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INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES AND WORLD LITERATURES
(10th Anniversary Issue)

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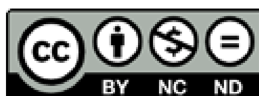

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A TIMELINE OF THE DECADE

Paweł Jędrzejko
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The idea of the offcial periodical of IASA was first formed among the participants of a meeting of the IASA Executive Council at the Rothermere American Institute of the University of Oxford, in September 2004. It was during that meeting that Djelal Kadir, IASA Founding President, Barabara Buchenau and Marietta Messmer (then of Georg-August University) raised the issue of the necessity of launching a newsletter which would facilitate communications among the IASA members. Yet, it was only in the beginning of 2006 that Michael Boyden (at the time of the University College Ghent, Belgium, now Uppsala University, Sweden) and Paweł Jędrzejko (of the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland) submitted a complete proposal to the IASA to launch a periodical, which would cater to the needs of the International American Studies Association, to the Organization's Executive Council. In March 2006, the founders were able to present it to Paul Giles, who, at the time, served as IASA President, and Theo D'Haen, then IASA Founding Executive Director, during a seminal meeting at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Upon their approval, as of September 2006, the *Review of International American Studies* officially became the organ of the International American Studies Association, with Michael Boyden as its Editor-in-Chief, Paweł Jędrzejko as the Associate Editor, Tomasz Adamczewski and Wojciech Liber of the Soft for Humans, Inc. as the journal's IT advisors, Karolina Wojdała as its graphic designer and Michał Derda-Nowakowski of ExMachina Publishers as its DTP specialist. The original *RIAS* Editorial Board consisted of Theo D'haen, Anders Olsson, Liam Kennedy, Sieglinde Lemke, Giorgio Mariani, Ian Tyrrell, Helmbrecht Breinig, Rosario Faraudo, the IASA Founding President and ideological forefather of *RIAS*, Djelal Kadir. Soon, the President's decision was ratified by the whole

of the Executive Council. As a result, IASA commissioned the design of the *RIAS* CMS System, which was launched at the end of August 2006 by the Soft For Humans, Inc. At the same time, the first call for papers was sent out to the IASA members. In September 2006, the inaugural issue of the *Review of International American Studies* finally saw the light of day.

In 2009, the Editors' team was strengthened by Cyraina Johnson-Roullier (Notre Dame University, USA), who joined the *Review* as Associate Editor. A year later, after three years of brilliant service, Michael Boyden stepped down, handing the leadership of the Journal to professor Johnson-Roullier. In the same year, Nancy Earle (Memorial University of Newfoundland St. John's, Canada), joined the team as the second Associate Editor.

2010 was a year of a radical transformation of the *Review of International American Studies*. With Ex-Machina changing their profile and the switch from the original CMS to Korora Systems, Paweł Jędrzejko was authorized by the IASA Executive Council to sign a contract with another DTP company, the M-Studio, Inc. The *RIAS* received a brand new graphic design by Hania Traczyk (then of the M-Studio) and implemented strict procedures of double-blind peer-reference for the feature texts submitted.

In 2011, Nancy Earle stepped down from her position as Associate Editor and György "George" Tóth (then of the Charles University of Prague, Czech Republic) joined the Editors' team in her place. The Editors' work was then supported by the extended Editorial Board, consisting of Amy Kaplan, Maureen Montgomery, Enikő Bollobás, Ulf Hannerz, Sun Youzhong, Jørn Brøndal, Amanda Lagerkvist, Christopher Saunders, Theo D'Haen, Liam Kennedy, Sieglinde Lemke, Ian Tyrell, Helmbrecht Breinig, Rosario Faraudo, Djelal Kadir, Anders Olsson, and Giorgio Mariani. Two years later, the Editor's team expanded to include Meghan McKinney of the Notre Dame University as Senior Copyeditor.

Since then, the team published six issues of the *Review of International American Studies*, including one issue in Spanish and one in Portuguese, thus living up to the IASA's hemispheric mission. Beginning with Vol. 7, No. 1 (2014), titled *Oceans Apart: In Search of New Wor(l)ds* (guest-edited by Agnieszka Woźniakowska and Anna Łakowicz-Dopiera), the journal's production was taken over by the Uni-

versity of Silesia Press in Katowice, Poland, which incorporated it in its online distribution and evaluation systems, thus granting the *Review of International American Studies* the much needed visibility. Distributed via the University of Silesia Press network, the *RIAS* became available through such important institutions as CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library), BazHum, MLA, ASA and many others, thus reaching out to thousands of readers worldwide.

In mid-2016, when Giorgio Mariani's term as President of the International American Studies Association came to its end, the journal transformed again, its Editors' team expanding. Professor Mariani, who formerly served as *RIAS* guest-editor and, at times, as a peer-referee, joined the team as the journal's Associate Editor, contributing his experience and enthusiasm.

In January 2017, after eight years of dedicated service, Cyraina Johnson-Roullier stepped down from her position of the Editor-in-Chief, handing the reins of the *Review of International American Studies* over to Giorgio Mariani. Supported by the journal's Managing Editor Paweł Jędrzejko (of the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland), two Associate Editors: György Tóth (now of the University of Stirling, UK, *RIAS* Associate Editor) and John E. Dean (of Texas A&M International University, United States)—as well as *RIAS* Senior Copyeditors: Meghan McKinney Jones (of the Department of English University of Notre Dame, United States) and Marta Cafiso (Dipartimento di Studi Europei, Americani e Interculturali Università "Sapienza" di Roma, Italy), Giorgio Mariani is now responsible for the growth of the *Review of International American Studies* and the quality of its continued service renderd both to the membership of the International American Studies Association—and to all academics specializing in hemispheric and transoceanic American studies worldwide.

Wishing the *Review of International American Studies* a very happy Tenth Anniversary, on behalf of the Editors' team I would like to express our most sincere thanks to all the fantastic colleagues whose incredibly hard work, dedication and unabating committment made *RIAS* a journal of international significance.

Paweł Jędrzejko
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INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES AND THE QUESTION OF WORLD LITERATURE

An Introduction

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Since its inception, International American Studies (IAS) had to define itself against the larger backdrop of global or world studies. However, as Paul Giles notes in his contribution to this special issue of *RIAS* marking the 10th anniversary of the journal and devoted to "International American Studies and the Question of World literature," "World Literature in its current institutional manifestation is a much more recent phenomenon" than IAS, and may have "accumulated academic prestige more rapidly and securely than International American Studies has so far managed."[1] Whatever their different temporal and institutional trajectories, however, both IAS and World literature may be seen as efforts to come to terms with the momentous historical, political, social, and technological changes of the past few decades. Put simply, both can be considered attempts to fashion new epistemological tools better suited to making sense of a globalized world, so that, no matter how (relatively?) different their objects of study might be, a set of theoretical concerns would appear to be shared by both fields. Both students of IAS and World Literature, for example, need to venture beyond the traditional categories of the nation and of national cultures, by coming to terms with the social, historical, and lin-

1. This issue of *RIAS* brings together revised versions of the papers and responses originally delivered at the IASA Symposium on "International American Studies and the question of World literature," held at the Sapienza University of Rome on April 14–15, 2016.

guistic complexities that such a move entails. Both have to do so in a way that "opens" one's field and yet preserves its *raison d'être*, especially at a time when the humanities are under attack and the defense of academic positions and credentials—all calls for "interdisciplinarity" notwithstanding—is of paramount importance. Both need to rethink the parameters of their disciplinary specializations, that is, without pulling the institutional rugs from under their feet—a precarious balancing act which, in the age of the corporate university, with its rage for classifying, evaluating, and ranking, is far from easy to perform.

These are only a few of the many problems faced by theorists and practitioners of both IAS and World Literature. So far, however, comparative discussions of these two fields have been rare. This may be surprising in light of the fact that—to quote from Giles' essay again—"some of the same academic personnel have been instrumental in the development of both movements." Perhaps, as Giles suggests, this has something to do with the need for each field to first define itself against its obvious "others": US American Studies in the case of IAS, and Comparative Literature in that of World Literature. Whatever the case might be, the time has come to question disciplinary boundaries not necessarily to erase them altogether, but to redraw them as we struggle to come to terms with a changing world where cultural and literary studies cannot simply remain what they were decades ago. This issue of *RIAS* has been imagined as a small, yet hopefully stimulating initial step in the direction of a larger debate that is likely to continue for years to come, as the humanities try to redefine their role in an academic environment increasingly subject to neoliberal doxa.

In the opening essay of this volume, Paul Giles considers some of the ways in which work done over the last ten-fifteen years in these two fields may be brought into some kind of productive and fruitful tension. The overarching question that both fields need to struggle with turns out to be, unsurprisingly, that of the local and the global. This question is important not only for IAS, which usually try to connect some feature of the history, culture, or politics of the Americas with what lies, more or less, "outside," but also for World Literature in so far as the "world" is always a world constructed from a particular local and/or lin-

guistic standpoint. This is a point that Cristina Giorcelli repeatedly underscores in her response to Giles, especially when she insists that "a language, any language—as any good translator knows—entails a way of seeing and understanding, and it thus proclaims its *difference*: a difference that refuses to be reduced to a sort of universal essentialism."

The problem of sameness and difference is of course one of the ways in which the question of the relation between local and global may be translated, and it is a problem very much debated in theories of globalization, which share with IAS a preoccupation with thinking the world as a whole while still preserving an "outside." As Ulfried Reichardt shows in the essay that follows Giles's, any meaningful discussion of this, and other thorny issues facing the two movements, must perforce entail a reconsideration of whatever theoretical tools we have to make sense of the new world we live in. His is a veritable tour de force through the very terms we rely on as we try to think and feel beyond the nation. His critical map of the various ways in which keywords such as "world," "literature," and "globalization" are being redefined, does not, however, aim at reaching some overarching synthesis. On the contrary, according to Reichardt, "We have to accept the many worlds within the one world as a shifting and contested field of overlapping and clashing views on the world." To this end, he argues that one of the tasks of current "world literature" (he refers to Dave Eggers' *The Circle*, in particular) is to investigate those technological and specifically digital innovations that hail from the US "but reach every place on the globe, strongly influencing the ways in which the world is understood."

In her response to Reichardt, Marina Camboni calls attention to what she sees as a red thread that runs through his argument, "connecting German idealism and US culture via transcendentalist philosophy [...]. The word 'kosmos,' in his text, links the German Alexander Von Humboldt to Walt Whitman's 'A Passage to India' and to an image of the world as a unity produced by communication and transportation technology." While appreciating the effort to construct a meaningful and synthetic picture of the world that animates Reichardt's intervention, Camboni fears that any reduc-

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tion of the world to a "cognitive pattern" will come only at great cost—the cost of losing sight of the agents of globalization.

All reductions—and there is no theory, no philosophy, no cognition without some form of "reductionism"—come at some cost, but perhaps today we feel this to be a particularly vexing problem because the proverbial crisis of "master narratives" is matched by an unprecedented and truly gargantuan availability of all sorts of data. We know that any kind of universalizing or totalizing is problematic but, at the same time, we also know that without some form of what Fred Jameson famously described as "cognitive mapping," we could not even step out of our doors, both factually and metaphorically. In a sense, however, we may take heart in the realization that this is a problem we confront not only as we try to make sense of our present, but also as we struggle to reconstruct—to resort to an old-fashioned key word of the Americanists' repertoire—a "usable past."

This is one of the lessons to be drawn from Cristina Iuli's wide-ranging discussion of Atlantic Studies but, in her case, it is the problem of the archive that takes center stage—or, better, of both the archive and the *missing* archive, as recent studies of the trans-, circum-, and cis-Atlantic have highlighted. As Iuli reminds us, it is a ghostly trace—"the (missing) Journal of the First Voyage" of Christopher Columbus—that "grounds the epistemology of a New World archive and of (an imagined) America as punctuated by elisions, absences, and erasures." These gaps that ask to be read, configure "the documentary and the spectral; the bodies of natives and native environments and their disappearance; the European, universalist history of the modern, (white) Atlantic, and the post-postcolonial resistance of the black (trans) Atlantic; *the Archival* (the scripted, inscribed) and its conditions of exteriority, that is, *the vanished*." Seen from Iuli's viewpoint, the question of the relation between IAS and World literature may be recast as one in which both the "solid" (land-based, inscribed) and the "liquid" (sea-based, submerged) "foundations" of the modern world must be made visible and interrogated. Literature remains for Iuli of paramount importance in this critical, philosophical, and narrative enterprise. Far from being marginal, literature is in Iuli's view "the best technology we have [...] because it thrives in the difference between

the saying and the said of any deposition by punctuating texts with repressions, erasures, and other unresolved elements."

In his response to Iuli, Ugo Rubeo underlines the pivotal role that Jacques Derrida's "Archive Fear. A Freudian Impression" plays in her argumentation. As he puts with admirable clarity, the challenge for contemporary researchers is, "how to envision and manage an entity [...] like the archive [...] originally intended as a closed, orderly, system, while it appears evident that its very renewal, and ultimately its survival, depend upon its being open to external, largely disorderly influences." Rubeo sees Iuli's solution in her suggestion that we construct "a counterarchive intended to challenge the silence provoked by white Western amnesia and reticence." In this counterarchive, performative statements and imaginative narrations would play a role equal to those of historical documents. Rubeo adds *Benito Cereno* to the texts discussed by Iuli, as Melville's story not only mentions Babo's silence and the manipulation of the trial's documents, but also provides "a dramatic *mise en scène* of that very process of erasure of possible counter-memories perpetrated by the Atlantic colonial tradition."

The new Atlantic Studies, by way of its insistence on the disappearance of bodies, languages, and cultures during the middle passage, which nevertheless persist as traces in folk knowledge and rituals, powerfully reminds us of the "unknown past" that marks the beginning of both "America" and the modern world, and therefore of World literature as well. Moreover, with their focus on a "liquid modernity" different from the one described in Zygmunt Bauman's work, Atlantic Studies can be imagined as part of a larger Oceanic Studies, whose importance to global and world literature studies is self-evident. As Patricia Yeager put it in the opening essay of a 2010 special issue of *PMLA*, "We have grown myopic about the role that seas and oceans play in creating ordinary histories and culture" (524). As we look for an alternative to land- and nation-based epistemologies, it should be useful to keep in mind that "we are mostly made of water: not geo- but aquacentric," and that, "Earth's commerce still depends on oceans. Ninety percent of the world's goods (most of what we eat or type on or wear) still travels in container ships" (523).

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The circulation of both goods, people, and ideas is of crucial significance also in Mena Mitrano's provocative reading of "Italian Theory as American Studies." Her focus, too, is trans-Atlantic, but the object of her observations is explicitly theory as both concept and practice. Of course, as Edward Said observed more than thirty years ago, "Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel," and all theory is in a sense "traveling theory" (226). "Italian theory" is no different, and indeed the name itself betrays its traveling origin in so much as, as Mitrano writes, it "is a name given within an Anglophone context (Italian Theory is called by its English name even in Italy)." Like "French Theory," also "Italian Theory" is in a significant way an American theory as well. Therefore, the question arises regarding its place within American Studies, especially at a time when, by redrawing its boundaries, American Studies turns into IAS. The point, of course, is not to assign a national identity to theory but, on the contrary, to realize once again the fact "that the act of recognition hinges on misrecognition amounts to a lot more than a subjective failure in the field practitioner; it constitutes the very condition of illumination."

The "diasporic logic" that Mitrano invokes in reference to the work of Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, may help us in moving beyond what may be described as one of the constitutive frictions of American Studies. The discipline has been trying hard to reconceive itself as a "hybrid borderland" and yet it has also been constantly engaged—as Carlo Martinez emphasizes in his response to Mitrano's essay—in a "somewhat obsessive retelling of its own story." "Italian Theory"—as Donald Pease has acknowledged in a recent essay on which Mitrano has much to say—has played a key role in complicating not only the conceptual map but the genealogy itself of American Studies. One need only think of the role played by such diverse thinkers as Gramsci and Agamben in the emergence of the New Americanists. Even though "Italian Theory" has always been in some sense an American filiation, it can also become a tool to subvert Americanness. One is reminded here that also one of the key texts of the (old) Americanist discourse was indebted to a (different kind of) "Italian Theory." F.O. Matthiessen was explicit about having drawn inspiration for his *American Renaissance* from Francesco de Sanctis's *Storia della letteratura*

italiana, and confessed a special debt to Benedetto Croce's own understanding of form in the *Storia*. What Mitrano identifies as a series of "interdependent moments of deterritorialization" may therefore be older than one would at first imagine.

All the contributions I have sketched so far focus on knowledge-production—on how we go about building paradigms that would help us take a hold of the slippery universe we inhabit. Djelal Kadir's essay would seem to strike a different note as its explicit focus is on "agnotology," though, as we shall see in a moment, understanding how knowledge is occluded may be equally crucial in making sense of our current world. "Agnotology," Kadir explains, is, "literally, the science of ignorance." The concept, he insists, "is there to remind us that what is not known becomes just as important, if not more crucial than what is known. […] [T]he doxa of imperial epistemology rests on what must be kept from being known, on what perforce must be ignored. Hegemony's understanding of the potential of ignorance, in other words, makes the production, management, and sanctioning of ignorance of paramount importance." One of the several merits of Kadir's intervention is to highlight how "willful ignorance" turns into a "political project." In his essay he calls attention, in particular, to those instances in which "the convergence of imperial impulse, willful ignorance, and world literature" translates into "a fateful triangle that becomes illustrative of the fate of dissent and also serves as precedent-setting template for wars of choice as instrument of capital and the securing of competing vested interests, economic and territorial, all behind the ideological screen of national consolidation."

The Trump quotation ("I love the poorly educated! They are the smartest people, the most loyal people") Kadir has chosen as epigraph was already there in April 2016, when he delivered an earlier draft of his essay. In his response to Kadir, Manuel Broncano has understandably chosen to update his original comments also in light of the new conditions brought about by the election of Trump to the US presidency. He duly underlines how current populist discourse enshrines "ignorance as the apex of happiness," but he also reminds us that the alarming resurgence of Know-Nothingness in the US (and elsewhere) stigmatized by Kadir,

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is tempered by the persistence of a rich tradition of "resistance and contestation." Broncano, as his references to Fray Bernardino de Sahagún and Roger Williams attest, insists that from the early days of colonial America there were important voices opposing the spread of ignorance as a tool of Empire. This is not to say we should feel any better about the contemporary situation in the US, as his evocation of the nightmarish world of George Orwell implies.

Urgent political concerns also animate the final essay of this issue of *RIAS*. The title of Markha Valenta's contribution ("Abandoning America the Better to Save America") has a nicely ambivalent ring to it. It could easily work for an article meant to criticize—as many have done—the "transnational turn" as a move to make American Studies legitimate and more palatable in a globalized world. However, though fully aware of the complications entailed in any internationalization of American Studies, she by no means wishes to abandon this project. Indeed, Valenta actually wants to sustain and expand the scope of transnational American Studies (whose recent history she ably traces) in order to reach a genuine decentering of the US. In her view, the problem is that "when American Studies goes international, the focus remains on the ways in which the gaze from elsewhere is directed at America. The fact that this gaze at America is one of many gazes directed both within and abroad—in relation to one another—that is, that a gaze is embedded in a tapestry of gazes, *including ones directed elsewhere than at America*, is insufficiently incorporated." The only way to truly provincialize (my term) the US, therefore, "would be to approach the question of the subject, object and method of American Studies from an explicitly pluralist, democratic sensibility that subsumes 'America' to the 'global' and to global projects for just pluralist relations."

Valenta's essay raises a number of thorny issues that would merit a very long discussion. In my response to her rich piece, I limit my focus to two. The "tapestry of gazes" is a very evocative image, but one wonders *who* would be able to apprehend it in all its wealth of colors and texture? Isn't that "tapestry" another name for the unreachable totality of world relations, another name—that is—for a form of global knowledge that very few scholars, no matter how learned, polyglot, and incredibly smart, would be

able to envision, let alone master? It is one thing to have a theoretical knowledge that one's gaze is just one of many, and quite another to be able to relate that gaze in relation to an infinity of others. Another problem I mention in my response concerns the concept of "egalitarian pluralism" that Valenta proposes as the ideal around which a soundly democratic American Studies should rebuild itself. I am not faulting Valenta for not being more specific about the concept, given the relative brevity of her essay, and I am sure that I would wholeheartedly subscribe to the ethical imperatives underpinning it. However, I do wonder why the word "socialism" never appears once in her argument, just as I wonder, more generally, about the virtual erasure of the Cold War in most discussions of international American Studies.

