cast as a mode of resolution for the ongoing crisis of *now*—a now repeatedly described according to the imperialist activities of the object of study, not the epistemological crisis of the present in which both the object's agency and that of its critic must be discerned. But it is in this way that New American Studies produces and defends the convergence that si-

multaneously defines and drives it: the critical relation to the object of study is a political agency *and* the cultivation of critical noncomplicity guarantees historical noncomplicity as well.

None of this is to say that academic inquiry, New Americanist or not, is devoid of politics or of implication in contemporary political contestation. Nor am I seeking to retread, albeit in different language, the familiar sentiment that has long accompanied academic scholarship: that its displacement from “real” life and “real” political struggle makes its ruminations little more than self-infatuated acts of navel-gazing. I am not even interested in blaming the contraction of the public sphere for the hyperescalation of a form of professionalization whose claims to political urgency are hailed as subverting the commodification of academic life. Each of these familiar criticisms resounds *within the frame* I am trying to identify—a frame that assumes not simply that it is possible to sort out the relationship between politics and knowledge production, but that the present can provide a stable calculus for doing so. My point throughout this discussion has been otherwise: that the repeated invocation of the present as the scene of political crisis and obligation is, paradoxically, evidence of its systematic eclipse by the narrative formulations that now attend it—and further, that these formulations are necessary not only to sustain the critical subjectivity that is established and invoked by the disciplinary apparatus founding the field, but to assuage the profound anxiety that accompanies the pursuit of noncomplicity as both motive and goal of New Americanism itself.

* * *

This essay has sought to explore the ends of New American Studies by attending to the repetition of the discourse of the state of the field as a generative strategy of disciplinary reproduction. Without doubt, this itinerary risks reducing the critical terrain of a vibrant scholarly field to a few paradigmatic examples, giving readers the false impression that my aim is something other than registering the power and attraction of the narrative practices I have described. But I take it as rather obvious, if not axiomatic, that the impulse that drives this examination is the lure of the critical subjectivity into which I have been honed. For it is this subjectivity that I have performed and valued countless times, one that is always on the hunt for what betrays its best intentions, that relies on critique as an agency of truth and resistance, and that believes in revelation as a means of political transformation. To wonder over these “ends” is not to declare the project of New Americanism over, nor to

express hope that its future will make other kinds of critical wishes come true. Rather, it is to pay attention to the repetition of the political claim that sustains New Americanism in order to understand the stakes of its ongoing refusal to let that claim go.

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NOTES

1 It is impossible to provide a comprehensive archive, but one might begin by reading across signal texts that engage the transnational, international, postcolonial, or postnational. On the transnational, see Paul Giles, "Reconstructing American Studies: Transnational Paradoxes, Comparative Perspectives," *Journal of American Studies* 28, no. 3 (1994): 335–58; Priscilla Wald, "Minefields and Meeting Grounds: Transnational Analyses and American Studies," *American Literary History* 10, no.1 (1998): 199–218; and Leerom Medovoi, "Nation, Globe, Hegemony: Post-Fordist Preconditions of the Transnational Turn in American Studies," *interventions* 7, no. 2 (2005): 162–79. On internationalization, see Jane C. Desmond and Virginia R. Dominguez, "Resituating American Studies in a Critical Internationalism," *American Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (1996): 475–90; Günter Lenz, "Internationalizing American Studies: Predecessors, Paradigms, and Dialogical Cultural Critique—A View from Germany," in *Predecessors: Intellectual Lineages in American Studies*, ed. Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: VU Univ. Press, 1999), 236–55; Djelal Kadir, "Defending America Against Its Devotees," *Comparative American Studies* 2, no. 2 (2004): 135–52; and Sheila Hones and Julia Leyda, "Geographies of American Studies," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2005): 1019–32. For a consideration of the postcolonial, see Eva Cherniavsky, "Subaltern Studies in a U.S. Frame," *boundary* 2 23, no. 2 (1996): 85–110; C. Richard King, ed., *Postcolonial America* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2000); Brian T. Edwards, "Preposterous Encounters: Interrupting American Studies with the (Post) Colonial, or *Casablanca* in the American Century," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 23, nos. 1–2 (2003): 70–86; and Malini Johar Schueller, "Postcolonial American Studies," *American Literary History* 16, no. 1 (2004): 162–75. On the postnational, see Donald E. Pease, "The Politics of Postnational American Studies," *European Journal of American Culture* 20, no. 2 (2001): 78–90; Frederick Buell, "Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture," *American Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (1998): 548–91; and John Carlos Rowe, ed., *Post-Nationalist American Studies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2000).