In more than one way, Valenta's essay—even though it does not engage explicitly the question of World Literature—circles back to some of the questions raised in the early essays of this issue. To the extent that we were to subsume 'America' to the 'global' wouldn't we be subsuming American Studies to World Literature studies? Is it feasible? Is it desirable? What intellectual and political risks would we run into by pursuing this strategy? Most importantly, from which global movements for "just pluralist relations" should we take inspiration? These questions will be with us for a long time, and *RIAS* will continue to address them.

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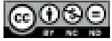

WORLD LITERATURE AND INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES

Convergence, Divergence, and Contest

Paul Giles
University of Sidney
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The question of World Literature and its relation to the formation of International American Studies is a complex and interesting topic, one that touches on many institutional and intellectual aspects of these overlapping fields. The internationalization of American Studies in a broad theoretical sense can be said to have started in earnest in the 1990s: Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, which proposed a transatlantic matrix for African American culture, was published in 1993, and the first World Congress of the International American Studies Association itself took place in the Netherlands in 2003, after several years of prior planning. However, World Literature in its current institutional manifestation is a much more recent phenomenon—David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* was published in 2003—and though some of the same academic personnel have been instrumental in the development of both movements (notably Djelal Kadir and Theo d'Haen, who both co-edited the 2011 *Routledge Companion to World Literature*), my general sense is that World Literature as a subject has accumulated academic prestige more rapidly and securely than International American Studies has so far managed. In terms of academic politics, there are, I think, some fairly obvious reasons why this should have been the case. Damrosch's definition of World Literature as that which "gains in translation" has ensured that World Literature has been invested primarily in literature in English, with the global Anglophone sphere facilitating the publication of anthologies and thereby incorporating all other languages within its global

remit (288). Those who have opposed the World Literature movement, notably Emily Apter in her 2013 book *Against World Literature: On The Politics of Untranslatability*, have invoked linguistic difference as what Apter called "a deflationary gesture toward the expansionism and gargantuan scale of world-literary endeavors" (3), and she talked here of trying to wean World Literature out of its Anglophone comfort zone towards a broader recognition of cultural difference.

But departments of Comparative Literature, priding themselves as they have traditionally done on an intimate knowledge of specific languages, have fared relatively poorly in the academy over the past fifty years, and given their marginal status they do not carry so much heft in terms of university finance or governance. If the institutional opponent of World Literature has been the weak political unit of Comparative Literature, the perennial antagonist of International American Studies has been the nationalistic fervor associated with the American Studies movement in the United States, a far more powerful opponent in terms of government sponsorship, diplomatic underpinnings, and, perhaps most importantly of all, the thoroughly naturalized romanticism that has made the articulation of an American Studies heritage a condition of professional identity for scholars working within the United States. I recall being at the American Studies Association (ASA) meeting in San Francisco some years ago, and participating with the late lamented Guenter Lenz in a panel discussing international frameworks for the subject. We were challenged by a member of the audience who said the only reason he joined the ASA in the first place was in the interests of furthering social progress and embodying his particular version of the American Dream, and he could not understand what we as outsiders hoped to "get out of it," as he put it, if we did not share a similar sense of engagement. This is the same kind of cultural insiderism that used to be associated fifty years ago with the Institute for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto, where the guiding principle was that by subscribing to the medieval field, you were implicitly supporting as a true believer the idea of medieval values or a reconstituted medieval synthesis. The notion that it might be possible to analyze the United States as one nation

among others within a complex material sphere, contemplating it in a comparatively neutral way in relation to the ideological vectors sustaining and crisscrossing it, is an approach deeply offensive to those for whom American exceptionalism, in either overt or sublimated forms, provides the intellectual template that underwrites their subject's *raison d'être*.

It is certainly not my intention here to devalue the important contributions made by World Literature to the formation of literary studies according to an enlarged planetary scale. Mads Rosendahl Thomsen has commented shrewdly on how it is "difficult at present to give convincing arguments as to why anybody should be interested in studying the literature of just one nation" (1), although he argued how World Literature "will always be a world literature as seen from a particular place" and will therefore be involved always in an implicit dialectic between local and global. Franco Moretti has of course also done important work to shift the axis of analysis from microcosmic text to macrocosmic superstructure, in his observation that "the literature around us now is unmistakably a planetary system" (54). One potential hazard of World Literature, though, as outlined by Pheng Cheah in his recent important book *What Is a World?*, is that it reproduces the Hegelian philosophy of world history, which anchored worldly events to an explicitly teleological understanding of time purporting to overcome temporal finitude. A "normative theory of world literature is based on an understanding of the world as a temporal category," argued Cheah: "The world is a normative temporal category, and not the spatial whole made by globalization [...] Transnational literary relations are relations of power and domination [...] [not an] enchanted and peaceful world of pure aesthetic creation" (6, 16, 32). In Cheah's eyes, Goethe's old idea of *Weltliteratur*, World Literature, as encompassing a universal spirit is thus recapitulated in Hegel's notion of *Bildung* as "the imposition [aufgeprägt] of a universal quality upon a given content" (63). This, I would suggest, is one of the reasons for the institutional success of World Literature, which speaks to a universalist design through which the material conditions of national formations are simply transcended.

In this sense, I would argue that there are closer parallels than some contemporary theorists would like to acknowledge between

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World Literature in the twenty-first century and Comparative Literature in the 1950s, which sought, under the aegis of Erich Auerbach and René Wellek, simply to rise above the fractious political divisions that had resulted in the Second World War. By contrast, the intellectual genealogy of International American Studies, I would suggest, can be traced back not to Hegel but to Marx, not so much the Marxist conception of economic infrastructure, but rather the kind of geographical materialism propounded by David Harvey, which has sought specifically to position what he calls the "new imperialism" of the United States on the empirical contours of a world map. For Harvey, the United States is a country, not an idea; it is a material phenomenon, not an abstraction derived inductively from idealist formations, or from what Jacques Derrida might have called the specter of exceptionalism. Much of the most revealing work in International American Studies over recent years has come from comparative theorists such as Harry Harootunian, who contrasted temporal formations in Japan in the middle of the twentieth century with those coming out of the United States. Such sentiments of missionary zeal, often generated explicitly by the American Studies movement in the wake of World War II, were designed to show Japanese culture how it was intrinsically belated and anachronistic. This kind of missionary American Studies always sought to compare Japanese time to the models of liberal progress associated with North American time, so that the Japanese came to feel themselves to be living in two time zones simultaneously:

> the assessment of modernity [...] often slipped into an adversarial assault against the West, especially the United States—pejoratively known as 'Americanism'—that led to waging intellectual war with history in order to resist being assimilated by it. Specifically, this struggle against history meant fending off the progressive segmentation of time and the swift succession of events that threatened to undermine any chance for stabilizing daily life. But the struggle also sought to stem the confusion caused by the splitting that resulted from mapping the historical experience of the West onto Japan. (Harootunian 46)

Kuan-Hsing Chen, in his book *Asia as Method*, similarly described how America in the second half of the twentieth century had succeeded in colonizing the collective unconscious of Taiwan to such

an extent that to oppose America appeared to involve engaging in a similar process of psychological "splitting" and disorientation: "Being anti-American is like opposing ourselves, and to love Taiwan is to love America. This is why we cannot oppose US imperialist intervention" (186). Both Harootunian and Chen thus analyzed how the United States in the second half of the twentieth century came to colonize Asia not so much politically or economically but in relation to a deeply embedded cultural imaginary.

Such analytical demystifications are very different in kind from the special issue of *American Quarterly* in 2015 on "Pacific Currents," which struck me as obscurantist in the way it approached the whole world from the perspective of Hawaii—the guest editors were from the University of Hawaii at Manoa—and idealized oceanic formations and Indigenous cultures, while entirely overlooking three centuries of colonial in-fighting in the Pacific region (Lyons and Tengan 545–74). Indeed, from reading this special issue, one would have thought that the whole historical legacy of British and German imperialism in the South Pacific, and the entire national formations of Australia and New Zealand, simply did not exist. Colonialism has often represented a blind-spot in the construction of American Studies, in part because Americanists have not wanted to engage with a situation in which their privileged nation might be seen as politically subjugated, in part because the utopian and Manichaean tendencies that currently galvanize this subject formation tend to be uncomfortable with what colonial scholars Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts have aptly described as the "messy beginnings" of American national consciousness. The project of Schueller and Watts argued "that the early cultural history of the United States is best understood in the context of extra-national historical and cultural models," thus questioning "the very idea of a consolidated originary vision of both a centralized national identity and a singular oppositional resistance" (6). It is far easier to idealize Native American or Indigenous cultures, to abhor all settler colonialism as inherently evil, than to consider in a more complex fashion how colonial power, national identity and native resistance were all interwoven with one another in complicated and multidirectional ways. Lisa Lowe's recent book *The Intimacy of Four Continents*, which I think is very interesting for the way

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it aligns nineteenth-century novels with a variety of global trade routes and interconnections, nevertheless seems to me to relapse ultimately into a unidirectional focus, within which the traditional American ambition of global hegemony is simply turned on its head, so that Chinese coolies and African laborers appear as no more than the counterparts to British imperial and American capitalist power. This is simply to reconstitute the premise of American empire from an inverted position, rather than acknowledging how US assumptions of global transparency and planetary communication were constantly being thwarted and interrupted by complicated local affairs. To appropriate American Studies as a vehicle for the liberation of Pacific Island cultures, in other words, is to impose an inappropriately Manichaean model of liberation and damnation in a geographical context where, as the Australian-born anthropologist Nicholas Thomas and others have observed, the binary oppositions of Messianic freedom do not readily apply.[1]

I recently contributed an essay on "Globalization" to a Cambridge critical anthology on American Literature of the 1990s, and re-reading some of those novels by exponents of multiculturalism at that time—Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine,* Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*—it was chastening to realize how dated many of these narratives now appear. All of these fictional works, narrated by female protagonists, tell stories of immigration and accommodation within the broad matrix of US culture, with their clear message being that American literature should be seen as made up of multinational strands. Mukherjee's *Jasmine* tracks the progress of its heroine from the Hindu constraints of a small Indian village to Elsa County, Iowa, with the central protagonist priding herself on her capacity for change and Jasmine's openness to personal "transformation" being linked explicitly to the American frontier myth: "Adventure, risk, comfortably in transformation; the frontier is pushing indoors through uncaulked windows" (240). Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, published in 1990, is set in the Philippines of the 1950s, and it evokes the hybrid nature of this particular island society, where influences from American popular culture

1. For the argument that Edward Said's model of orientalist subjugation is "not helpful for the Pacific," see Thomas 17.

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have become all-pervasive. But the heroine Rio grows up to live in the United States, in the midst of all the American popular culture she experienced as a child only by proxy, and the format of this genre involves the mediation of a distant, overseas past through the voice of a narrator who looks back at her native heritage from a position safely ensconced within the American heartland.

This is globalization within an almost entirely domesticated compass, the stuff of contemporary university programs in global awareness, where extraneous values are folded comfortably into traditional American pedagogical investments in liberal diversity. In 1997, Slavoj Žižek aligned "multiculturalism" with what he called "the cultural logic of multinational capitalism," one in which "Western cultural imperialism [...] treats *each* local culture the way the colonizer treats colonized peoples—as 'natives' whose mores are to be carefully studied and respected," with Žižek going on to describe "multiculturalism" as "a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism," a "racism with a distance" (44). Again, I do not want simply to dismiss American writing of the 1990s which was exploring, even if in an inchoate manner, the embryonic appearance of a global imaginary, and in particular Bob Shacochis's novel *Swimming in the Volcano*, published in 1993 but set sixteen years earlier on the fictional Caribbean island of St. Catherine, seems to me a splendid imaginative account of the uncomfortable American transition from a national to a global imaginary, with all of the psychological processes of destabilization that go along with such a process of deterritorialization. But that American literary idiom of the 1990s is now beginning to appear as a historical phenomenon, rather like the Beat novels of the 1950s or the Dust-bowl novels of the 1930s, and it is important to recognize how American texts of this era were circumscribed by both historical and geographical markers.

Such twentieth-century styles are, I suspect, radically different in kind from the more innovative work that will probably be done in international American studies over the next generation or two. I could imagine, for instance, a revisionist account of American literature written by a scholar in China that would hold in abeyance all the traditional US formulas of liberal progress and choose to focus instead on issues of class conflict, environmental politics

and colonial power struggles going back to the Revolutionary eras in both America and China. Most US academic transactions with Asia still have an old-fashioned missionary status, with famous scholars flying out from Ivy League institutions to spread the good news about US advances in scholarship, but in the more carefully calibrated and globally nuanced world of the twenty-first century, there will be more scope for reciprocity and for the decentering of US hegemony by intellectual vectors from elsewhere. In his 2014 novel *The Bone Clocks*, English author David Mitchell (a great favorite of Fredric Jameson, incidentally) has a scene set in Shanghai in the near future, 2018, where the narrator remarks: "When I was a boy the USA was synonymous with modernity: now it's here [...] Shanghai's aura is the color of money and power, its e-mails can shut down factories in Detroit, denude Australia of its iron ore, strip Zimbabwe of its rhino horn, pump the Dow Jones full of either steroids or financial sewage."[17] In his essay "From Marco Polo to Leibniz," Umberto Eco suggested that interactions between different cultures can take the form of conquest, cultural pillage, or exchange, along with the various power politics associated with them, and though much globalization emerging from the United States has characteristically involved what I would call a form of soft colonialism, where the overseas culture is suffered to exist only as the extension of an assumed US hegemony, it is likely in future that a greater interpenetration of cultural alterity—working from the outside in, as well as from the inside out—will help crucially to reshape the American global imaginary (53–76). Reflecting the current constellation of academic interests, Robert Young commented recently on how "the world has come to globalize the United States," but international American studies will have come to intellectual maturity when the United States is more cognizant of its position within a complex global world (as quoted in Apter 40).

All of these ambitions represent arduous, long-term goals, and they are not likely to be accomplished overnight, or indeed within the timespan of a single generation. World Literature, as I have suggested, has been successful as an academic subject in part because its underlying assumptions have fitted so comfortably with a Hegelian rhetoric of spiritual progress that can be traced back as far

as Goethe. International American Studies, on the other hand, has from the beginning run into obstacles of all kinds, from the vested interests of existing national associations to the financial influence of diplomatic agencies, to the exceptionalist instincts of scholars wedded to certain forms of identity politics. But if progress has been slow, it has also, I would argue, been sure. One of the reasons Barack Obama has been so unpopular during his second presidential term is because he has been trying to reconcile the American public's expectations with his own sense of the country's profoundly altered place in the world, when the logic of outsourcing and the dynamics of the transpacific partnership will inevitably change in the long term ways in which the American middle class positions itself in relation to the emergent economies of China and India. The phenomenon of Donald Trump's political popularity should not, I think, be a surprise to scholars of international American Studies, since this kind of resentment and anger has been brewing for a long time in the United States, and not just within the purlieus of the white working class. I remember giving a talk about ten years ago at a university in Missouri, where I made the quite unexceptionable claim that some of Frederick Douglass's political and religious views in his later life were shaped by his interactions with his German mistress, Ottilie Assing. Assing was based in the United States but she sent back newspaper articles and reviews to be published in German in her native Hamburg, and it was she who introduced Douglass to the work of German "Higher Critics" of the Bible, such as Ludwig Feuerbach and David Friedrich Strauss. This moderate transnational intervention received a very sour-faced response from a Midwestern graduate student who said the reason he had chosen to do American literature in the first place was so that he would not have to trouble himself to learn "foreign" languages, as he put it. I do not want to make a direct equation here with Trump, but this theme of radical unsettlement and systematic displacement is infiltrating US life in all kinds of interesting ways in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and it should be the remit of international American studies to track these kinds of frictions, so as to reposition the US domain, provocatively but judiciously, within a wider global orbit.

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THE DIFFERENCE THAT LANGUAGE MAKES

A Response to Paul Giles' "World Literature and International American Studies: Convergence, Divergence, and Contest"

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I want to thank Giorgio Mariani for having organized this Symposium in Rome: after so many far-away and interesting countries and cities where IASA members have met in the past, it is now our turn. And, to make the event more memorable, we are in the presence of four out of the five presidents IASA has had so far: from IASA founder and first President, Dejal Kadir, to the second President, Paul Giles, to Giorgio himself, to the current President, Manuel Broncano!

As a member of the 2001 IASA Founding Committee in Bellagio, I am happy to see how, after fifteen years of existence, IASA has developed its dialectics and, in an enlarged and more variegated world context, how it is re-discussing its *raisons-d'être*. Therefore, even if it is not one of IASA's biennial conferences, this symposium promises to be a very important event as regards the association's future.

Paul Giles's outline of today's debate on American Studies in the international panorama or, rather, on the formation of International American Studies vis-à-vis the World Literature project, is extremely useful. I am not familiar with some of the books he mentions, but, if I understand him correctly, the debate still seems to be a tentative one and one that will probably take a few more years before it settles on a satisfactory agenda. To conjugate the global with the local, to reach what has been horribly called "the glocal," does not seem to be an easy task. From the titles of some of the papers that will be read and discussed during

this two-day symposium, the options revealingly seem to go from conciliatory to radical.

Certainly, a lot of ground has been covered over the past fifteen years, at least by those of us who live abroad and who are not US citizens. The situation of many (not all, of course) US Americanists is too often still characterized by a sort of nationalistic "fervour," as Paul calls it, and by a deep-down, perhaps un-confessed— even to themselves—belief in their country's exceptionalism, in spite of what has happened to it/them and to the rest of the world in the last half century. And, if we want to be historically correct (see Schueller and Watts's book), in spite of the complex and "multidirectional" origins of their national identity—notwithstanding the many "voices" touting it otherwise. In his essay, Paul relates two exemplary personal anecdotes, so allow me too to mention an episode in which, more recently, some of us have been involved. A couple of years ago, of his own initiative, an excellent US historian, who had taught in Italy twice, but also in Vietnam and in Latin America, proposed a panel on "Teaching American Studies in Italy" at the ASA Conference of that year. He invited some of us (Donatella Izzo, Fernando Fasce, Giorgio Mariani, and myself) to take part in it. Each participant would have paid all his/her own expenses (travel, hotel, meals, etc.)—of course. Well, much to our friend's embarrassment, his proposal was turned down, first, on the grounds that it was not interesting, and then, when he explained why it was indeed of great interest, on the grounds that… no room was available! As a matter of fact, it was only as late as 1986, at its Conference in San Diego, that, thanks to the late Emory Elliott's efforts, the ASA accepted an entirely European workshop comprising only French and (two) Italian Americanists. Even if we know that there are US Americanists who think differently, we are far from seeing a spatially more extended imaginary emerging from our country of reference, in particular as far as international American studies are concerned.

Leaving aside, however, the attitude and opinions of several among our US colleagues, when, at the beginning of this new century, IASA started its activities, some of the most alert post-nationalist—in the sense of being less insular and less parochial—organizations and Departments in the USA were relating their mainstream culture

to the many cultural areas present in the country: from the native, to the black, to the Chicano, to the Italian, to the Asian, to the feminist, to the gay, to ethnicity, to post-colonialism, etc. Without intending to create a hierarchical ladder under the white Anglo-Saxon aegis, the multiculturalism of these institutions resulted from the conviction that the USA—being hybrid by nature—was the ideal laboratory where a multilingual and culturally interrelated field of studies might be pursued. Individual scholars—like Werner Sollors, for one—were working along similar, or even more extensive, lines. Overcoming the concept of the melting-pot, for these colleagues the time had come when the warp and weft of their country's interwoven tapestry—made of distinct threads/visions of life—could finally be objectively and intelligently examined.

Since the beginning of the new century, however, some Americanists—many from countries other than the USA—realized that this approach might be dated. It started to be seen, as Paul puts it, as globalization within a domesticated compass. Even when the risk and temptation of a patronizing/colonizing attitude were avoided, and multiculturalism was not what Žižek calls "the cultural logic of multinational capitalism" and a form of "racism with a distance," due to the hegemonic political and economic power of the USA (and its gigantic army), some Americanists felt the need to set their researches within a larger context: larger in space, but, above all, in the sense of making room for reciprocity and (a welcome) alterity. From this perception both IASA and the more recently institutionalized World Literature Association have originated. In order to address the conceptual urge behind what especially IASA attempts to do, however, we would need, first of all, a new methodology, new paradigms of research, borrowed, possibly, from other, interconnected, fields.

Skipping, for the time being, this pivotal point, let me say right-away that I, for one, agree with Emily Apter's argument and do not share Franco Moretti's and David Damrosch's macrocosmic visions according to which, when dealing with literatures, the knowledge of the languages relating to the ones we want to tackle is not necessary since translations will do—explicitly those into English (implicitly enforcing the "cultural" supremacy of this language/culture). In my opinion, this course is acceptable

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when we are engaged in a scientific field or in macro literary studies with the intention of arriving at "gargantuan" taxonomies, but not when we aim at something deeper and more analytical. And this is because a language, any language—as any good translator knows—entails a way of seeing and understanding, and it thus proclaims its *difference*: a difference that refuses to be reduced to a sort of universal essentialism—to what Paul rightly refers to as Goethe's and Hegel's ideological vision of a universal spirit: a vision seemingly shared by the World Literature Association. Turning our minds only towards countries that use English or only to texts translated into English makes the project more practical, but, in my opinion, one that cannot take into consideration—and is not respectful of—those differences that are crucial for any literary enterprise that intends to be scholarly. As I am convinced that the Comparative Literature scope is now obsolete—politically, since, in spite/because of globalization, nationalisms are more marked than ever, and culturally, since it is geared around fixed and limited perspectives—it seems to me that a specific knowledge of the language and of the culture of the country/ies of reference is *a must* (what one of my teachers called the need to know what the members of the civilizations in question ask and eat for breakfast). Shall we, then, limit our endeavors, as Mary-Louise Pratt suggested years ago, to those that for each of us are contact-zones, where no more than two-three languages and the history and customs of a limited number of populations are involved so that our goal is not… unreachable? Inevitably, according to the parameters of a planetary design, results would be partial, but wouldn't this also be the case if we were to depend on the work of others (the translators) and on our limited knowledge of the civilizations referred to? In effect, if we were to embrace the World Literature approach, would we not run the risk of creating another, culturally diluted, melting-pot?

When, for instance, Paul hypothesizes a future Chinese scholar, who will rewrite an account of US literature, comparing, as may be the case, very specific topics relevant to the two countries he knows—his own and the USA—Paul seems to imagine someone who has one foot firmly in his/her own ground and another on US soil, unencumbered, however, by all the myths that US people have

created about themselves throughout their history. This is more or less what Mads Rosendahl Thomsen argues, when he reflects that any investigation necessarily starts from a "particular place."

For those of us who are not US citizens and belong to a different culture, this road— though circumscribed in space, languages, and cultures—is the one we have taken so far and are still trying to tread. What, then, may be the new direction? That of being more knowledgeable about what other Americanists around the world are doing in interrelated areas?[1] Certainly. Until we have formulated an appropriate methodology, at least to criss-cross and compare notes, points of view, and judgments is always enlightening for everyone. This recommendation, should they be willing to pay attention to "others," might be of help to some US Americanists as well. Because, indeed, as David Harvey posits, their country is not an abstraction to be idealized, but—like every other country—a very "material phenomenon."

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1. Though not on a planetary scale, this is what all continental associations of American Studies have been encouraging their constituencies to do and the primary reason why they were founded (some, like the European Association of American Studies, over four decades ago).

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THEORIES OF THE GLOBAL, GLOBAL LITERATURE, AND AMERICAN LITERATURE IN A GLOBALIZING AGE

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I want to begin my reflections by briefly looking at the mission of international American Studies.[1] The advantage of such an approach to American literature and culture may be located in the view from outside onto the United States and its culture and society. Critics from various countries around the globe study the United States and are, at least ideally, able to recognize specifically US-American presuppositions and premises that tend to go unnoticed in US-American "American Studies." One example is the deeply entrenched individualism we can even find in books that are critical of the American ideology. Sacvan Bercovitch has emphasized, for instance, that Frederick Douglass's model of emancipation is possessive individualism (371). A spectrum of external views might help to put interpretations of American culture from within into a critical perspective, allowing for pluralism and making unacknowledged premises visible. Of course, non-US-American critics bring their own biases and presuppositions that themselves can only be made visible and useful in dialogic exchanges and open-ended negotiations.

What are the ramifications of international American Studies for the question of world literature?[2] I do not want to rehearse again the shift from national literature as a container to American

1. This essay is based on my earlier publications in German "Globalisierung, Mondialisierungen und die Poetik des Globalen" (2008) and *Globalisierung: Literaturen und Kulturen des Globalen* (2010).
2. See also my essay "American Studies and Globalization."

literature as intersection of various cultures and ethnic experiences that are constellated and negotiated in American literary texts, usually discussed under the rubric of transnational American Studies. I want to focus instead on the question of world literature in relation to literature in the age of globalization and literatures of the global, and relate these to literary texts written in the United States that target global constellations. In order to designate the field of global and/or world literature, I want to look at some parameters that are useful for a theory of globalization.

The first topic I will discuss concerns theories of the global and approaches to the concept of the world. The second part of my paper will offer a few definitions of literature in a globalizing age, and then address some definitions and proposals how to approach world literature in literary scholarship. Here we will encounter qualitative as well as quantitative methods, ones that presuppose world literature as a system and ones that use a hermeneutical approach which focuses on individual texts and close reading. In my concluding section, I will venture the somewhat bold claim that in today's digitally restructured knowledge world we have to consider contemporary novels and other literary texts that reflect on the transformations of media and of knowledge formation as versions of world literature as well.

What is globalization, and why should we care in the context of the debate about world literature? Globalization is a fact, a catchword, a *passe-partout* term, and an intellectual challenge. It has been going on since humans, or better the species *homo sapiens*, left Eastern Africa and began populating the surface of the earth, it took many of the forms we know today with the beginning of Europeans' taking dominion of non-European territories since about 1500, it accelerated immensely in the nineteenth century because of new media as well as modes of transportation and as a result of an intensified world economy, and it reached its so-far latest stage with decolonization, neoliberal economics, the recent great migratory waves and the internet, that is developments that occurred since the second half of the twentieth century. Globalization first became an area of research in economics and the social sciences, and was picked up as a concept in the humanities only later. While transnationalism and transcul-

turality are seen as positive developments, globalization continues to have the *haut gout* of neoliberal economics, implying, for instance, outsourcing, the privatization of water resources, and highly speculative transactions in the financial industry. What has only rarely been attempted, however, is to propose a theory of these developments, a model which allows us to navigate and operate in a highly complex world characterized by globalizing processes.

Why do we need a theory of the global, and what does it mean to think globally? The first point to mention is that, as the empirical conditions of our daily life, our societies, forms of communication and geopolitics have changed, the concepts we use to navigate in this world have to be adjusted as well. As many concepts emerged in the context of the nation state since the nineteenth century, they are coeval as well as intricately linked with this order, not only of state and interstate politics, but also of academic disciplines and basic theoretical assumptions. The late sociologist Ulrich Beck speaks of "methodological nationalism" (46). As these terms were developed to capture and explain a situation which no longer exists, they have to be modified, adapted, and we need, moreover, new terms and models for describing and mapping a globalizing world. Examples are the German term "Nationalökonomie" (the older term for the discipline of economics), the concept of society based on the nation state, the idea of culture as national culture (linked to the emergence of the nation state), or the belief that one can ground the idea of justice exclusively on modern Western values, values that have come down to us within a very specific and local history.

The second level of theorizing concerns what I want to call globalization as an analytic category. Armin Nassehi speaks of globalization as a "cognitive pattern" (196, my translation) and points to the necessity that we look at contemporary phenomena from a global perspective. The decisive distinction necessary for thinking about "globalization as a philosophical issue" (Jameson) concerns the one between globe and world. One of the reasons why philosophy proper has been reluctant to approach the topic is that it is rarely concerned with the areas traditionally ascribed to globalization, such as economics, migration, media, and society. The philosophers' concept of the world focuses on human

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cognition and action. Yet lived as well as thinkable worlds are not independent of the changing conditions of the empirical globe, a statement which is also true in reverse. We have to think globalization and "mondialisations" (see Badura) together, empirical changes that can be found in migration patterns, global cities and cultures, in media, trade, money flows and in climate change, as well as human-made, lived, and thought or conceptualized versions of the world. Globalization is a development made by humans, yet individuals do not act within circumstances they have chosen.

Lived worlds have to do with the worlds humans imagine, know, or believe to be living in. These differ strongly between individuals, and even more between cultures. Nassehi has given us a felicitous formulation to capture this situation when he stresses the "many worlds within the one world" (200, my translation) which make up the contemporary global situation. But we can also go back to William James and his notion of a "pluralistic universe" or a "pluriverse" (1907) to grasp the fact that all humans belong to the globe and are bound to it in every respect. Yet at the same time everyone has a specific and different view of this world, such that we have a multiplicity of worlds within the one world. "Pluralistic universe" is an appropriate formulation, as the one universe is seen, understood, or imagined in many different ways and cannot be unified on the conceptual level. We have to think wholeness, unity, and even totality together with multiplicity and irreducible difference. The main stress here is on the "and," as globalization tends to be associated with homogenization in the sense of a standardized unity and to be criticized with reference to difference. Yet it is the combination and intricate link between the two which constitutes the basis for any thinking in the mode of the global. Nassehi emphasizes:

> For it is not merely these differences which constitute the social of the world but rather the mutual observability of the perspectives and places; the reciprocity of difference. (197, my translation)

The wholeness and coherence of world society is made up of a myriad of differences which nevertheless are linked and know of each other. In this sense, the global and the local presuppose each other. Unity and diversity complement each other.

“Why the world does not exist”—*Warum es die Welt nicht gibt*—is the title of a recent bestseller in philosophy written by the young German philosopher Markus Gabriel. He does not claim that things do not exist; rather, he argues that everything exists, except such an entity as the world (9). There is nothing that may contain everything.[3] What, then, does the “world” in “world literature” mean, and what do we mean when we speak of the world? First of all, the term implies an open horizon of possible conceptions of worlds as well as possible forms of existence. World also refers to the entirety of what can be thought, imagined and perceived, a concept that is, of course, historically and culturally contingent. From a European perspective, well into modern times, the earth was still grounded in a numinous unity which gave security and a sense of home to humans. As Niklas Luhmann writes:

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> Until far into modern times the world had been understood cosmologically as the entirety of the visible as well as the invisible, as par-ticioning [“Ab-Teilung”] of things which then can be found at the places to which they belong in nature …. In all relevant dimensions of meaning the cosmological concept of world and with it the ontological metaphysics of [modern times] have broken apart. (“Weltkunst” 7, my translation)

At least in the modern West, one does no longer posit a numinous instance as an external observer. Jean-Luc Nancy therefore writes, “globalization [*mondialisation*] had to be preceded by a worlding [*mondanisation*]” (35, my translation). Globalization, then, has to be understood in the context of secularization, of conceiving of the world in empirical terms. The conceptual impact of the exploration of the globe has not only been the radical extension of space on earth, but also the compression of the world to just this space of the globe. Before about 1500 the numinous sphere—think of Dante’s system of celestial and terrestrial spheres—was real and ultimately immeasurable, yet with the expansion of the known globe its influence on most people’s vision of the world radically

3. Rather, we can know areas of reality, and know them as really existing, but we can know no all-encompassing coherence, at least not in a non-theological or non-metaphysical manner. For Gabriel, this view is a version of a “new realism” (9).

shrank (Sloterdijk 15). Today's internet and World Wide Web are as immense as they are limited at the same time.

To define world horizons, Luhmann employs the notion of 'possibility.'

> [...] in every moment the whole world is present—yet not as plenitudio entis, but as the difference between actualized meaning and the other possibilities accessible from there. (*Gesellschaft* 142, my translation)

In terms of formal logic, he describes the doubling of the world and respective specific worlds as the form of operating "in the context of complexity" (*Gesellschaft* 144, my translation). "World" in the times of modernity does not only comprise what is happening, but also a field of possibilities surrounding every actual reality. As a consequence, the world can no longer be grasped as a fixed entity or substance, but rather as a sequence of observations. The ways in which we see the world depends to a large degree on the observer, and thus on his or her context. In its sameness, therefore, the world cannot be observed; in so far as it can be specified, it is not the same for everybody, because every person will use different frames of reference. In other words, we can only observe or think the world from within the world and from a specific position which constitutes merely one version of the world among others (Reichardt "Globalisierung" 23). As a consequence, we are always confronting other versions of the world when we communicate, and we have to negotiate the differences.

I have to emphasize that the focus on the whole globe as our common world involves a decisive paradigm shift. Particularly since the times of deconstruction and the focus on difference, any notion of wholes, unity, and totality has been seen as suspect, if not totalitarian, and thus a concept to be rejected. Theodor W. Adorno famously declared that "the whole is the untrue." (55) Yet if we wish to think in terms of interconnected networks, if we aim at de-provincializing our thinking, including Western philosophy, and wish to make claims that are valid worldwide, we have to include the whole globe as the horizon of our thinking. With regard to complexity theory, Mark C. Taylor has pointed out that we should think of "the nonlinear dynamics of systems that act as a whole but do not totalize" (65), implying that the globe has

to be thought of as a complexly interconnected unity, even while we can never observe it as a whole. Such a view implies conceiving of the earth as an open system, not only in terms of empirical changes, but also conceptually, as an open horizon including conceivable as well as not yet thinkable possibilities in the sense of unpredictable emergence. The world is what is as well as what could be, and the realm of the possible is part of the horizon we have to include in our thinking. Difference is thus constitutively inscribed into the notion of the globe itself. The irreversible focus on the one earth enforces the conceptual effort to always think difference and connection together, and thus to reconnect any local description to the larger whole, even if it can only be named tentatively, having a specific, yet provisional perspective inscribed into it.

The third move I want to propose can be subsumed under the title of a shift of perspective. Postcolonial studies have stressed the necessity of "provincializing Europe" (Chakrabarty) and the North Atlantic region. This argument mainly refers to power and values, to the power of issuing interpretations, that is, to truth claims. Yet in a truly globalized world and from a verily global perspective, we have to acknowledge the plurality not only of cultures, but also of basic assumptions and presuppositions. There is a cognitive multiplicity, and highly different world views in the sense of "ways of worldmaking" (Nelson Goodman) exist simultaneously. If we wish to acknowledge and recognize this constellation, we have to decenter Western thinking by comparison with other forms. François Jullien speaks of a change of place from which to think in order to achieve a distanced perspective on the categories which underlie the often unacknowledged assumptions we use in our descriptions. His approach is to compare Chinese and European presuppositions and ways of thinking. One could call this a form of epistemological globalization—or, as Walter Mignolo calls it, of "de-westernization" (3). However, no culture and no cultural form has ever been pure. Hybridization thus also concerns categories. They travel and mix and can no longer be seen, if this has ever been true, as completely separate and independent. Thus we have to take into account the processes of mixing and hybridiza-

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tion, of reinterpretation and adaptation, as is well known of global processes in general.[4]

The main difference, then, is the one between the globe and the world. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to refer them to different spheres, the one being kept for the practical affairs of the present and the other merely for conceptual entities. It is crucial to regard them as mutually dependent. The factuality of a globalizing world does indeed have immense ramifications for ways of conceptualizing life, society, and art, while, on the other hand, notions of globalization also have to acknowledge that they are partaking in (re-)describing the world. In the context of real-world globalization, theories of world-making can no longer distance themselves from the effects and processes of interconnectivity and simultaneity. If culture and thoughts, images and sounds (and people, for that matter) from all corners of the world coexist and are synchronized today, then thinking can no longer be positioned in one single place, at least if it aims at offering propositions that are not only valid locally. Dipesh Chakrabarty's call for "Provincializing Europe" implies that European forms of knowledge are grounded it Europe's history and cultures and thus might not be valid elsewhere, even while he also acknowledges that European concepts have become the world's (16). But then they no longer exist in their original form but have been translated into and accommodated to new and different contexts. Peter Sloterdijk sums up: "Since 1945 it has become evident that the history-making power of the European carriers of expansion has expired. [...] The look at Europe's past no longer has any significance for the projection of the future of the world as a whole." (258, my translation) Accordingly, he reconceives the history of globalization not only as philosophy's context, but as the concrete precondition of what can actually be thought in the present, and he claims that the undeniable facticity of globalization should be taken as the starting point of any serious reflection today:

4. With regard to "Americanization" as an important dimension of global popular culture, Mel van Elteren speaks of "selective borrowing and appropriation, translation and incorporation into the indigenous cultural context" (62).

> [The] terrestrial globalization [is], comparable to an axiom, the one and only precondition, from which a theory of the contemporary epoch has to take its start. (218–19, my translation)

Jean-Luc Nancy speaks of the irreversible immanence of the world ("être-au-monde," 35). The decisive move, then, is to take the whole world as the horizon of reference. As such a view is not directly possible, it is necessary to constantly shift one's perspective, to regard every position as situated and open to revision.

Next, I want to delineate some models of conceptualizing globality in more detail. I will begin with concepts which concern actual contemporary developments. Sociologists studying globalization point to changes in social relations and argue that these can no longer be captured by a concept of society which is structurally grounded in the nation state. Institutions, forms of daily life, and communication are no longer limited by the boundaries of states. Therefore, the concept of society has to be modified and adapted to accommodate global interactions. A concise formula has been offered by Robert Robertson: "Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole." (8) This definition nicely captures two crucial aspects. The world is becoming smaller in the sense that distances are easier and faster to traverse, and thus there is an intensification of communications, metaphorically a compression of space. At the same time, these objective developments lead to the subjective experience of living not only in one's own region or country, but also of being a part of and being connected to the whole world. It is important to point out that Robertson regards objective as well as subjective developments as interdependent.

Time and space are affected by globalization as well. David Harvey, in an often quoted phrase, speaks of "time-space compression" (240). With relations of time and space, basic categories of our life-world and experience are transformed. Marshall McLuhan coined the term "global village" to refer to changing forms of communication as a result of the new electronic media in the early 1960s already (31). Nowadays we are living in a global communicative space. The most important term is interconnectivity which refers to the links between everybody who has access to a computer

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as well as to the increasing interdependence of all humans living today. As electronic media transmit information (almost) immediately, most places of the earth are synchronized and people there can communicate in real time.

If distances lose in importance, then people and goods as well as data will travel fast and arrive without much time for accommodation. The term glocalization, a hybrid of the terms global and local, attempts to capture precisely this fact. Globality and locality do not exclude each other. Rather, global developments have to "take place" (in the strict sense of the term) and be experienced somewhere, and most often they do this in a concrete local place. Glocalization then means that global flows and globally circulating forms, goods, institutions etc. will be interpreted, adapted, accommodated, and thus also modified in specific cultural and social contexts. As a consequence, they will not stay the same. Re- and decontextualization signify processes in which the specifics of one environment lose in significance; the compressed, abstracted form travels and is readapted somewhere else for somebody else.

The best abstract model for globally interconnected exchanges, I want to suggest, is complexity theory. The dominant metaphor is the network which refers to the fact that we have to shift our focus from the object, the text or phenomenon, to the relations between objects, texts, and phenomena. These are reconceived as nodes in a network, no longer as substances, but as relations, as being constituted within exchanges. The metaphor of the network allows us to conceive of an interdependent unity which does not neglect the particular node. One can say that the traditional substantialist way of thinking—we try to get at the unchanging singularity of a thing—is exchanged for a dynamic way of thinking which attempts to describe an entity with regard to the interplay with its environment. The meaning of a node is the result of its links with other nodes, such that the relations become more important than the thing itself (see Taylor).[5] John Urry stresses that a globalized world cannot be understood within descriptive models which remain static (X). As there cannot be any single

5. Taylor writes: "… networks consist of interconnected nodes, which are able to communicate with each other. Each node is constituted by its interrelations with other nodes and its place in the overall network." (154)

one position from which the global system could be observed, and as any position will be within the complex global network, complexity with regard to globality implies a constantly moving system that changes with the parts and their relationships.[6]

Debates about world literature, then, have to take into account the empirical constellation characterized by interconnectivity and synchronicity as well as the irreversible fact of plurality, difference, and multiplicity of perspectives, of world views, and cultures. Linked in network fashion, the relations between texts and literature become as important as the text itself. All texts within world literature belong to the same globe and humanity, yet none refers to the same world, or few of them do. This multiplicity, nevertheless, can never be seen at once and in totality either. Therefore, world literature is either an all-inclusive category or one shifting with the respective observer's position.

Let me now discuss a few proposals concerning world literature. First, I want to offer my own attempt at defining versions of a literature of the global. My first category is world literature which comprises virtually all written or oral texts from everywhere on the earth; it is an all-encompassing category which pays tribute to the dissolution of national boundaries and of the Western focus dominant even within comparative literary studies. My second category is global literature. Here I am referring to literary texts presenting encounters between members of different cultures and societies, cultural contact, and transcultural hybridization. The term refers to texts that foreground the permeability of national or cultural borders, staging transnational and transcultural flows. It concerns travelogues and stories of migrants as well as intergenerational *Bildungsromane*. Such literary texts are often subsumed under the term transnational literature, for example transnational American literature. My third category is the literature of globalization, texts that present concrete elements, moments, or events of the process of globalization, for example Walt Whitman on the opening of the Suez Canal, Herman Melville on the whaling industry and world knowledge, Alexander von Humboldt's *Kosmos*, and more recently novels about financial speculation, to name

6. See also my essay "Complexity—a Truly Transdisciplinary Concept?"

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just a few well-known instances. Here globalization is presented metonymically, if not directly mentioned.