2 Exceptionalism is always a weighty word to use in American Studies conversations, and today exceptionally so, given its critical currency as the term used to broadly critique U.S. American Studies in the heyday of its institutionalization in the post-World War II era, when—as the story goes—the U.S. state began in earnest to use mass education for a nationalist project of citizen building in a global effort both to differentiate itself from a fractured Europe and to counter the growing power of the Soviet Union. What was for many scholars a matter of the specificity of U.S. culture became, in this context, exceptionalist: not simply unique but universally representative of democratic nation formation and hence paradigmatically different from all other nations that had come before. In the exceptionalist view, "America" was beacon of democratic practice and possibility for the entire world. On exceptionalism's historical legacy, see especially Michael Kammen, "The Problem of American Exceptionalism: A Reconsideration," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1993): 1–43; Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity from 1493 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993); Daniel

T. Rodgers, "American Exceptionalism Revisited," *Raritan* 24, no. 2 (2004): 21–47; and Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2009).

3 The ritual of presidential addresses delivered to the U.S. American Studies Association is a case study for understanding the status of the discourse of the state of the field as the state of the field. Of these, see especially Janice Radway, "What's in a Name?" *American Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1999): 1–32; Mary Kelley, "Taking Stands: American Studies at Century's End," *American Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2000): 1–22; George Sanchez, "Working at the Crossroads: American Studies for the 21st Century," *American Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2002): 1–23; Amy Kaplan, "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2004): 1–18; Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005): 17–57; Emory Elliot, "Diversity in the United States and Abroad: What Does It Mean When American Studies Is Transnational?" *American Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2007): 1–22; and Philip J. Deloria, "Broadway and Main: Crossroads, Ghost Roads, and Paths to an American Studies Future," *American Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2009): 1–25. In addition, there have been numerous "blockbuster" anthologies that are routinely described as field-transforming statements, including Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1993); and *American Studies: An Anthology*, ed. Janice A. Radway, Kevin K. Gaines, Barry Shank, and Penny Von Eschen (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009).

4 As Michael Bérubé puts it, "It seems safe to say that over the past quarter-century the field has aligned itself with an anti-imperialist intellectual tradition in which U.S. history and culture are viewed critically with regard to the United States' history of conquest in the Western Hemisphere and with regard to its assumption of global power since World War II. Indeed, one wing of American studies has practically devoted itself to exposing the complicity of an earlier generation of American studies scholars . . . with the ideological machinery of the Cold War." "The Loyalties of American Studies," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2004): 226.

5 See Wiegman, "Romancing the Future: Internationalization as Symptom and Wish," in *American Studies: An Anthology*, ed. Kevin Gaines, Janice Radway, Barry Shank, and Penny Von Eschen (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 578–87; and "Outside American Studies: On the Unhappy Pursuits of Non-Complicity," *Rivistadi Studi Americani* 19 (2008): 35–78.

6 It is not my intent to take up critique in its multiple genealogical inheritances, as I am less interested in plotting its divergences across philosophical debates or disciplinary domains than in considering how its circulation as a mode of left political thinking has been institutionalized in New American Studies. For a very cursory archive of the philosophical discussion of critique, see Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *The Political*, ed. David Ingram (Blackwell Publishers, 2002): 191–211; and Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in *The Political*, ed. David Ingram (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002): 212–26, and "Non-Thinking in the Name of the Normative," *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 137–64.

7 On the former, see Rita Felski, "After Suspicion," *Profession* (November 2009): 28–35; Michael Warner, "Uncritical Reading," in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004), 13–38; Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108 (Fall 2009): 1–21; Anne Anlin Cheng, "Psychoanalysis Without Symptoms," *differences* 20, no. 1 (2009): 87–101; and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction Is about You," in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, ed. Eve Sedgwick (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1997), 1–40. On the latter, see Eva Cherniavsky, "Neocitizenship and Critique," *Social Text* 27, no. 2 (2009): 1–23; Michael Hardt, "The Militancy of Theory," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 1 (2011): 19–35; Talal Asad, Wendy

Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2009).