My last category is what I want to call world-creating literature, that is texts projecting images and stories about "the whole world" and the ways in which it is conceived. Here I am thinking about historical texts like the grand epic poems, but also science fiction stories and theoretical narratives like the ones by Jorge Luis Borges. My favorite example is the text by Borges famously quoted by Michel Foucault in the opening sequence of his *The Order of Things* about a "certain Chinese encyclopedia" that categorizes the animals in the following ways:

(a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *etcetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. (Foucault XV)

Our ideas about the world depend on what we include und exclude, on the categories we employ to distinguish among its elements, and these are arbitrary in the sense that different times and cultures use different distinctions.[7]

The concept of world literature has already been used by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as well as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels[8] in the nineteenth century and by Erich Auerbach in the 1950s. I will not repeat their propositions as they are well known, even while they are still relevant today. An important contemporary definition has been proposed by David Damrosch (2003):

I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language [...]. [Yet] a work only has an *effective* life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture. (4)

He adds that "world literature is multitemporal as well as multicultural. Too often, shifts in focus from classics to masterpieces

7. The previous two paragraphs are based on Reichardt 2010, p. 151; pp. 163–175.
8. "World literature" is mentioned on p. 466.

to windows on the world have underwritten a concomitant shift from earlier to later periods." (16) Therefore, "all periods as well as all places are up for fresh examination and open to new configurations." (17) As can be seen in the *Longman Anthology of World Literature* which he co-edited, "world" in Damrosch's usage encompasses texts from most areas of the globe and historical times and is thus an inclusive concept. The principle of selection is the representativeness of texts and their significance beyond their original locale of production and reception. The Mahabharata and the Bible, Homer and Shakespeare are still read today in various regions of the globe.

French critic Pascale Casanova has proposed a different model to chart the flows of global literature by claiming the existence of a world literary space, which she calls the world republic of letters (2004). It is a hypothetical model distinct from political borders. World literature in her view is not formed by the sum of texts. Rather, it is a sum of positions that have to be conceived in relational terms. Casanova uses Fernand Braudel's concept of an economy-world and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the literary field. Literary works have to be deciphered "on the basis of the whole of the composition [...] Each work that is declared to be literary is a minute part of the immense 'combination' constituted by the literary world as a whole." (3) For Casanova, world literature refers to the world's subsystem of the world republic of letters which is made up of texts from a large part of the world circulating through the literary marketplace of Paris. This world republic is a system of inclusion and exclusion based on power, dominance and prestige.[9]

Franco Moretti, finally, proposes a radically different approach when he takes his start from the "great unread" of literature (2000, 55, he quotes Margaret Cohen). Most novels are forgotten and no longer part of the corpus. Traditional notions of world literature thus comprise only a miniscule section of the literature

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9. "The internationalization that I propose to describe here therefore signifies more or less the opposite of what is ordinarily understood by the neutralizing term 'globalization' [...] In the literary world [...] it is the competition among its members that defines and unifies the system while at the same time marking its limits" (40).

that has been published globally, let alone the non-published, for example oral literature of non-modern cultures. To fill this lacuna, Moretti suggests an approach which can be subsumed within the sprouting field of the digital humanities. He wants to detect and analyze trends within the largest corpora digitally available, for example of the English novel in the nineteenth century. As a result of his quantitative research, he will get correlations triggered by algorithms. (This implies, if I am correct, search orders such as "Find all usages of the word 'painter' and correlate them with the frequency of the terms 'art' and 'woman'," for example). He speaks of "trees," the curve of distribution within national developments, and "waves," typical of transnational dissemination (66–68). Moretti no longer believes in close readings but calls for a statistical approach using big data. While he cannot access all novels, he can trace long-term and wide-range developments of concepts such as the novel form. His aspirations are democratic—going beyond the selection of relevant texts based on the taste and interests of mostly national elites—but he also has to select the terms he uses to trace constellations, and these are neither objective nor innocent. What I find interesting is that he is using the tools for "reading" that are increasingly becoming, for better or for worse, the dominant ones of literary analysis. He regards world literature as a system, and is interested in larger and more abstract developments and flows. The concept of the "world" is again inclusive, for example all novels written during a certain time. The main impetuses are decentering and dehierarchization, which have been the implicit political ideas behind quantification in science, the desire of no longer having certain quasi- or post-theological authorities declare what is important and good.

I find Damrosch's inclusive notion of world literature most convincing, even if it still continues to transport power structures sedimented in selection processes—which Casanova (selectively) foregrounds and Moretti wants to go beyond by way of quantification. Ultimately, it can be regarded as an inclusive form of enlarging the canon, one that still maintains the focus on the individual text as opposed to regarding it as data. Moretti's suggestion aims at a radical decentering, yet is restrictive at the same time, as it has to use terms such as the novel to navigate big data.

In all of these approaches, "world" appears selectively constructed, and this is true for all concepts of world literature. We have to accept the many worlds within the one world as a shifting and contested field of overlapping and clashing views on the world.

In my last section, I will follow some of Moretti's conjectures, yet direct them into a different direction. I want to propose that Dave Eggers's novel *The Circle* (2014), while not world literature with regard to its literary merit, deals with questions that seem highly important to contemporary investigations of world literature, and particularly those with an American inclination. I am interested in the changes within knowledge worlds that result from the increasingly digitalized and monopolized ways of knowledge formation in contemporary data-based information societies. If we wish to think about world literature today, I want to suggest, we also have to take into account the new tools and media in which literature is increasingly mediated and made available worldwide.

Focusing on a corporation that is easily recognizable as an only slightly fictionalized version of Google, the novel tests the possibilities and dangers inherent in technologies that already exist or are close to their realization in the near future. The main topics and problematics are privacy, transparency, sharing as a constant challenge, and the tipping over of deliberate participation into domination by a few. One of the implicit arguments of the novel is that most of the innovations introduced by the corporation are meant to improve people's lives, yet carry the danger of tipping over into oppressive mechanisms that precisely negate the increase in freedom they were meant to establish. Moreover, creativity and self-management also become more than a challenge; they turn into an oppressive duty, the non-deliverance of which is heavily sanctioned. Thus neoliberal subjectivity is conjoined with corporate existence.

In Eggers's view, the doubling of one's life into a digitalized copy implies the danger that somebody else, for example a corporation, will own the copy. "Possessive individualism" (MacPherson), owning oneself as the basic concept of liberal humanism since John Locke, would be radically reversed. Self-determination is radically shot through with external challenges, but it appears as if the protagonist who is working for the corporation as an "employed

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entrepreneur of herself" (Voß and Pongratz 131, my translation) actively and deliberately wishes to conform and further the Circle's control and power. Her conformity is an effect of her creative participation. The novel is interesting precisely as a fictional experiment for "thinking through" the spectrum of possibilities inherent in recent technological innovations and developments.

The Circle makes strong claims about future developments which will concern literature on a worldwide scale as well. As many technological trends issue from the Silicon Valley, they are culturally based in US-America but reach every place on the globe, strongly influencing the ways in which the world is understood. And in this sense, international American Studies might be called upon to critically observe the digital world and think about which specifically US-American premises and presuppositions are being inscribed into the media that determine our knowledge production more and more. A novel such as Eggers's that foregrounds already existing developments and problems, moreover, can itself be analyzed from an international standpoint and investigated for specifically American cultural ideas to be detected even in the critique of internet corporations.

While in different ways the same could be said about Melville's *Moby-Dick* and DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, for example, *The Circle* underlines the dialectical relationship between the local and the global. It is set in California and describes American ideas and values involved in the organization of the corporation. At the same time, it negotiates globally effective developments instantiated worldwide. Even while Eggers writes critically about digital monopolies, he does so from within American culture and society. We may thus read his novel in order to understand what will become reality in Europe and elsewhere soon, and also to analyze what is US-American about it, culturally and in terms of the knowledge ecology it is situated in. Through the Google- and Facebook-world, US-American presuppositions are implicitly and often invisibly inscribed into the world's knowledge landscapes. International American Studies, then, has a whole new set of objects to be investigated in today's new mediascapes.

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THE LIMITATIONS OF THEORY

A Response to Ulrich Reichardt's "Theories of the Global, Global Literature, and American Literature in a Globalizing Age"

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As a former theorist myself, I know the difficulties of working on the conceptual and ideological aspects inherent in the use of such words as "the world" and "the global," and I appreciate Reichardt's effort at providing a model of a world caught up in globalizing processes. I also consider his distinction between world literature, global literature, and literature of globalization very useful, for it provides a guideline when approaching texts that focus on globalization and its consequences. I believe, however, that in different ways all literature is world-building and not only the texts that explicitly create imaginary or possible worlds.

Reichardt's association of the US with a future-directed time-arrow also provides an important perspective. In his contribution, he rightly calls attention to the future *telos* characterizing American culture, a *telos,* however, that ends up affecting the rest of the world (for the cultural roots of post-World War II active planning of World Futures in the US, see Williams). If I understand it correctly, his thesis is that American culture is an unavoidable mirror image and the carrier of social, political and artistic patterns capable of offering the rest of the world a preview of what will happen to them. The US, then, stands for a future-oriented present, while the rest of the world, lagging behind, will be made to catch up with it, gradually or abruptly in different locations. As a consequence, globalization seems to be the necessary future of a world built in the image of that quintessential *mise-en-abyme* which the United States of America offers to the world. And if America is the world's Manifest Destiny, then the world can

be conceived, or imagined, as an amplified version of US America, produced by the globalizing processes it has been promoting for over a century.

Reichardt's German-centered theoretical construction, however, betrays its idealistic limit as well as its potential. For indeed, the red thread that runs through it, connecting German idealism and US culture *via* transcendentalist philosophy, is clearly detectable. The word "kosmos," in his text, links the German Alexander Von Humboldt to Walt Whitman's "A Passage to India" and to an image of the world as a unity produced by communication and transportation technology. Whitman's geography is over and under-wired with cables that smooth its asperities and connect peoples around the globe, wiping out barriers, borders and differences, to produce a future in which women and men are not only put in contact but also find cohesion, and perhaps perpetual peace.

Whitman's idealizing picture also offers the ground on which to build a critique not so much of his non-problematic and American-centered globalizing future but of the pacifying, optimistic version of economic and cultural globalization that carefully hides the agents and the role human agency plays in it while obliterating geographical, cultural, and economic differences and power struggles. If anything, it magnifies the gap existing between idealized and real worlds.

Perhaps it would help the debate if, before entering into more detail, we could reconsider the words "world" and "globalization" from a different, less idealistic angle. From my perspective, the world is not "a field of possibilities" that can only be grasped "as a sequence of observations." Before we are able to grasp it and its possibilities, we have to come to terms with it as the material reality we are born into. The world is both the biosphere that allows us to live as human animals and the semiosphere that nourishes us as social and thinking sentient beings (Lotman) and as agents interacting with one another and with the ecosphere. The world precedes us and forms us before we form or "project" an image of it. The word "world," then, stands for the totality that makes the individual experience of the world possible. While dependent on the cultural place we are rooted in, such an experience is built by a mind that can create or reconstruct a map of the whole

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out of partial images accumulated and deployed along our biological and historical life (Damasio).

"Globalization," on the other hand, can be abstracted to "a cognitive pattern" only at great cost. As a word that maps part of our experience of the world, it is a composite that refers not only to a state of things or to a spherical object (the globe) but to an overall process, or to a series of processes. It implies, as well, the existence of an agent or number of agents who start the process, anticipate or plan it with definite aims, and/or create the technology and the tools that make it possible. As a process, moreover, it includes a time-dimension. Speed, after all, is one of the disruptive factors of today's globalization. Furthermore, with agents come not only world-views but also power-struggles.

It follows that if we agree with Reichardt that "globalization" means condensation of the world and intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole, and if complexity theory offers the best model to conceptualize "globalization," and the word "network" provides the most suitable metaphor for a focus on relation and a dynamic way of thinking, then, what this picture leaves out is the agent(s) and ways of globalization, and it thus hides conflict as well as consensus. For agents do not always produce "globalization" in a caring way.

We have not only systems but also both size and power asymmetry among them. Power asymmetry produces both connections and disconnections, as Fredric Jameson has shown (see "Notes on Globalization" quoted by Reichardt), and the constant friction between standardization, forced integration, and the fight for plurality and diversity of conceptions of the good (Mouffe).

To conclude, I would like to point out that theory thrives in abstraction. What happens when it is confronted with actual people or literary/cultural texts rather than with other theories? What happens when we move from the general to the particular? What happens when we put English as a global language side by side with the other languages? What happens when languages encroach one upon the other? What happens when within the same geo-political context myths and symbols, beliefs and lifestyles, brought together by colonialism and rapid globalization, conflict, as they are doing now in Europe, or in the US, either in a peace-

ful way, or through more violent and life-threatening modes? What if barriers and borders are re-built that had been canceled by the American-led economic construction of a globalization that discounted the conflict that hegemonic power systems, or states, inevitably create?

It's crucial also to consider these questions.

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FIGURING ATLANTIC LEGACIES

Impossible Archives, Missing Histories, Literary Counter-Memories

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> *They say it came first from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved; that it was the death bane of the Taìnos, uttered just as one world perished and another began; that it was a demon drawn into Creation through the nightmare door that was cracked open in the Antilles. Fukù americanus , or more colloquially; fukù—generally a curse or a doom of some kind; specifically the Curse and the Doom of the New World. Also called the fukù of the Admiral because the Admiral was both its midwife and one of its great European victims. [...]*
>
> Junot Diaz, *The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Part of the larger process of trans-national reconfiguration undergone by American Studies in the past couple of decades or so, *neo-* or *new- Atlantic* studies (Boelhower) has evolved out of a notion of the Atlantic as "a watery site of cross-cultural exchange and struggle," (Gabaccia 1) and has gained currency throughout the 1990s in scholarship related to the history of Africa, Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean and their commercial, cultural, and human relations. In literary studies, the investigation of relations between the trans-Atlantic world and the formation of national cultures in a time frame that encompasses the entire arc of modernity, from the *discovery* and *conquest* of the New World to the contemporary Global World, has prompted the emergence of an ambitious research project that aims at describing processes of symbolic and material exchange, dissemination, and transformation of literary cultures, identities, and objects that first came into contact by virtue of the intercontinental

crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. While this transition has so far proved dramatically productive, it also forces a reconsideration of the field of American cultures studies and opens important methodological questions concerning the definition of research areas, objects, textual practices and their impact on literary historiography, on canon revision and on the definition of an Atlantic archive. This paper considers how neo- or trans- Atlantic studies conceives of the Atlantic and its legacies in relation to the idea of archive, that is, of a body of works related to traces of a trans-Atlantic American past, to its principle of organization and analysis for literary studies, and to the critical project it casts on future descriptions of American Cultures in the context of a long trans-Atlantic network.

I. ATLANTIC LEGACIES

In literary studies the recent turn to Atlanticism has at least two points of origin: Robert Weisbuch's 1986 monograph, *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson*, and Paul Guilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993).[1] Together these critical works have prodded the two main lines of development of Atlantic studies and have established chronologically the shift from old Atlantic to new, Trans-atlantic studies. Weisbuch's call for "a rigorous study of Anglo-American literary relations" (Weisbuch xx) both foregrounded and contested the Anglo-American special relation implicit in the *old,* "white" Atlanticism focused on the study of European imperialism and on Anglo-American cultural traditions, and inspired a new generation of literary scholars to recontextualize those traditions within the dynamic trajectory of transatlantic exchanges and dislocations.[2] The persistence of a surreptitious

1. See the special issue of William and Mary Quarterly edited by Eric Slauter, with contributions by Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Allison Games, Eliga Gould, and Bryan Waterman. I have discussed in detail the emergence of the neo-Atlantic studies shift elsewhere. See Iuli.

2. Focalizing especially on the colonial period, the early Republic, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Abolitionism and, more recently, modernism, this version of critical work on Atlanticism, pioneered, for instance, by Paul Giles, is framed by Anglo American cultural and linguistic bounds, even if the scope of the "Transatlantic Imaginary" defined by Giles is meant to encompass

Eurocentrism in this body of works, however, is underscored by the Anglo-American cultural and linguistic orbit of its investigations (Boelhower).

The "black" genealogy of Atlantic studies is rooted in the trauma of slavery and the history of the African diaspora, and is unanimously acknowledged as the foundation of what William Boelhower, in his important methodological essay, has defined as "The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix," (Boelhower 1) a research perspective that takes off from the "abrupt perspectival reversals" injected in Atlanticist scholarship by post-colonial and cultural studies methodologies. Although significant overlaps between these two lines of research can be detected across the long list of publications they have inspired, the special awareness of "the heteronomic and multilingual condition of Atlantic studies themselves," and the parallel questioning of "the very concept of Europe as a unified, integral entity," (Boelhower 86) tend to distinguish Black Atlantic from Anglo-American transatlantic studies.

The Black Atlantic matrix is disseminated across most studies of transatlantic culture: one could argue, indeed, that Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* midwifed *transatlantic* American Studies from its (white) *Atlantic* matrix into its (black? Critical-racial?) post-postcolonial and militant horizon. Gilroy's study, inviting scholars to "take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective," (Gilroy 15) was immensely influential precisely because, by reintroducing the history of the middle passage and its dissemination back into the history of Western modernity, it bound the field of Atlantic/Neo Atlantic studies to a rewriting of modernity that operates both historically and conceptually, thus pressuring scholars "to rethink modernity via the history of the black Atlantic and the African diaspora into the western hemisphere" (Gilroy 17).[3]

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the "interiorization of a literal or metaphorical Atlantic world in all its expansive dimensions" (Giles 5).

3. Scholars agree that *The Black Atlantic* as "the most influential and field-defining" of several works around which a recent, critical Atlantic discourse has developed. I discuss this point in detail in Iuli.

And yet, an Atlantic discourse focused on the retrieval of the "actual dis-junctures that have characterized the Atlantic historical and geographic components," (Games 741) is both necessary and problematic. It is necessary to recall and investigate the repressed matrices of modernity and to deconstruct their universal prescriptions; it is problematic because its ambitions transcend the American or North-American specificities of the Atlantic experience, and indicate that its scope is effectively circum-Atlantic, potentially (and problematically) encompassing the near totality of the terraqueous globe.[4] Interrogated as the matrix of modernity and as a nexus of relations emergent from the events of the "discovery" and the "conquest" and from the cycle of the colonization of lands, deportation of people, appropriation of resources and primitive accumulation[5] that prompted and structured western modernity, the Atlantic is conceived, in Boelhower's view, as a "field of emergence and transformation"(93); a fluid, relational, excessive, and perhaps inexhaustible conceptual domain which is necessarily "more than itself" both historically and spatially. In this view, the Atlantic is a heuristic construction meant to evoke the material and symbolic reservoir of information lost at sea, carried by the cross-currents of the ocean through the centuries, and whose historical intelligibility is bounded to the narrative of European modernity as an outcome of the dual process of expansion of the (North) Atlantic world and of capitalism (Trouillot 221). The long, dual history of Atlantic modernity entailed the reorganization of global space for explicitly political or economic purposes, as world capitalism naturalized a foundational and incessant rendering of modernity while simultaneously hiding its colonial darker side, and linked, irreversibly, distant sites and unequal temporalities across the Atlantic Ocean.[6] Instantiat-

4. The term "circum-Atlantic" was first used by Joseph Roach in his very influential monograph, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. Roach's study was greatly inspired by Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, but expanded the definition of the Black Atlantic to encompass the African-diasporic, Native American, and Caribbean dimension of Euro-Colonial Atlanticism in the perspective of a Euro-colonial modernity.
5. See Singh.
6. From a different vantage point, understanding the Atlantic Ocean as a crucial historical space for addressing the formation of empires and the rise

ing the modern world *with* the new, colonial order *on/of* the world, European capitalism brought up the Atlantic world together with modernity and coloniality, producing what Walter Mignolo has called the foundational "colonial difference" on which modernity instituted itself; a difference that neo-Atlanticism must address within that constellation of concepts, if it is to be critically different.[7]

II. MISSING HISTORIES

Trans-Atlantic studies does, indeed, derive much of its rationality from the investigation of the roots, the traces, and the effects of the capitalist/modern/colonial world order as it expanded across the unbounded space of Atlantic crossings. As is perfectly allegorized by the invisible *Fukù Americanus* in Junot Diaz's novel, that order has not ceased to produce its effects, no matter if the proofs of its instantiation are missing: just like the condition of modern *and* colonial subjectivity was brought about by the maps and ships that instituted and installed modernity, so the Fukù, midwifed on the Antilles by the Admiral Christopher Columbus—who was also "one of its great European victims"—haunts the trans-Atlantic present, and binds cultures and histories ever since: "No matter what its name or provenance, it is believed that the arrival of Europeans on Hispaniola unleashed the fukù on the world, and we've been in the shit ever since. Santo Domingo might be Fuku's kilometer zero, its port of entry, but we are all of us its children, whether we know it or not" (1–2).

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of capitalism, but centering it on the "specific maritime technology" that made both possible, the historian Marcus Rediker has linked maritime commerce and the ship as a specifically inhabited environment in his reconstructions of "the ocean as a real, material place of human work and habitation, a place where identities have been formed, where history has been made." (Rediker 18) Rediker's works has inspired revisionist literary study of the Atlantic such as Laura Doyle's influential *Freedom's Empire* (2008).

7. The conceptualization of modernity as a North-Atlantic phenomenon is discussed by Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Trouillot's reading dovetails with the analysis of modernity developed by decolonial critics: Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, and Silvia Winter. For an illuminating reading of the project in the context of a race-critical Enlightenment critique, see Winter. For a good synthesis of the decolonization project in the context of transnational American studies, see Lenz.

In the narrative dramatization of the Fukù, the space of the Atlantic is made legible as the phantasmatic manifestation of a spectral epistemology that escapes the archival recording of the conqueror's chronicles, journals and letters and yet haunts back the visual economy of conquest that routinely makes the discoverer and conqueror the protagonists of the vision and the natives its passive objects. But while the relational and potentially inexhaustible Atlantic horizon is so ingeniously processed and so remarkably brought to literary generativity in this novel, its material indeterminacy defies—conceptually and materially—*both* historical knowledge, which depends on the availability of archival records, *and* literary-historical knowledge, which depends on a *corpus* and on methodologies predicated on linguistic, rhetorical and hermeneutic analysis. While—as I argue—the Atlantic world may thus operate as a productive *poetic* concept generative of literary counter-memories of (global) Atlantic modernity, its status as *archival* concept remains problematic, metaphorical at best, because it cannot provide the epistemological grounds for an archival apparatus that aims to identify, sort out and organize the heterogeneity of Atlantic cultures, and to consign their traces to the sheltered space of the historical archive. The very vastness, scale and horizon of intelligibility of the Atlantic as a concept defy both the archival methods of literary historiography and the selective methods of source-based historiography, warning us that any attempt to bring together a "whole" Atlantic world may be, as Eliza Tamarkin has observed, "[…] only an anachronism of it—one that reflects an impulse to imagine histories beyond the presence of the nation, that an earlier […] moment has passed down to us" (Tamarkin 267).

Boelhower is aware of the risks this project involves, and smartly averts casting some version of totality as the potential domain of neo-Atlantic analysis by shifting the methodological weight of his proposition from the concepts of place and space to the concept of relation, and spatializing time according to a view inspired, beside Gilroy's black Atlantic, by Fernand Braudel's historiography, Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation, and Michel Foucault's concept of genealogy. As he puts it: "The armature of Atlantic studies, we might conclude, is nothing less than the changing

historical relation between land and sea understood as two different symbolic and geopolitical orders" (Boelhower 92). The constituents of the object of study, of the research methodology, and of the archive this matrix projects, however, remain as elusive as an act of critical awareness, located as they are in the "extended phenomenological awareness [...] of the shifting historical relation between them," [i.e. land and sea] (Boelhower 92). Neo-Atlanticism then, we may observe, is not even constituted by the history of the *relations,* by the material and immaterial traces those relations have sedimented in time, but only by the *awareness* of those relations: "Awareness of this shifting relation [...] has generated the Atlantic world's first language and arguably its first archives" (92).

What/where/how can the sources an Atlantic archive so conceived be determined so as to operate functionally for literary historical purposes? In his expansion of the Black Atlantic order to the global horizon of the watery realm, Boelhower identifies the space of the Caribbean archipelago—"the Atlantic world in microcosm"—and two foundational texts of *the Black Atlantic*: Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African Written by Himself (1789),* and Eduoard Glissant's *Poétique de la Relation* (1990)—as exemplary indexes of an *affirmative* trans-Atlantic archive, providing the materials and traces on which a *positive, neo-Atlantic* archive is conceivable. It is an archive not so much mobilized to diagnose the structural and historical gaps of memory and history, but rather to affirm the global interdependence of traces in Atlantic history; it is less serviceable to asking what transatlantic world such an archive leaves undisturbed in the abysmal depths that connect the Gold Coast of Africa to the Caribbean, punctuating them with "scarcely rusted balls and chains" (Glissant 6), than to affirm the positivity of a surfacing Atlantic world. And yet, Boelhower's selections point to an ambiguity and a conceptual paradox that surfaces once neo-Atlanticism departs from its black Atlantic matrix to expand into a more comprehensive paradigm for literary criticism: unmoored from the traumatic archive of slavery, its heuristic and epistemological value becomes intellectually seductive but historically and conceptually weak, because it is left

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without a principle in relation to which an oceanic logic may be adjudicated as preferable to a territorial one, on both empirical and conceptual grounds.

Unhinged from the history of the Black Atlantic as "a structure and a system," as Gilroy framed it, even the expanded new-Atlanticism so much invested in the deconstruction of Western modernity and its symbolic expressions looses its epistemological anchorage, leaving unclear why an oceanic logic should be more radical than or preferable to a terrestrial one, as—among others—Jonathan Elmer and Etsy have pointed out. Scholars of the Black Atlantic can rely on surviving cultural forms that, as Alan Rice has demonstrated, are sea-based, forged in the diaspora, transcend national boundaries, and "speak of and to a mobile proletariat that has diasporan Africans at its core." (Rice, *Radical* 24) Shanties and African-American oral narratives "constructed about the Atlantic during slavery in the South and later in the post-emancipation Northern and Southern ghettoes" are some examples of the cultural forms mobilized by scholars and activists to challenge white Western amnesia with counter memories generative of counter-archives (Rice, *Radical*; Rice, "Tracing"; Broeck). But identifying the pivots of a neo-Atlantic counter-memory of modernity not centered on the Black Atlantic is immensely more problematic and cannot be satisfactorily addressed with the tools of conventional historiography. Indeed, in the history of the Atlantic diaspora, what supplements the archival erasure (of knowledge, histories, documentation) of native and slave populations and their histories are the popular, vernacular, artforms—such as folktales—that, as Édouard Glissant put it, "zero in on our absence of history" (Glissant 85). But in the neo-Atlantic project Boelhower charts, poetic and/or performative interventions play no part in the fabrication of a counter-memorial project. Nor it is obvious why "the changing historical relation between land and sea understood as two different symbolic and geopolitical orders" has to remain ultimately bounded to sea, and to an Atlanticism that is either too abstract for conventional historiography, or too narrow for a genuinely critical history of global capitalism and modernity.

The point has been made, I think, by alternative investigations that have addressed the complex relation between the production

of colonial difference in the global history of modernity and capitalism, and the inscription of colonial absence in the archives of modernity from the vantage point of a poetic or performative historiography which entails a reorientation from a neo- to a circum-Atlantic horizon, and a shift from archival knowledge to a recuperative methodology based on the creative work of performance and the imagination. In this perspective, as Sabine Broeck has emphasized, because "chronicles" of the dates and facts of colonization from the vantage point of its muted subjects do not exist, then "the pervasive ellipses of Western historiography will only be pointed out and filled by way of the (literary) imagination" (Broeck 24) In her feminist study of the Black diaspora, Broeck laid out a critical/creative methodology to which we can align not only Joseph Roach's claim that "the scope of the circum-Atlantic interculture may be discerned most vividly be means of the performances, performances traditions and the representations of performance that they engendered [...] because *performances so often carry within them the memory of otherwise forgotten substitutions*" (Roach 5. My italics), but also recent work on performativity and memory and comparative circum-Atlantic spectrality by, respectively, Diane Taylor and Adam Lifshey, as well as those contemporary, past, and classic works of the imagination that have interrogated the infrastructural historical voids of modern Western amnesia.

On a similar note, the reorientation from neo- to circum- Atlanticism, as Joseph Roach's put it, is not meant to "deny Eurocolonial initiatives their function in this history [...] but it considers the results of those initiatives as insufficiently acknowledged cocreations of an oceanic interculture" (Roach 5). And it is, indeed, from one crucial, foundational event in the historicization of the Atlantic slave trade—the journey of the slave ship Zong and the spectrality its history installed "in the archive of circum-Atlantic discourses and texts that have gathered around that massacre in the course of the past two hundred years," that Ian Baucom reconstructs the centrality of that event and of its representations "not only in the history of the Atlantic slave trade and for the political and cultural archives of the Black Atlantic, but in the history of capital, of ethics and of the awareness of modern temporal-

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ity." In other world, for a philosophy of history of circum-Atlantic modernity (Baucom 31)

Identifying a functional, neo—Atlantic Archive may well be impossible, but it may also be beside the point. After all, even Boelhower's emphasis on historical narrative and away from historical causation suggests that what is at stake in neo Atlantic studies is not so much the designation of a fresh disciplinary domain or of a new canon as the articulation of a philosophy of history that addresses the "general system of the formation and transformation of statements" concerning the Atlantic world; the historical a-priori which operates as the "condition of reality for statements" (Foucault, *Archeology* 170) and highlights their conditions of emergence (technical, ideological, grammatical, syntactical) in discursive practices. In other words, at stake is the affirmation of a post-post colonial, genealogical, critical philosophy of history that engages the archive of the Atlantic world not as a repository of traces defining the beginning of a history, or ascertaining its incompleteness, but, to paraphrase Ian Baucom, as the site of production of a constitutive, aporetic void that disrupts the lines of continuity of Atlantic modernity, of its historicist impulse and of its positive narratives by inscribing in the representations of the historical scene of trans-Atlantic modernity an irreducible fracture between erasure and writing, between experience and documentation, and by making that gap generative of performative and/or imaginative historical explanations. The critical task of this neo-Atlantic philosophy of history is primarily to keep that fracture open and productive by addressing the "gaps in the archive" (Baucom 4) that makes the history of the Atlantic world, and to activate "the silence it writes into the histories of empire and the modern," in order to assemble "a counterarchive" (textual, performative, material), that, itself haunted by originary loss, may disclose "a reassembled history of the modern" (4).

Following the tracks of scholarship of Black Studies and decolonial thinking, this philosophy of history will seek the silence inscribed in opaque sources, among the linguistic deterritorialization that constitute the matrixes of modernity and of the poetics of relation and transform them narratively or hermeneutically. According

to Glissant, those matrixes are the slave ship and the plantation, but in the history of North-American cultures we should also add the settlement, the fort and the camp. Wherever we find gaps in the narratives they authorize and govern, we can be confident to be witnessing "gaps in the archive," the silent traces of operations of "colonial difference" working in the intersection between the time of the archive and the time of archiviation, as well as between the space of archiviation and its time. We can conceive of this difference as *différance* in Derridean terms. But we can also read it in relation to the epistemology of documentation along the distinction Paul Ricoeur set between *witnessing* (the deposition)—what "does not end its trajectory with the institution of archives" but resurfaces in "representations of the past in stories, rhetorical artifices, images" (Ricoeur 226)—and *the archive*—"the moment in which the historiographic operations enters writing" (235) by means of a formal and logical procedure that installs a discontinuity between saying and what is said by the deposition, and between the documentary trace and its transformation into a document by virtue of its capacity to become writing, to be transformed into a story by means of a deposition. As a witnessing that can be written, the deposition is the condition of possibility for the formation of archives, and archives are "the material places that protect the destiny of this kind of trace [...] the documentary trace" (226).

But what does it mean to protect this kind of trace, with respect to the *impossible* Atlantic archive? How to address that trace, if the archive, besides being a material and a virtual place, is also a social place and a technical device, and thus, intrinsically subject to semantic instability? A place whose meaningfulness always depends on a fragile balance not only between an inside and an outside, i.e., between what is remembered and documented and who (or what) remembers, but also by a double and inextinguishable tension between who (or what) remembers and how (one) remembers; that is, if meaningfulness also depends upon on a constitutive and technical relation between archival objects and the individual and collective dimensions of memory? If—as Derrida has repeatedly insisted in his reading of the Freudian text—"writing is unthinkable without repression," then the archive—

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that, as we have seen in Ricoeur, marks the entrance of history in writing—can not *not* be, also, the operation that erases, displaces, represses, censors, and silences traces of the past and forms of social knowledge irreducible to writing, as Diana Taylor has forcefully shown in *The Archive and the Repertoire*. As a memory device, the archive is thus also a device of silence, a supplement that "seems to add itself as a positive to a positive," while, in fact, it "supplements" the present of the past, reconstructing it a posteriori as the present that never was there. Thus the archive is a mnemonic prosthesis; It is what takes the place of a gap in memory and fills it. It occurs in the "place of original structural weakness of memory" (Derrida, *Archive* 11), where it reintroduces the specter of an exteriority (or a void) that breaks the illusion of a direct, unproblematic access to meaning making.

In the history of the American continent, the silence inscribed and repressed between the time and the space of archivization of Atlantic modernity refers to the lives, cultures and forms of knowledge that have been lost, materially destroyed, silenced or delegitimized in the "Circum-Atlantic Vortex" (Roach) through the process that Diana Taylor has defined of "rejection by documentation," that is, denial by documentary incorporation of forms and techniques of native historical knowledge—ancient, non-western, and non-writerly—instrumental to the affirmation of colonial power. To make visible those processes of erasure and the impact of the violence around which the foreclosure has occurred—to unleash the specter of exteriority haunting the Atlantic Archive—is the aesthetic, political, and counter-memorial purpose of a circum-Atlantic philosophy of history.

III. LITERARY COUNTER-MEMORIES

If the first voyage of Columbus marks the official beginning of Atlantic history, it also institutes and exemplifies the spectral epistemology of trans-Atlantic knowledge, as Adam Lifshey has argued in *Specters of Conquest:* "the diary of Columbus's first voyage remains in a very real sense the foundational text of the transatlantic itself" (Lifshey 11), and like other foundational texts that forged "America," "it is haunted by aboriginal ghosts born of an originary and westward mapping" (3), and imagines

"its transatlantic commencement as inseparable from the production of absence as resistance" (5). But Columbus' narrative of the first voyage is spectral also in the sense that, itself a ghostly palimpsest in which points of view, voices, and "first" accounts alternate under the orchestration of Bartholomé de Las Casas, it initiates and consigns to posterity the *factual, historical*, and *archival* events of the Conquest—the selection, classification and presentation of archival elements—by means of paradigmatic narrative that binds the material and written inscriptions of the New World to the void marked by the disappearance of the original traces, subjects, and even the original document of their inscription.[8] In so doing, the (missing) *Journal of the First Voyage* grounds the epistemology of a New World archive and of (an imagined) America as punctuated by elisions, absences, and erasures, and since the former is the condition of emergence of the latter, it paradoxically engenders as asymmetrical coextensions the documentary and the spectral; the bodies of natives and native environments and their disappearance; the European, universalist history of the modern, (white) Atlantic, and the post-postcolonial resistance of the black (trans) Atlantic; *the Archival* (the scripted, inscribed) and its conditions of exteriority, that is, *the vanished*.

The double trans-Atlanticism thence surfacing is so grounded in foundational narratives of the New World and in North-American mythologies, that two centuries before Adam Lifshey theorized its heuristic potential for criticism, Washington Irving gave it full resonance in his own narrative of Columbus' journal of the first voyage, highlighting the structural paradox that governs its archival status:

> It is evident that a great part of this fancied intelligence was self-delusion on the part of Columbus; for he was under a spell of the imagination, which gave its own shapes and colors to every object. He was persuaded that he had arrived among the islands described by Marco Polo, as lying opposite to Cathay, in the Chinese sea, and he construed everything to accord with the account given of those opulent regions. (Irving 56)

8. It also coexisted with coeval and supplementary accounts of the lost manuscript of the *Journal of the First Voyage*, including Ferdinando Colombo's *Historia*, Chapters XVI-XLII, and Bartolomé de Las Casas's *Manuscript of the Original Journal of the First Voyage*. See Dunn and Kelley.

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In Irving's words, Columbus' inaugurative narrative is both the outcome and a tool of that "geography of imagination and geography of management" Michel-Rolph Trouillot sees as instrumental to the establishment of North Atlantic modernity (221), and illuminates what Diane Taylor calls "scenarios," that is, "paradigmatic setup[s] [that] exist as culturally specific imaginaries—sets of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution—activated with more or less theatricality" (13), whose reiterated stagings across time and contact zones attest to their cultural and historical power, and whose intended theatricality suggests the possibility of appropriation, parody, subversion by social actors enacting communal, non verbal forms knowledge not incorporated in archival records, and yet circulating as social affect (Taylor 28).

All inaugural scenes of colonial possession from the sixteenth-century onward, for example, as Taylor highlights following Michel de Certeau, are cast as the reiteration of the same "scenario" of conquest: "inaugural scene: after a moment of stupor, on this threshold dotted with colonnades of trees, the conqueror will write the body of the other and trace there his own history'" (de Certeau in Taylor 23) But scenarios operate and/or are implied in literary narratives across centuries of (North) American Literature. Literary narratives about the American past are punctuated by stories of the Atlantic world in which inaugural scenarios are played out or enacted. For instance, to remain with Washington Irving, his conflation of Columbus' notational anxieties with the performance of imperial power in the very first act of *modern* colonial slavery Columbus performs on the American Continent: the abduction of seven *indians* as agents of infiltration/mediation, as translators instrumental to filling the imperial text with the details of its first transatlantic archive. Columbus's scripted act memorializes the form of colonial violence that foreshadows the future inscriptions of slave bodies on *the space of* the colonial settlements and later of the Republic.

But examples abound: Walt Whitman's vanishing Indians resurfacing in "Starting from Paumanok" as place-names— literally place holders for a narrative of indigenous populations already disposed of, culturally and materially extinct; Hart Crane's poetic body-parts, fragments of the subterraneous history of transoceanic contact, and certainly missing material for an circum-Atlantic archive,

occasionally re-surfacing to be washed ashore by submerged currents and communications lines, as we read in "At Melville's tomb"

> Often beneath the wave, wide from this ledge
> The dice of drowned men's bones he saw bequeath
> An Embassy. Their numbers as he watched,
> Beat on the dusty shore and were obscured. (Crane 100)

These are "Specters of the Conquest," as Adam Lifshey calls them, which have haunted the history of American literature since the first written accounts of the country, starting from Captain John Smith's plotting *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624) as a romantic narrative of native self-sacrifice under the forces of modern proto-capitalism. Similarly: William Faulkner's evocation, in *Absalom! Absalom!,* of the 1791 slave revolution in Haiti, for instance, uses an anachronism to casts a spectral shadow on the improper foundations of Sutpen's plantation, in what has been called a suspicious act of "literary counter-revolution" (Godden 206); or Jack London's 19th century cast scenarios of conquest and colonization on the background of the gold rush in *White Fang*. Those narratives and so many other have inscribed and re-told the disappearance of bodies, settlements, animals, environments, languages, and cultures from scenes affected by circum-Atlantic, modern capitalism by supplementing its archival histories with the gaps, fissures, and silences they create.

Framing foundational scenes in the history of American literature from the vantage of a circum- Atlantic philosophy of history so conceived, allows us to intercept the silent occurrences that punctuate the literature of the United States and read them against the grain of a pacified modernity. It helps us focus on those occurrences as site-specific events in the larger, global network of material, cultural, human relations and powers that brought up the Atlantic space and the modern world it generated. It also means to deconstruct from the inside the patterns of "repudiation through documentation" (Taylor 25) foregrounding the history of trans-atlantic modernity as a script of "fancied intelligence" which inscribes in the Conqueror's words the ungraspable materiality of a long-dreamed continent.