8 Cherniavsky, "Neocitizenship," 2. While Cherniavsky writes that "the defining aspiration of critique is to *unmake* this readable world, to reveal its incoherencies, contradictions, and the bad faith that governs its composition," she quite rightly acknowledges that "None of us may see the nuance of our critical practice rendered in this admittedly reductive sketch" (2). I take her point here as a compelling acknowledgment that while many of us who owe our intellectual formation to the political turn in the humanities might recognize the thoroughly formulaic ways in which critique has been institutionalized, we nonetheless hold to the belief—alive in left investments in criticality—that the reductions we discern are not our own.

9 Frederick C. Crews, "Whose American Renaissance?" *New York Review of Books* 35, no. 16 (1988). Please note that additional citations in the text are from the online link, which is not paginated. See also Crews, "The New Americanists," *New York Review of Books* 39, no. 15 (1992).

10 The essay appeared first in a special issue of *boundary 2* 17, no. 1 (1990) and was published later under the same title in Pease's edited collection, *Revisionary Interventions into the Americanist Canon* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1994).

11 For an exploration of "American American Studies," see Sheila Honess and Julia Leyda, "Towards a Critical Geography of American Studies," *Comparative American Studies* 2, no. 2 (2004): 185–203 and relatedly Liam Kennedy, "Spectres of Comparison: American Studies and the United States of the West," *Comparative American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2006): 135–50.

12 Leo Marx offers the most well-known defense of the Cold War generation against the New Americanist charge in "On Recovering the 'Ur' Theory of American Studies," *American Literary History* 17, no. 1 (2005): 118–34. For responses to his essay, see George Lipsitz, "Our America," *American Literary History* 17, no. 1 (2005): 135–40; and Amy Kaplan, "A Call for a Truce," *American Literary History* 17, no. 1 (2005): 141–47.

13 Alan Wolfe, "Anti-American Studies: The Difference between Criticism and Hate," *New Republic* 228, no. 5 (February 10, 2003): 26, 30.

14 This is not to say that New Americanism is either the first or only Americanist discourse to differentiate itself from the dominant ideological discourses of America, merely that it is the first to institutionalize such a disciplinary self-definition. Bryce Traister underscores this point when he writes that, "With the publication of *Ideology and Classic American Literature* in 1986 and *The New American Studies* in 1991, the political agency of Americanist critique became an *explicitly theorized* component of the business of American literary and cultural study" (emphasis mine). See Traister, "The Object of Study; or, Are We Being Transnational Yet?" *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010): 9 at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/864843hs>.

15 Traister, "Object of Study," 5.

16 In noting the "resurgence of the term 'the New American Studies' in the new millennium," Traister specifies that it should not "be confused with what now must be considered the "old 'new' American studies" vision of the early 1990s" ("Object of Study," 24). But as I indicate, the field imaginary that undertakes to write the "new" as a project of exteriority—whether in the more recent figures of the border, diaspora, international, or post-national—is consistent across the transnational turn that Traister uses as the basis of his distinction.

17 David Rubin, "Women's Studies, Neoliberalism, and the Paradox of the 'Political,'" in *Women's Studies for the Future: Foundations, Interrogations, Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2005), 257.

18 The other two were John Carlos Rowe, ed., *The New American Studies* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2002), and David Noble, *Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2002).

19 Donald E. Pease, "9/11: When Was 'American Studies After the New Americanists'?" *boundary 2* 33, no. 3 (2006): 77.

20 For an elaboration on this point, see Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2009).

21 In defining cultural justice, Pease cites Michael Denning's articulation in *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* which links identity oriented liberation movements and their "struggle to reassert the dignity of despised cultural identifications" to the history of "proletarian cultural movements and folk culture revivals that flourished around the world in the early twentieth century, stressing the dignity of working people and their cultural practices." (New York: Verso, 2004), 165.

22 Michael Hardt, "Jefferson and Democracy," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2007): 41–78.

23 Betsy Erkkila, "Radical Jefferson," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2007): 277–89; Barry Shank, "Jefferson, the Impossible," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2007): 291–99.

24 See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000); *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004); and *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009).