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This point is explicitly made, for instance, in Laila Lalami's *The Moor Account*, where the reiteration of the inaugural scene of modernity is cast on the scenario of the 1527 expedition to Florida of Don Panfilo de Narvaez, a disastrous enterprise narrated by Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca in the famous deposition "Shipwrecks" and retold, in Lalami's story, from the vantage point of the Moorish slave Esteban:

> Until Senor Albaniz had arrived at the promises and threats,I had not now that this speech was for the Indians. Nor could I understand why it was given here, on this beach, if its intended recipients had already fled their village. How strange, I remember thinking, how utterly strange were the ways of the Castilians—just by saying that something was so, they believed that it was. I know now that these conquerors, like many others before them, and no doubt like others after, gave speeches not to voice the truth, but to create it. (Lalami 10)

To think critically about a trans- Atlantic imaginary in relation to a transatlantic archive, demands *a witnessing of the witnessing that has disappeared from the historical record*, but that, however, has not been entirely erased from cultural traces. This, I understand, means to return to Ricoeur's understanding of what witnessing means as the condition for the deposition to occur and enter the archive, but also as what does not end its trajectory in the archive, and surfaces and resurfaces instead, time and again, in "stories, rhetorical devices, images." It does not mean to imagine a totality, or to re-establish a positivity, a fullness to memory, but to conceive a philosophy of history that endorses the meaningfulness of foreclosures and repressions of events in the archive, and that considers the gaps in the thought and the writing of history. This philosophy of history demands a pedagogy of reading aimed at capturing the traces of such silences, gaps, displacements, and voids in the inscriptions (non-referential and not necessarily textual) of the violent, originary repression and erasure occurred in processes of cultural transmission.

To return to the new—Atlantic studies matrix with which we started, perhaps its weakness is to be sought in its affirmative inclination toward a notion of history and the archive, while—as we have seen—cultures forged in the Atlantic crucible challenge acts of interpretation non only from the affirmative

side of linguistic deterritorialization and cultural hybridization, but also from the negative side of the production of absence; from the gaps in the deposition that—after all—could technically have been given, given the co-presence of a variety of languages and of different skills on the microcosm of the slave ship not only during the intensified 18th century conditions of the *middle passage*, but already in 16th century trans-Atlantic voyages (Rediker). There is no archival trace of those languages, eventually creolized by virtue of what Glissant calls "the most completely known clash between the power of the written world and the impulses of orality" (5), and yet, they have not been completely cancelled, but have often survived in unofficial, folk knowledge, in rituals and in cultural scenarios, as Diane Taylor has argued.[9]

It is by attending to those residual cultural traces enacted in representations, performances, rituals, language uses, scenarios and all that survives alongside archival documentation, and in a supplementary relation to it, that a circum-Atlantic poetics of the memory seems to affirm itself. Operating on a scale epistemologically weak, but imaginatively strong, this poetics suggests a sort of performative para-archive, perhaps a negative archive, irreducible to the temporality of historical linearity and originary archival violence. It gets manifested in recurrent, repeated performances of foundational scenes in the history of America and of Atlantic modernity, where, as Adam Lifshey puts it, "the enactment of scripted presence [...] is matched by a corollary enactment of an unscripted absence" (2). America here, in Lifshey's, is not conceived as a specific place, but as a "reiterated foundational narrative" of the Conquest; the latter being

> not a single entity or act but a fluctuating, polyphonic, grotesque, and macabre experience of genocide and ecocide that began with the first voyage of Columbus and has continued, in forms only sometimes mitigated, through our present day. Each manifestation of the Conquest is characterized by different details of who is attempting to inscribe whom, and where and how that takes place, and under which terms. But each microcosmic America that appears is not so much an inscription as a re-inscription, which is to say a performance, one endlessly repeated, each staging a restaging, each production of presence a reproduction of absence. (Lifshey 3)

9. See, for instance, Dillon.

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As Lifshey demonstrates, for instance, in his reading of Columbus's *Journal* and of Thomas Pynchon's *Mason&Dixon*, the over-writing of the entire phenomenological world—humanity, environment, landscape—in the code of the Conquerors inaugurates an archontic process of writing that occurs simultaneously with the incomplete symbolic and material extermination of what was there before archivization. The process is incomplete, though, he claims, because every historical representation it enacts and installs as a presence ("each microcosmic America that appears") also inscribes and reproduces the enactment of an unscripted absence, in a recursive process of incomplete repressions and erasures that installs the paradox of America as the result of an always partial, always incomplete Conquest, and of conquered subjects as always carrying conflict and resistance.

The reading pedagogy elaborated and exemplified by Lifshey is heavily indebted to theories of performance, particularly, as we have mentioned, to the thesis of Joseph Roach and Diana Taylor. The first has defined circum-Atlantic performance as "a monumental study in the pleasures and torments of incomplete forgetting" (7), the latter has developed a definition of recursive scenarios akin—in many ways—to Propp's structural elements of the fairytale: "formulaic structures that predispose certain outcomes and yet allow for reversal, parody, and change" (Taylor 22). Scenarios are scenes to be enacted, devices that abridge "past and future as well as the here and there. [...] Never for the first time, and never for the last, yet [scenarios continue] to be constantly reactivated in the *now* of performance" (Taylor 58). Scenarios are enactments of dramatic events/moments in national history, such as Columbus arriving at the New World, planting a flag before gathered indigenous people, and proclaiming territorial ownership (the subject of both Taylor and Lifshey's analysis), or—we can add—Captain John Smith rescued by Pocahontas; the Declaration of Independence; the Nat Turner insurrection—to name a few. These dramatic sequences have been played out in many places and media several times, since their occurrence. And yet, they remain powerful, because—Taylor suggests—they "make once again visible what is already there: the specters, the images, the stereotypes. The discoverer, the conqueror, the "savage" and the native princess, for instance"

(Taylor 28). But scenarios and their re-writing are also, as literary scholars know well, the stuff of which literature is made of.

IV. CONCLUSION

In literary history, the explanatory power of a concept depends on its capacity to organize and give logical, rhetorical, ideological, aesthetic, and chronological, consistency to otherwise heterogeneous material, thus providing the ruler that "spans the distance from literary history as narrative to literary history as reference archive." (Arac 1) To date, there is no comprehensive literary history of the Atlantic, but one could speculate on what such project would be like, methodologically. Would it be a narrative history organized around the supra-personal, collective concept of the Atlantic, which would hold together and explain the vast archive of the drawn and submerged traces of *trans-*, *circum-*, and *cis-* Atlantic space and the historical and literary modernities it co-evolved with? Just like 19th century narrative literary histories, would this history also show a plot (the history of the Atlantic as a conceptual fold)? Unlike its positivistic predecessors, it would not be directed by a teleology (of the nation, of freedom, of emancipation, of conquest, or any other). It would perhaps be coextensive with the history of modernity, capitalism, enslavement and coloniality, but it could not be organized by any one of those concepts as its metanarrative. On the contrary, and like most post-modernist literary histories, by selecting, organizing, generalizing and explaining from a circum-Atlantic perspective diverse cultural and historical elements, material and discursive phenomena, actual and imagined events occurred in time and in relation to a geopolitical space, this history would likely struggle to counterbalance the impulse to encyclopedically include the boundlessness of the modern Atlantic world, with the impulse to organize it narratively. In this respect, it would not be methodologically different in kind from literary histories by now rather familiar that aim to retrieve "the context in the text"—as Hayden White put it long ago—and to provide historical reconstructions of the complex network of relations around textual objects by resituating them in specific material zones of production, representation, appropriation, and use. Such a history would also be genealogically oriented to "cultivate the details

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and accidents that accompany every beginning," to "seek the subtle, singular, and subindividual marks that might possibly intersect in them to form a network that is difficult to unravel" (Foucault, *Language* 142), and that connect asymmetrically, *in disparity*, modernity and the Atlantic as "a space of dwelling "in" and a way of reflecting "on" the modern [beginning of things]" (Baucom 4).

But then, would this history be an asymmetrical yet parallel narrative that sidetracks official histories of worlds across the Atlantic? Would it be a history written, as the erudite Moroccan slave Esteban in Lalami's novel claims: "to correct details of the history that was compiled by my companions" who, "in accordance with the standards set by their positions [...] were led to omit certain events while exaggerating others; suppress some details while inventing others?" (1). Perhaps. But only with the important rejoinder, as long as "correcting the details" does not mean to add "a positive to a positive," and means instead attending to that *witnessing* that has not ended its trajectory in the archive, so that it may surface and resurface, time and again "in stories, rhetorical devices, images." Just like Esteban's story.

The discourse that develops from Baucom, Roach, Taylor and Lifshey, and that has guided this essay, points toward a similar direction. It allows for a framing of the relation between cultural knowledge and the transatlantic archive that acknowledges and sidetracks the aporias intrinsic to the gap between *witnessing* and *writing* in Ricoeur's sense of the terms. It allows us to think about a politics of *archive fever damage control* by means of a hermeneutic reading inspired by deconstruction and performance studies, and attentive to re-signify the structural gaps and silences of archival practices toward the production of a different, counter-memorial knowledge, because those gaps "contest from a position of history," and yet not historicist, "a prevalent representation of a state of things" (Lifshey 7). This kind of reading, which I would like to call a poetics of the archive, forestalls the closure of the narrative on the replenished memory of scenarios of discovery, conquest, rebellion, and racialization attempted by the histories of the conquistadores and their never silenced descendants.

Literature, I think, remains the best technology we have for this task, because it thrives in the difference between the saying

and the said of any deposition by punctuating texts with repressions, erasures, and other unresolved elements, and by displacing inherited repressions, silences and erasures in/as alternative narratives, or, counter-memorial practices that mediate between an unknown past and an unforeseen future.

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BUILDING A COUNTERARCHIVE

A Response to Cristina Iuli's "Trans-Atlantic American Studies and the Transatlantic Pedagogies: Some Methodological Perspectives and Questions"

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Cristina Iuli's paper "Figuring Atlantic Legacies" is a well-documented, comprehensive analysis of the theoretical, philosophical and critical debate that has steadily been growing around the subject of Transatlantic Studies in the past twenty years or so. In her systematic reconstruction of the various articulations that such a comprehensive field of research has so far experienced, the author has not merely limited herself to account for its major transformations and to explore their specific impact upon the international scholarly scene, but in so doing, she has also traced her own personal route by singling out, among the large variety of critical views currently available, a number of inspiring references to guide her safely in her own Transatlantic crossing. This has resulted in a spirited intertextual dialogue with some of the best known, seminal works that have helped opening entirely new perspectives to students of the Atlantic world—a rich exchange of critical hypotheses and opinions that are here combined in a particularly lively—and certainly very useful—fashion. From the innovative outlook of Black and Neo-Atlanticism, to Roach's and Baucom's Circum-Atlantic perspective and on to the global view of Trans-Atlantic studies, all of the most relevant stages of the decolonization process that has inspired the evolution of transnational American studies are followed closely in their numerous and subsequent variations.

As the author makes clear since the opening paragraphs of her essay, the emergence of an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective, and the disposal of both the "colonial difference,"

and its powerful, Western-centered rhetorical constructs, cannot be fully evaluated without taking into account the construction and management of a neo-Atlantic archive. This latter point becomes indeed the pivotal question underlying Iuli's analysis, as she draws from a variety of sources as different as Paul Gilroy's early intimation of the necessity to redefine, both spatially and temporally, the limited outlook of an Atlantic archive entirely based on the US experience, and Franco Moretti's recent re-definition of the term in the light of the new possibilities opened up by digital technology, particularly in terms of the unprecedented flow and variety of published literature now made available. Crucial, in this respect, is the discussion she dedicates to the notion itself of a Trans-Atlantic archive, and to the inevitable consequences connected to the the technical management, and the political control of such a colossal, volatile mass of information. A particularly compelling question among the various, delicate issues raised by the potential use of that new plenitude of documents, quite obviously concerns the discretional use, not to speak of the possible manipulation, of the materials *collected*—but *dispersed* could be another way to put it, depending on how we look at it—within the archive itself. Nor does that question invest merely the technical details of the matter, for, as the author repeatedly emphasizes through a variety of references, the core of the entire debate is essentially of a philosophical nature.

In a way, it is as if the old question that over twenty years ago Jacques Derrida brilliantly addressed in his crucial essay, "Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression," which Cristina Iuli appropriately recalls, were still very much at stake today. The riddle confronting contemporary researchers, in fact, appears to be somehow similar to that raised by the French philosopher—that is, how to envision and manage an entity that, like the archive, is originally intended as a closed, orderly, system, while it appears evident that its very renewal, and ultimately its survival, depend upon its being open to external, largely disorderly influences. According to the author of the essay, a possible answer to bridge the gaps created by the many oppostions deriving from that fundamental paradox (i.e.: order vs. disorder / collection vs. dispersion / recollection vs. forgetfulness), lays in the construction of a counterarchive

intended to challenge the silence provoked by white Western amnesia and reticence. Indeed, the central part of Iuli's essay is centered around the various possibilities envisaged by contemporary Trans/Atlantic critics and thinkers to eliminate those "gaps in the archive," or, as it were, to transform those silent, missing segments into narrations or representations of the past, aimed at erasing the last vestiges of "colonial difference." The author's major references for this crucial step in the process of building up a counterarchive made of textual and performative material are mostly thinkers of French extraction—among them Édouard Glissant, Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricoeur—each of whom supplies his won piece of wisdom—Glissant by advocating the need to address two matrixes of modernity such as the slaveship and the plantation; Derrida by calling attention upon the ambivalence of the archive as a device of memory but also of silence; and Ricoeur by drawing a subtle distinction between the notion of witnessing (or the substantial *freedom* of a deposition) and the archive (or the repository of written, archival documents).

Taking the lead from the different theories developed by a number of scholars actively engaged in the decolonial debate (Broeck and Rice, but also Baucom, Lifshey, Taylor), Iuli sums up her own conviction that thanks to the vital inclusion into the archive of documents that are the product of the literary imagination and of the performative tradition, the gaps of silence still existing in Western historiography can be finally turned into new narrations, essential to the affirmation and strengthening of a circum-Atlantic perspective. Finally acquiring a long denied visibility, the impact of this wealth of counter-memories (whether historical explanations, performative statements, or imaginative narrations) will directly serve the purpose to make tangible the violent process of erasure they have undergone at the hands of the old Atlantic historical tradition, while at the same time making explicit the ultimate significance of the circum-Atlantic philosophy. In this light, the final part of Iuli's paper is dedicated to a series of "literary counter-memories" that deconstruct, and delegitimize some of the fundamental narratives and paradigmatic writing models upon which the North Atlantic modernity has thrived. Borrowing from Lifshey's definition of "spectral," and from M. R. Trouillot's

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notion of a "geography of the imagination," Columbus'/Las Casas' diaries of the conquest, John Smith's *General History*, and more recent literary works by Whitman, London and Faulkner, all punctuated by scenes with "inaugural scenarios," are discussed as products of a logic inherent to the Modern tradition of colonial violence. In this respect, it would have been very interesting to read also some comments concerning *Benito Cereno*, since, particularly through Babo's silence and the narrator's comments on the manipulation of the trial's documents, Melville seems to proceed to a dramatic *mise en scène* of that very process of erasure of possible counter-memories perpetrated by the Atlantic colonial tradition.

Finally, the many questions that Iuli's raises in her conclusion concerning the possible methodologies for a future, comprehensive literary history of the Atlantic, lead her to envision what she calls "a poetics of the archive" in which the production of a new counter-memorial knowledge is finally capable to annul once and for all the authority of the Western Atlantic traditional narrative. In her opinion—a view that can largely be shared—literature seems to be the best "technology" to affect that task, thanks to its high potentialities to displace inherited cultural hierarchies, and substitute them with new counter-memories that are deeply aware of their intrinsic impermanence—a suggestive conclusion for a highly engaging paper.

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AMERICAN STUDIES *AS* ITALIAN THEORY

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1. WHAT IS AN AMERICANIST?

The phrase "Italian Theory" has emerged in recent years as a result of the influence of a cluster of Italian philosophers outside of their country of origin. This influence has given rise to a number of international conferences, the first of which took place in September 2010 at Cornell University, and to high-profile international publications, including two volumes of *Diacritics*.[1] In 2014 there was an international symposium in Paris, where participants wondered whether an "Italian Theory" really exists, and whose proceedings have been published in a volume called *Differenze Italiane* (2015). Moments of research outside Italy were followed by a conference in Naples (Institute of Philosophical Studies and Istituto di Scienze Umane), an international symposium at the University of Salerno (October 2015), and by a seminar in Pisa (Scuola Normale Superiore, January 2016). These events have culminated in the constitution of a new research Network on Italian Thought and European Philosophies (Workiteph) in March 2016. The Network's manifesto speaks of events that have "outlined the contours of a paradigm."[2] The kind of "Italian Theory" I will

1. The conference held at Cornell September 24–25, 2010 was titled "Commonalities: Theorizing the Common in Contemporary Italian Thought." See *Diacritics*, vol. 39, no. 3 2009 and vol. 39, no. 4 2009, the double special issue on Contemporary Italian Thought introduced by Timothy Campbell.
2. "Documento Fondativo del Laboratorio su 'il pensiero italiano e le filosofie europee'—WORKITEPH" (Founding Document of the Network on Italian

be addressing here is a radical tradition of thought, whose more conservative dimensions are not within the scope of this paper.

Certainly one of the interesting traits of the new wave of critical thought called "Italian Theory" is that its name comes from the outside. On more than one occasion philosopher Roberto Esposito has offered the narrative of its emergence. In *Pensiero Vivente* (2010) he traces its beginning to the success of living Italian authors among American scholars in American Universities (3), a phenomenon that closely recalls the rise of French Theory and, before French Theory, of the earlier critical theory of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. In a more recent essay, "German Philosophy, French Theory, Italian Thought" (2015), Esposito sees Italian Theory as part of that movement of deterritorialization which has propelled European philosophy, since its decline in the 1930s and 1940s, outside its boundaries, in the attempt "to reinvent itself along other trajectories" (105).

As Esposito notes, deterritorialization resulted in the broadening of a particular philosophy. His narrative begins with the enforced geographical displacement of German philosophy, which corresponded to its intellectual redirection as critical theory, and remarks on the differences between this first wave and the second great displacement of French Theory. He writes:

> Unlike the German diaspora, French Theory did not ensue from traumatic events and it was, therefore, devoid of any tragic resonance; but like the German diaspora, geographical displacement resulted in a contamination and in a circulation of ideas that took on the traits of a veritable hegemony in a number of disciplines, from literary criticism to gender studies and postcolonial studies. ("German Philosophy, French Theory, Italian Thought" 106)

The name "French Theory" actually testifies to the force of deterritorialization since, as Esposito reminds his readers, once it crossed the Atlantic, the thought of Derrida, Deleuze, and Foucault, "became quite other as decontextualized fragments of their thought amalgamated in a new discourse called 'theory'" (106). Italian Theory continues this movement but, in Esposito's view, when

thought and European philosophies), Università di Bari, March 10, 2016. For the text, see the network's website: http://workiteph.com/english/.

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compared to the preceding waves, it adds a different emphasis: "The 'outside' that propels Italian Thought (the formula preferred by Esposito, and we shall see later why) is neither the social dimension of German Philosophy nor the textual dimension of French Theory, but the constitutively conflicting space of political practice" ("German Philosophy, French Theory, Italian Thought" 107). Esposito's hypothesis is that Italian Theory bridges the old gap between theory and practice with a different "mood of affirmation" (*tonalità dell'affermazione* 110). To be sure, since its recent inception, Italian Theory has been synonymous with affirmative thought yet, by Esposito's own admission "affirmative" remains a problematic term, meaning many different things.[3] From his point of view, "affirmative" is meant to refer to a philosophy of immanence, which, extending well beyond Italian philosophy, is comprised of thinkers like Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze, all united in the shared effort to think "not in a reactive but in an active, productive, affirmative way" ("German Philosophy, French Theory, Italian Thought" 110).

Even from these summary remarks it is possible to see that Italian Theory meets us with two interesting but problematic traits: its strange name and, strictly related to its name, its affirmative character. The strangeness of the name lies of course in the adjective "Italian." One of the founding fathers of "weak thought," Pier Aldo Rovatti, in a firm rejoinder to Antonio Negri's "The Italian Difference," has expressed concerns for the "emphasis on national character" (Rovatti 26–27). Others would agree with Rovatti,[4] particularly since we are talking about a wave of theory that gathers momentum when the critical debate in the Humanities is steadily shifting away from the national and toward a wider planetary dimension (see Elias & Moraru). In light of this general-

3. For some of the meanings, see Negri,Malandrini, and Perniola.

4. Similar reservations are voiced by Lorenzo Chiesa in one of his critical introductions to Italian theory. On the occasion of my presentation of an earlier draft of this essay at the IASA Rome Symposium in the Spring of 2016, the same point was made by Carlo Martinez, who acted as my respondent, and Giorgio Mariani, who organized the Symposium and invited me to present. "International American Studies and the Question of World Literature," a Symposium of the International American Studies Association (IASA), "Sapienza" University of Rome, 14–15 April 2016.

ized change, any return to the national character sounds, at best, anachronistic; it suggests a retrogade motion.

In the past, Italian thought more generally has not been foreign to such intimations. As Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano point out in their introduction to *The Italian Difference* (2009), first Guy Debord, in *Commentaries on the Society of Spectacle* (1988), and later Michael Hardt, in his introduction to *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (1996), link Italian thought to the "advantage of backwardness" (3): for these authors, the image of an Italy lagging behind modernization and postmodernization processes actually corresponds to a capacity for extreme experiments in resistance (*operaismo* and *autonomia organizzata*). While the label remains a source of concern, it should be kept in mind that "Italian Theory" is a name given within an Anglophone context (Italian Theory is called by its English name even in Italy). Thus it would be useful to understand the phrase from a slightly different angle, not only as a historical variation of transatlanticism but, as such, also as a more fundamental form of interpellation regarding something that exits in the eye of the Other. From this perspective, Italian Theory becomes much more than, to use Srinivas Aravamudan's phrase, "the return of anachronism." It raises the question of exactly what, in its paradoxical backwardness, appeals to the Other, that is to say, to all those who recognize and name an "Italian" theory.

We might also consider the clichés at work within the phrase. Even though it is lamentable of course, the ugly work of clichés always counts: if "French Theory" may have projected intellectual sophistication, "Italian Theory" can retain a certain ethnic flavor. One of the points of the label "Italian Theory" is to invite implicitly the comparison with "French Theory," which it follows. It would seem that, in the comparison, "Italian Theory" can only claim a strained, almost working class, vulnerable grasp of the concept. As Deleuze and Guattari once (surprisingly) suggested, Italy, like Spain, is "capable of a powerful development of concettism, that is to say, of that Catholic compromise of concept and figure which had great aesthetic value but which masked philosophy, diverted it toward a rhetoric and prevented a full possession of the concept" (103). Because of its imagined contiguity

with ethnicity and with a weaker possession of thought, "Italian Theory" can wield an uncomfortable power if brought before American literature and culture: its ethnic ring and its assumed philosophical secondariness can potentially recall and mirror old scars in the body of a currently decentered, would-be post-ethnic and post-racial America.

Apart from its potential for memory work, the fact remains that an "Italian Theory" first became visible and was named in the US, later irradiating in another parts of the world. It would not seem unreasonable therefore to propose that the origins of this wave of theory invite the question of how it addresses American Studies. For example: Might it rightfully belong to the Americanist's domain of inquiry? If so, what impact might it have on the identity of the Americanist? What is an Americanist?

2. METHOD

The existence of Italian Theory therefore questions the boundaries of American Studies, a field that in recent decades has spent its best energies redrawing its own intellectual order. The reconfiguration has not been isolated; it has concerned other fields of knowledge as well. But it seems significant that while, for example, in the case the New Modernist Studies the redrawing of boundaries has meant a planetary expansion of the concept of modernism and a multiplication of modernities and modernist latitudes in time and place (Friedman), the reconfiguration of American Studies instead seems inexorably bound to a trajectory of dissolution. With its internationalization, "America" has transformed into the term of a knowledge constructed globally, from points of view other than national that remain decidedly non-American (see Edwards & Gaonkar), and the traditional territorial idea of America has been replaced with a much more fragmented image. In this play of refractions and reflections, it is as if the object of study vanished in the distance, further away from the observer, like a distant mark in the horizon, engaging the imagination with the notion of residue, debris, detritus. (It reminds me a little of Italian photography when Susan Sontag looked at it: she found that the image of Italy that she had in mind became less decodable and more confining, a set of thin, material

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marks "not meant to be sauntered through [...] an abstraction. To be seen as an image. To be seen from the air [...]" [222]).

The process may be said to have begun with what Donald Pease calls "a generalized crisis in [...] the field-Imaginary," by which he means "the prelinguistic identification of the field practitioner with the field's assumptions, principles, and beliefs" (Pease 118). America was understood as a unitary narrative rooted in its geographical boundaries. When disidentification with this narrative set it, it became a new critical productive force. The New Americanists Project driven by Donald Pease in the late 1980s and early 1990s questioned two deeply linked notions: the mastery implied in the idea of a subject of knowledge (the field's practitioner) and the extent to which this mastery meant the control to be exerted over the boundaries of a field of knowledge. Disidentification installed the work of the negative within the field. The Americanist, much like the critical theorist in the footsteps of Adorno, found it vital to criticize a "thinking that tolerates nothing outside it" (Adorno qtd. in Giles, *Virtual* 261).

This element of conflict represented only the beginning of a wider, relentless forward movement of American Studies toward the outside that continues in the present. Djelal Kadir hopes that the exit from its geographical boundaries will transform American Studies into "an international interdisciplinary field of inquiry" (Kadir "America and Its Studies" 11). What I find fascinating is that this movement outside affords the mind the image of a confluence of American Studies and critical thought, both involved in a simultaneous movement of deterritorialization that pushes them outside their established boundaries. The two areas of knowledge appear closer than ever, sharing a certain inclination for heterogeneity. What they appear to have in common is the recursive problem of imposing intellectual order on an incongruent mass of materials.

I understand critical thought as that theoretical activity which, in the twentieth century, led to the renewal of European philosophies with figures like Adorno, who favored a philosophy (critical theory) oriented toward social change. As we have seen, Roberto Esposito construes Italian Theory as the third phase of critical thought, as the vantage point from which European philosophical reflection, far from being insular and hegemonic,

can retrospectively be grasped as an onward series of geographical exits that amount to so many intellectual transformations. For Esposito, Italian Theory belongs in this historical continuum but, at the same time, it exceeds it, naming a different kind of thought linked to a structure of latency. Elsewhere, I observed that in *Pensiero Vivente* (2010), the story of Italian Theory begins with a blank, with a time of stasis and non-action. Italian Theory points to a philosophical-critical body that has remained inoperative and takes on transnational resonance belatedly, when it can be understood as particularly attuned to the "dynamics of globalization and immaterial production of the postmodern" (*Pensiero Vivente* 5). Beginning with a blank at the beginning, Italian Theory never really begins. We find it already mixed with other waves of thought, according to a logic of contamination that often subtends the formation of new ideas. Italian Theory, then, sounds like another name for the problem of the new. Esposito himself argues that it prefigures the awakening of "innovative paradigms" *(Pensiero Vivente* 4–5). Interestingly, as the question of the emergence of the new, Italian Theory might be advantageously grasped in its colloquy with American Studies.

The colloquy has barely begun to be uncovered,[5] and thrusts into relief what Donald Pease and Robyn Wiegman, reviving an expression of Gene Wise, call "paradigm dramas," the phrase referring to the drama attending the symbolic act itself. This drama is at the core of Esposito's narrative of Italian Theory, which illustrates how new ideas do not define themselves against something. Certain ideas, Esposito stresses, reach us from an uncertain elsewhere: they make sense, are given credit, and become valuable at a particular time. What seems new in certain conceptual horizons comes, in fact, from strands of thought that were already at work elsewhere, and take on "thematic stability" and the necessary conceptual force only in the new register beyond the original conceptual horizon (*Pensiero Vivente* 3, 5). Esposito is seeking to move

5. In his last book, *Da Fuori* (2016), Esposito devotes a section to discussing Italian thought in a transatlantic context, weaving connections between Italian Theory's emphasis on the plane of immanence and the rejection of hierarchies and the representation of American space from Tocqueville on (*Da Fuori* 51–63).

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beyond an enduring and confining dialectical model, and Italian Theory, which becomes the proof that ideas arise because they circulate, is made possible exactly by such a diasporic logic.

While it may be that, as Esposito argues, this diasporic logic is always inherent in the emergence of meaningful concepts across deep time, the impure circulation that he describes closely recalls the logic of *méconnaissance*. *Méconnaissance* informs us that the act of understanding thrives on an element of misunderstanding. We understand because we recognize something in misrecognizing it. That the act of recognition hinges on misrecognition amounts to a lot more than a subjective failure in the field practitioner; it constitutes the very condition of illumination. If, as Lacan affirmed, there is no speech without a reply,[6] it is also true that a speech act is, somehow, always a call for recognition, even in the absence of another (Tarizzo 43). The fundamentally divided condition of the linguistic subject and the dialogic nature of language imply identities and ideas formed through speech and recognized in the act of naming; but insofar as they are formed in and through speech, they are also constantly misrecognized. Insofar as the act of grasping something is grounded in something that becomes available for recognition, something will come forward, appear and become meaningful (i. e. conceptually accessible) *in* something else, *as* a familiar unfamiliar.

The standard example of *méconnaissance* is the Mirror Stage. The child's jubilant moment of self-apprehension is simultaneously a moment of misapprehension, when, from body-in-fragments lacking any motor coordination, the child recognizes himself in the idealized, unified mirror image over which he is the master. Here, however, I would like to dwell on a lesser known example from an autobiographical fragment by Aby Warburg. Like the Mirror Stage text by Lacan, Warburg's fragment (1922) deals with the force of images, but it is perhaps more relevant to my argument since the child's seduction by overpowering images is explicitly made to prefigure the adult's capacity for putting intellectual order in chaos.

6. In "Function and field of speech and language," Lacan writes: "there is no speech without a reply, even if it is met only with silence, provided that it has an auditor: this is the heart of its [language's] function in analysis" (Écrits 40).

Remembering the time when he fell ill with typhus, Warburg writes:

From that time my mind still retains the images created by the fever with such clarity. They well up, as if they had just been impressed in my memory this very moment, combined with olfactory sensations which, since that time, have caused me to suffer from an unpleasant overexcitation of the olfactory organs. I remember exactly the odor of the toy gun that I used to hold as a child, the soup bowl and the soup it contained, even the texture and the odor of the wool that our old governess used for her knitting (the reason why today I still have a marked aversion for certain shades of yellow).[7]

The most beautiful moment of the fragment comes when Warburg relays his vision of a small coach or carriage:

At the time of the fever-induced delirium, I also had visions of a small horse-drawn carriage moving forward on the window sill, a memory derived, I later realized, from an illustration in a book by Balzac which, as a child, I always sought to touch without, however, understanding the written text. (Binswanger & Warburg 154)

The prelinguistic force of certain images imposes itself even before the child can read and understand. To this prelinguistic force Warburg traces the adult's capacity for new intellectual paradigms, for founding acts of order, suggesting that the discipline he created as an adult researcher, iconology, originates precisely in the visual memories, particularly in the anxiety evoked by the visual chaos. Tellingly, Warburg speaks of "the tragic infantile attempt of the thinking man" (Binswanger & Warburg 54).

The child in Warburg's fragment begins to think of the events around him in terms of an uncontrollable, material power that makes itself felt through "the illogical supremacy of colors, odors and sounds" (154). He thus outlines a fatal weave of environment and intellect: "The fever-induced delirium isolates and emphasizes the memory image, which is suddenly brought before us in its unbounded singular power" (Binswanger & Warburg 154).

7. All translations from Warburg in the body of this essay are mine. Warburg suffered from depression and symptoms of schizophrenia, and was hospitalized in Ludwig Binswanger's neurological clinic in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland in 1921. He was cured and released from Binswanger's clinic in 1924. The fragment I am drawing on was written during his stay at the clinic.

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The image triumphs in a face to face that is decontextualized from the rest of the environment. Later on, speaking about his feverish state, Warburg explicitly refers to the "effect of an environment," indicating the demonic force or illogical sovereignty (colors, odors, sounds) that has him in its grip. Clearly, the power of images is no personal concoction of the feverish child, but concerns his place in the social community, and, what is worse, it prefigures the suffocating, irreparable conjoining of intellect, social community, and national character.

The link between the uncontrollable force of certain images and the question of social belonging becomes clear as the fragment progresses and Warburg relates how he tried to counter the illogical force of the image with real life and integration in "a normal community ready to act and impose order on chaos" (Binswanger & Warburg 154). He goes on to relate his vicissitudes in public schools, his necessity to change communities and adjust to new groups of peers, his experience of being brutally beaten on his fingers with an iron ruler by an anti-Semite theologian, and other violent rites of the community's excluding inclusion.

Warburg dwells on the enigmatic link between the pressure of the social environment and the subjective agony of symbolic activity. The fragment marvelously stages intellectual creativity as the alternation of the child's retreat to his cocoon, which is emphasized by his illness and delirium, and the pressure of belonging, which is associated with the discomfort and outright violence at school, the sovereign symbol of the much wider *dispositif* of the national psyche. The word "environment," then, suggests a nuanced complex, and the work of the fragment is to show the child's attempt to become unmoored from it, reflecting his, as well as our own, unease at that kind of belonging. Warburg mentions his struggle to become included in an "already ordered mass," a torment that was ended by Dr. Cohen's intervention and the child's withdrawal from school. What I wish to remark on is the connection that the fragment establishes between the pressure (from the outside) of a mechanism of excluding inclusion and the agony of the symbolic act, with its promise of conceptual invention. The point of the Warburg fragment is that intellectual work issues from the pressure of the communal

mechanism, and, even though we may try to become unmoored from national versions of excluding inclusion, these remain always residual to language.

3. PARADIGM DRAMAS: THE PRODUCTION OF SPECTRAL ORIGINS

I have dwelled on Warburg at length because his fragment bears on the necessary "paradigm dramas" attending the act of imposing order on chaos, especially when the act determines the foundation of a field. It is to this founding scene that Donald Pease returns in an influential account of American Studies, "Futures," to which I now turn. Co-authored with Robyn Wiegman, and introducing the volume *The Futures of American Studies* (2002), "Futures" rereads Gene Wise's classical account, "Paradigm Dramas" (1979), with a mixture of admiration and rejection. Pease and Wiegman scrutinize, through Wise, Perry Miller's urge to impose order on chaos and thus organize intellectually a disparate heterogeneity in his classic *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956) (Pease & Wiegman 6). As Pease and Wiegman remark, the founder's act resulted in an academic field organized around a "substantive consensus on the nature of American experience and a methodological consensus on how to study that experience" (6). While they acknowledge the results (an American mind expressed in certain leading thinkers and in recurrent themes like puritanism, transcendentalism, etc.), they are more interested in the breaks from the original paradigm: the first break in the mid-1960s, when the ordered materials appeared to enforce the dominant culture, the second break in the 1970s, when the critique from social movements outside the field resulted in a proliferation within the field (African American Studies, Latino Studies, Asian American Studies, Native American studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, and Women' s Studies). While Gene Wise saw these breaks as the onset of a decline, Pease and Wiegman judge them positively.

They focus particularly on the second break, in the 1970s, because that is when the question of an "outside" began to emerge. The territorial imaginary of earlier scholars came under attack by subcultures that pressed like so many forces "unable to become present in the field's available representations" (Pease & Wiegman 20). The central question at the time was not the field's

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openness to other disciplines. In the post-World War II years, American Studies had, in fact, encroached on other disciplines, and, from the beginning, it had depended on the hospitality of others, engaging other fields in an exchange in which the lexicon of friendship overlapped with that of economy, suggesting giving and taking, debt and guilt. Wise, for example, was concerned about American Studies being a "parasite field," living off the ideas of others. The real question, instead, was the vitality of the discipline. Pease and Wiegman reconsider the anxiety about the field's lack of an inner unity to deploy its affirmative potential. Turning away from the discourse of crisis, they conceive the discipline as a "hybridized borderland," a conceptual zone where "the emergent inhabits the residual," whose focal point is the recognition of "the unsayable" within the cognitive parameters of the discipline (Pease & Wiegman 21). As, in Pease and Wiegman's narrative, American Studies becomes unmoored from the territorial imaginary, much like Cultural Studies, it wants to speak, "especially when something awkward and difficult need [s] to be said"; it wants to be about "opening up a discursive space from the outside" (Hebdige).

To other scholars, the outside of the New Americanists Project did not seem outside enough. Since the publication of the New Americanist Manifesto in *boundary 2* (1990), the question had been whether the project really did entail a change in American Studies. For Djelal Kadir the field remained too territorial, too "American": "taken in as naturally and as inexorably American" ("America and Its Studies" 20). For Kadir, its "hybrid borderlands" and "variegated American identities" still "implicate the subject in a specular identification with ideological state apparatuses" ("America and Its Studies" 20). He proposed a different version of the Americanist who, in his reorientation, is a scholar who "seeks an exogenous assessment of America."[8]

Kadir was not wrong to perceive an illusionary object, "securely interred," within a field which appeared to be haunted by a "spectral

8. "[W]e have an obligation," Kadir writes, "to value diverse recognition above the tautological misrecognition of identity formations, whether in literature or in other forms of discourse, as we remain fully alert to national hubris" (Kadir, "America and Its Studies" 22).

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soliloquy" ("America and Its Studies" 20). He perceived, in other words, the melancholy incorporation of something and, in this perception, he echoed the concerns of Janice Radway. In her landmark Presidential Address to the American Studies Association (1998), "What's in a Name?," Radway had spoken of "the ghostly presence of a fantasmatic, intensely longed-for unitary American culture" (51). She put the question mark next to the name "American" to free an increasing number of field practitioners from such spectral returns. To this end, she also advocated "new ways of thinking the relationship between geography, culture, identity" (51), encouraging a shift in the meaning of "American" from national signifier to critical and theoretical signifier of "new work" and "intricate interdependencies" (53). For Radway, the necessity for the shift at the time was dictated by "the problem of US imperialism" in the post-Cold War period (51). After Radway, Lisa Lowe has taken up the problem more explicitly, and, as Pease and Wiegman point out commenting on her contribution, "The International within the National: American Studies and Asian American Critique," she has argued that the future of American Studies "involves reckoning with the imperialist history that has led some members of the association to be ashamed of the name" (24). The "spectral soliloquy" and the "ghostly" returns do not therefore exclusively concern a mythical, intensely longed-for unitary American culture; they are also linked, in almost unspeakable ways, to shame as a key factor in the critical practice within the field. As suggested by Lowe, shame is the deep content of American Studies. It not only runs through the field but claims a primary place in the formation of the Americanist. This results in an ambivalent sense of belonging to the field that is at the same time a sense of exclusion or self-exclusion. As Elspeth Probyn writes, "Most experiences of shame make you want to disappear, to hide away and to cover yourself" (329). The Americanist must affirm his or her object of study at the same time that he or she wants to hide away from it.

From this perspective, the New Americanists Project is an important way out of the shaming ritual, that is to say, out of the mechanism of excluding inclusion at the center of the field. Viewed as a hybrid borderland, "America" becomes a zone of inquiry

that hosts within itself the potential of critical thought. Theory, like a pebble thrown in the water (I am thinking of Emerson's image in "Circles"), impacts on the broadening circles of American Studies, locally and globally. When, therefore, with the New Americanists Project, Donald Pease affirms American Studies as a hybrid conceptual zone, when he bridges the gap between American Studies and critical theory in their shared resistance to the concept and emphasizes the unsayable, these are important ways of interrupting shame and its role in the negotiation of the identity of the Americanist. The translation of the outside (the unsayable), promises to emancipate the field practitioner's critical act from the shame that is lodged in it, releasing the critical act for the open horizon of the intellectual event.

4. RECIPROCAL HEALING

When he introduced the elements of conflict and disidentification, Donald Pease was trying to alter the libidinal economy of the field. This work continues in a recent contribution, "Gramsci/Agamben: Re-configurations of American Literary Studies," where Pease emphasizes the theoretical origins of the New Americanists Project and responds to the earlier criticism of his melancholy incorporation of an illusionary, unified idea of America by acknowledging a special connection with Italian Theory. He writes that he could not have imagined the New Americanists Project without a cluster of thinkers that have come to be associated with Italian Theory, a field from which he took his chief theoretical claims. He focuses particularly on the role of Antonio Gramsci and Giorgio Agamben. Gramsci, he explains, enabled him to insert the element of division, conflict and disidentification within the field through readings that "released the repressed relationship" between literary interpretation and "the needs and aspirations of oppressed groups" (115). The reference to Gramsci, therefore, enables Pease to redraw the profile of the Americanist in closer proximity to the critical theorist, who must continuously face the negative, that which remains unassimilated to the concepts of the discipline, and to propose that the Americanist act as a conduit "for the return of figures and materials previously excluded from the field" (117). But, aware that even this reparative project

might be exposed to the risk of a "reinscription of the nationalist project" (Kadir, "America and Its Studies" 19), Pease addresses the criticism lingering from the past by appealing to the work of Giorgio Agamben: "Agamben's analyses of the interdependence of the state's sovereignty and the construction of an ongoing state of exception opened my eyes to a way out of the cycle through which the state has refunctioned social movements' demands for 'freedom' and 'rights' as justifications of the state's sovereignty" (117). He concludes with the image of a confluence of American Studies and Italian Theory, affirming their common interest in the nexus of life and power. The shared question, he writes is: "How can we articulate the relations between life and power according to individual or collective needs?" (120).

Pease links Agamben's emblematic (and now rather popular) *dispositif* of excluding inclusion and American Studies in an interesting relation of reciprocity; there seems to be something in the *dispositif* of excluding inclusion that not only drives the work of Agamben and other Italian theorists, but also resonates with the situation of the Americanist, who must reckon with an element of shame, not so much with regard to America or even US imperialism, but with regard to what he or she conceives of as a lapse in the "true" American ideal. To quote Probyn, "shame, left unspoken, solidifies as a layer of intensity that never seems to go away" (47). It is as if Italian Theory could help to name, in other theoretical terms, the hidden and buried work of shame. For the Americanist, the recognition of Agamben's mechanism at a silent level seems the precondition for being a field practitioner. It may be characteristic of Pease to circle back to the destructive element of the American imaginary, but he gravitates toward the affirmative/destructive symbiosis in a way that is quite reminiscent of how I am characterizing Italian Theory here.

But it is when we consider the larger context of Agamben's popular mechanism of inclusion/exclusion that perhaps we begin to see better the relation of reciprocity that I am proposing. Agamben's mechanism of excluding inclusion (*sacertà*) was the stepping stone for a larger project to which Italian Theory is associated. Despite their remarkable differences, the authors that have come to represent Italian Theory have in common the exodus

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from the dialectical model, which deconstruction, despite its accent on difference, was not able to complete. Also called by Agamben the "bipolar machine" (qtd. in Chiesa and Ruda 163), the dialectical model defines an identity always through its opposite (alterity) and empties the particular in the universal. En route outside this model, Italian Theory encounters the force of an alternative view of modernity, which is understood, in the words of Laura Bazzicalupo, as "a conceptual apparatus, as a set of artificial procedures aimed at protecting life by denying life" (Bazzicalupo *Biopolitica* 115). Apart from raising questions about the ways we have been thinking about creativity, identity, and action, this other modernity foregrounds the nexus of life and power. It takes as its privileged object of study the repression of life, with a special interest in experimental modes of resistance that consist neither in the assumption of the symbolic identities that we are forced to be nor in disobedience. Agamben celebrates Melville's Bartleby, an American negative hero, precisely as the example of a different mode of resistance, a state of suspension between the force of the symbolic order (with the identities that it imposes on us) and disobedience (the affirmation of life that exceeds life if only through the potentiality not to). Along this route we encounter the affirmative power which is said to constitute the "Italian difference." As already mentioned, the meaning of "affirmative" is much more complex and problematic than it can be discussed here.[9] Nevertheless, it would be helpful to point out that, within the strictly philosophical debate, the term "affirmative" suggests a new ontology, one that, as Laura Bazzicalupo writes, shifts the focus from "resistance (conceptualized in the negative) to creativity (affirmative quality of creating, recreating and transforming situations, and being actively involved in the process)" so that "life and the living become matter that resists and creates new forms of life" (Bazzicalupo, *Biopolitica* 92). Outside the strictly philosophical debate, this affirmative quality may be grasped in terms of a wel-

9. If this affirmative quality is connected to the exit from the polarities of the dialectical model, it becomes highly problematic if the radical exodus from the dialectical model assumes an occlusion of the symbolic order altogether, a fact which makes a *tabula rasa* of the linguistic turn and denies the imaginary dimension of subjectivity.

comed distance from melancholia as the privileged environment of critical thought. It is this distance from melancholia that can help us to further illuminate the connection with American Studies.

Roberto Esposito's narrative of Italian Theory, discussed in the earlier part of this paper, would not be complete without the question of oppressive origins. As we have seen, Esposito presents Italian Theory as a latent body of thought that becomes meaningful only belatedly. One of the key features of this thought is a different relation to the origin. In general, says Esposito, what has made possible the production of the new (*nuovo sapere*) in European philosophy is "the notion of a threshold—whether anthropological, epistemological, institutional—which offers shelter from an origin that cannot be dominated (intellectually ordered) by and through reason but instead threatens reason" (*Pensiero* 24). The origin that preoccupies Esposito echoes the illogical sovereignty of Warburg's fragment. It is a "magmatic pre-reflexive substance," at times identified with "a human dimension too close to the animal dimension," at other times with "the imaginative language of myth and magic" (*Pensiero* 24), which is construed as the origin, lost in time, from which aggression flows and from whose spectral returns the thinker defends himself/herself, seeking a new beginning.

Contrary to this inclination, Italian Thought, by which phrase Esposito means that up until now inoperative thought, which the name "Italian Theory" helps uncover, has a different relation to the origin (*Pensiero* 25). The origin is coeval with the present but in a latent way (*in maniera latente*) that allows for the "reactivation of the origin as energetic resource, instead of suffering the origin as a spectral return" (*Pensiero* 25). Italian Theory names therefore a re-orientation of thought, away from the subjection to the spectral returns of an archaic aggression and toward a critical labor that weakens the destructive element and reorients it in a diasporic sense (in the sense of productive repetition) so that it might be felt as heterogeneous, affirmative potential.[10]

10. Insofar as Esposito's rejection of oppressive origins denotes an anxiety of confinement, it is comparable to the anxiety of which Kuan-Hsing Chen speaks in *Asia as Method* (2010). Addressing the possibility of an inter-Asian dialogue, Chen sees as its principal obstacle the state of "being constantly

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When Italian Theory is perceived as an affirmative direction away from melancholia, we can begin to see why Donald Pease claims its role in the reconfiguration of American Studies. "Italian Theory" indicates a different environment of thought, one in which the production of the new no longer depends on the "erasure of the origin" (*Pensiero* 24). Pease indicates the biopolitical theme, the nexus of life and power, which is already there in Gramsci (*Americanismo e Fordismo*) and is later reactivated by Foucault, as the common terrain of the two disciplines. It would be helpful, however, to understand the biopolitical less as a theme or specific content and more as a figure of what Esposito would call a different "tonality," or even a certain way of moving or advancing (*movenza*) (*Da Fuori* 116).[11]

At the confluence of the two fields, Italian Theory's work with aggressive origins resonates with (and supports) the Americanist's work with shame as a buried assumption of the field, offering some relief not only from the melancholia of the inhibiting spectral returns of founding acts, but more importantly, I would argue, from the melancholia of "securely interred" symbolic acts, that is to say, of the interred potential of intellectual invention (new paradigm dramas?). If shame were not also a powerful productive force, one would perceive the relation between the two disciplines as one of reciprocal healing. At the confluence of the two fields, too, the broadening of America no longer seems just a matter of content, borders, and themes, but a question of theoretical turns.

CONCLUSION ("WILDERNESS")

Describing the transnational turn in American Studies, Paul Giles employs the notion of deterritorialization, taken from Deleuze

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anxious over the question of the West." His aim in promoting Asia as method is "to multiply frames of reference in our subjectivity and world-view, so that our anxiety over the West can be diluted, and productive critical work can move on" (223). The departure from a traditional European thought outlined by Esposito similarly seems in the service of a dilution of anxiety and of the onward movement of productive critical work.

11. I explore the full import of this metaphor in an essay in progress temporarily titled "From the Culture Industry to Italian Theory: The Search for an Affirmative Critical Thought."

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(Giles, *Global*).[12] As we have seen earlier on, Esposito has recourse to the same notion when discussing Italian Theory as a product of the movement and displacements of European philosophies. These displacements may be seen as interdependent because they belong in a much more global conceptual shift, within the lexicon of contemporary modernity, from need to desire. For political philosopher Laura Bazzicalupo the shift spans the *longue durée* from the late 19th century to the present, and she compellingly explains it in terms of the passage from classical economy (Smith, Ricardo, Marx), which was not yet a form of government, to the anarchic autonomy of economic phenomena which, in late modernity, have come to shape people's lives (Bazzicalupo, "Economia" 26). She writes:

> Life manifests as movement, singular, concrete motivation directed toward its own satisfaction. [...] The inner direction of the movement is one and only one: it is interest, *desire.* Its pursuit by each and every living being constitutes the ontological premise of any economic work. Scarcity and lack no longer inhere to the world out there, but become constitutive of subjects: it is hunger, hunger for eudaimonia. This desire—the same libidinal principle at work in Foucault's notion of subjection, or in Freud's notion of psyche, as well as in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s—is the new empirical dimension of bios. The dimension of life is the mechanism of drives in movement toward self-realization, eudaimonia [...]. ("Economia" 27)

Late modernity is a landscape of "subjective vectors, guided by instrumental logic" (27), and society "a spontaneous intersection" of "flows of desires," an interweaving of "immanent powers" (27). Bazzicalupo paints a scenario that captures all the force of the life

12. In his introduction to *The Global Remapping of American Literature*, Giles resorts to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "deterritorialization" to give "historical specificity" to the matrix of trasnationalism. Noting that Deleuze and Guattari were the first to broach the idea of deterritorialization "to describe how flows of desire traverse the boundaries of distinct, separate territories," Giles draws on the following quote: "The decoding of flows and the deterritorialization of the socius thus constitutes the most characteristic and the most important tendency of capitalism. It continually draws near to its limit, which is a genuinely schizophrenic limit [...] Capitalism, through its process of production, produces an awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy or charge, against which it brings all its vast powers of repression to bear." (*Anti-Oedipus* qtd. in Giles, *Global* 20).

and power nexus: "There is neither empathy nor co-existence, because they are not necessary, they are not functional [...] these affects might be an end to the pursuit of an aim but always with an economic logic. There is no common aim: the only measure of value is individual subjectivity, always different, always anarchic [...]" (27). If, at first, the encounter with Italian Theory may be disorienting and destabilizing, it is because, at least in part, it responds to the "wilderness" of contemporary modernity with the urgency of a redefinition of life.

Such a redefinition remains controversial, but the urgency can be heard in the emphasis on the "impersonal," a way of understanding life as a virtual spark, as "a kind of preindividual or transindividual biological substance, in which even the human body loses its contours" (Lisciani Petrini 45). Esposito turned toward the impersonal in *Terza Persona* (2007). In that book, the abstract term was highly suggestive of an outpost of thought, of a place at the latter's furthest limit. It promised a true plurality, a human condition never experienced before, a way of being human that is no longer defined by and through alterity (especially alterity in relation to the animal dimension) (*Terza Persona* 140). Some, like Enrica Lisciani Petrini, expressed concern for the impersonal's evocation of archaic or primitive social orders implicit in a scenario dominated by the biological physical datum and for the cultural *tabula rasa* implicit in the notion of mere life. While I share Lisciani Petrini's concern, I also find Esposito's destabilizing signifier interesting as a way of affirming the exit from the melancholia of spectral origins. His "impersonal" remarks on the exit with a gesture that is just as literary in its echo of provocative avant-garde aesthetics as it is philosophical. The figure of the impersonal raises the question of thinking itself, of its proper environment and disciplinary belonging.

When Donald Pease opens to the horizon of Italian Theory, when Djelal Kadir envisions an American Studies without its name, as an "international field of interdisciplinary inquiry," when Paul Giles finds that "America," the cultural icon, and the Americanist are caught in a play of gazes and become reflections, unstable "virtual subjects whose sense of identity emerges in various forms of paradoxical displacement and nostalgic misremembrance"

(Giles, *Virtual* 21)— all these interdependent moments of deterritorialization include "America" in the much wider "wilderness" of modernity, a fact that is going to change the ways we conceive of our associations, of our journals, and of ourselves in our attachment to an ever more elusive object of study.

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DISPERSING THE FIELD AS "RECIPROCAL HEALING"

A Response to Mena Mitrano's "American Studies *as* Italian Theory"

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If reflexivity is 'a foremost manifestation' of the achieved autonomy of a social field (Bourdieu 101), then the work carried out by the several scholars gathered together for this IASA symposium—together with that of many others—provides definitive evidence that American Studies as a sub-field of study has reached a highly autonomous status with respect to external determinants. Even more, American Studies has become a target of inquiry in itself, sparkling a lively debate concerning its goals, methods, critical tools, domain and stakeholders. As Mena Mitrano writes in her contribution to this issue of *RIAS*, American Studies as a discipline has been engaged in constantly re-drawing its own boundaries ever since its foundation. This is not the place to offer yet another version of the genealogy of the discipline; suffice it to notice that while in its emerging phase American Studies had amply borrowed from literary studies (as the Myth and Symbol School did), after the harsh critiques of the paradigm of exceptionalism (propelled by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War), American Studies has become much more aware of the geopolitical complexities its goal and scope entail, starting from its very name.

The New Americanists[1] in particular, have repeatedly deconstructed the logics underpinning the discipline and its ideological

1. I use this definition in a very broad sense, to indicate the generation of Americanists that emerged in the wake of the crisis of the exceptionalist paradigm.

implications. What is peculiar in the epistemological break they have effected is the fact that they did not present themselves as the bearers of a new critical truth. Nor did they claim that their renewed methodology could finally gain access to any truth at all. By contrast, they started, on the one hand, by acknowledging their indebtedness to the previous generations, and, on the other, by reconstructing the lines of descent of the field, shedding light on the latent and unspoken pre-suppositions and assumptions underlying it. Rather than marking a new start, the New Americanists seem to represent more a post-Americanist, or late-Americanist stage, insofar as they tend to develop the field within a structural tension between the acknowledgment of hitherto ignored, excluded, undervalued, or marginalized subjects, and an unrelenting harking back to the past of American Studies. This tension generates a systematic questioning of the field's own rationale and operating modes—a constant return to the origins that Mena Mitrano rightly emphasizes in her essay.

Rather than through breaks or ruptures *with* the past, New Americanists appear to advance through a series of 'revisionary interventions' *into* the past. Each new turn, at one and the same time, discloses new spaces and perspectives, while also uncovering anew the narrative of its own genealogy. Therefore, the 'Futures of American Studies' (to evoke the title of a landmark study by the New Americanists,) seem to feed on a constant act of recontextualization of its own premises and tenets, together with an endless, somewhat obsessive retelling of its own story. And this re-telling each time debunks many of the categories, master-narratives, and norms undergirding the field imaginary called American Studies, in order to reconstitute it on renewed organizing principles and self-understanding. This process is most evident in the writings of Donald Pease, the founder of the New Americanist school. From his groundbreaking introduction to, and editing of, *Revisionary Interventions into the Americanist Canon* (Pease, "New Americanists"), to the co-authored introduction to *The Futures of American Studies* (Pease and Wiegman), to *The New American Exceptionalism*, to his introductory essay in *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies* (Pease, "Introduction"), each time Pease rewrites the genealogy of the field

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on the basis of the changes in perspective produced by the latest approach. This double move inevitably brings a risk for the New or Post-Americanists, that of being caught in an endless loop, as we can see in this short, exemplary passage: 'In calling for a wholesale dismantling of American exceptionalism, transnational Americanists have failed to see that transnational American Studies produced the version of American exceptionalism without exceptionalists that the transnational state of exception required' (Pease, "Introduction" 23). They seem to repudiate their origin by a complex act of critical re-enacting of another version of it.

This quote may provide a useful introduction to the role that what goes by the name of Italian Theory seems to play in this scenario. For it is at this juncture that Italian Theory comes into the picture. Pease himself recognizes that first Antonio Gramsci's and then Giorgio Agamben's works helped him to articulate his reconfiguration of the field (Pease, "Gramsci"). Pease has hinged his revisionary efforts on his reinterpretation of the exceptionalist paradigm, and, from 2002 onward, Agamben especially has supplied key concepts, such as that of the 'state of exception' (Agamben, *State*) and that of the 'homo sacer' (Agamben, *Homo*), which Pease has been employing in his successive reformulations of the field. The latter image in particular serves for Pease as the icon of the 'excepted figures' towards which the new transnational Americanists have increasingly directed their critical efforts in order to recover these figures 'from which America had forcibly dissevered itself' (Pease, "Introduction" 30).

Pease's recourse to these Italian intellectuals to redefine from the outside the disciplinary field can be seen as an example of the transactions of cultural and symbolic capital which characterize the transnational literary field in the age of globalization. In this light, through a sort of conceptual outsourcing, Pease has put to use, by incorporating them, theories originated in widely different socio-historical realities and conceived with other ends in view, in order to regenerate and expand the scope of American Studies. Much more importantly, also thanks to this approach American Studies is no longer a nation-based project, but can potentially expand its reach on a virtually global scale.

It is a fact that Agamben's thought has been recognized and become much more productive only after it entered the US cultural debate. One more instance of what Liam Kennedy has named 'the spell of intellectual authority cast by American academia' (Kennedy 4). But it is exactly here that problems arise. American Studies and Italian Theory: how do we cope with two critical and theoretical endeavors defined, in their names, by a national denomination, and yet aiming at transcending it? Roberto Esposito has rather convincingly argued that, given its long history of deterritorialization, the Italian quality of this thought cannot equate to the nation (Esposito 107 ff). And its recent making its way to the US and flourishing there is yet another example of it. But the import of the national name in the case of American Studies, seems to be quite different.

In fact, the name America, as Janice Radway and Djelal Kadir have commented, can indicate one nation, the North American continent, the American hemisphere. Plus two oceans and the countries that border them. One more leap, and the transnational can make America cover the whole globe. Therefore, in a nation of nations, as the stereotype goes, or in a multinational nation, isn't inescapably Italian Theory always already part of American Studies, in the same sense, it can be maintained, that French Theory was also always already there, and the Frankfurt School had always already been there before, and so on? Isn't 'America' in this sense working as the main hub of a transnational flow of cultural capital re-invested through the import and export of various paradigms, tenets, ideas which were originally conceived elsewhere, in totally different historical, social, and cultural contexts, but which can be recognized and made productive mostly when grafted onto this globalized field of American Studies, to be then resold worldwide even to the cultures from which they originally stemmed? And is the recent transnational turn in American Studies a way of disrupting or intensifying this process, in which we, European scholars, are often complicitous, as Liam Kennedy noted in a 2009 article in the first issue of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*? In an essay published in the same year, Donatella Izzo posed the question of the possibility for American Studies to really confront positions outside the field 'in their historical and geo-

graphical difference', rather than just 'appropriating and reducing them to one's own' (Izzo 593). The question, thus, is still open: can the transnational turn in American Studies be read as the sign of an emerging academic field no longer pan-optically centered in the US, but dispersed over a world-wide arena, in which America as a field imaginary functions like a prism refracting lights coming from different directions and producing different hues? If this is the 'reciprocal healing' that Mena Mitrano was suggesting is going on between Italian Theory and American Studies, then it is certainly more than welcome.

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AGNOTOLOGY AND THE KNOW-NOTHING PARTY: THEN AND NOW

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I love the poorly educated! They are the smartest people, the most loyal people.

Donald Trump[1]

Willful ignorance is a powerful enablement. So I was taught by Harold Bloom, a most able agon in the gladiatorial arena of poetic discernment and my first poetry teacher in an ordinary place in New Haven some time in the last century. By the beginning of the current century, I found ample confirmation of that insight in the realpolitik of the world, a substantiation that corroborated for me the worldliness of literature as world literature and the transferability of critical comprehension into political awareness. The distance between willful ignorance and belligerent ignorance, I have come to realize, can be scant and easily traversed. And whereas poets create worlds by an act of will, historically politicians and those for whom they rule define the world for convenience by bellicose acts of expediency directed through self-serving management of the intricate ratio between knowledge and ignorance.

The efficacy of managing knowledge to purpose becomes foregrounded in periods of hegemonic ascendancy when the world to be ruled is ruled with greatest efficacy as the world that is to be known. The declaration of "critical languages" and the rubric of "area studies," the institutional framework for academic pedagogy

1. Upon winning the Nevada primary, 23 February 2016.

and scholarly discourse on the world throughout most of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first is a compelling instance of this connection between knowledge management and the pursuit of worldly mandate. This is the historically repeated confirmation that yokes epistemology to empire and links knowledge management with colonization and hegemonic occupation. Optimally, the hegemon comes to realize, what is not known becomes just as important, if not more crucial than what is known. As with the paradox of negative theology, where faith is predicated on what cannot be known, the doxa of imperial epistemology rests on what must be kept from being known, on what perforce must be ignored. Hegemony's understanding of the potential of ignorance, in other words, makes the production, management, and sanctioning of ignorance of paramount importance. And the ratio between the level of accountability and the credibility index of those who do the managing of knowledge and the purveying of ignorance can be quite stark, even if dismissed and disdained by the governing operatives and their media apparatus. Trading on ignorance, or "manufacturing consent," as the Gramscian title of a 1988 treatise by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky would have it, then, is the trademark of the modern imperial era, and no more so than now, when media are consolidated into monopolistic corporations, monolithic ideologies, and univocal echo chamber.

It should not be surprising, then, that the vehemence with which programmatic ignorance has been instrumentalised as hegemonic and neocolonial stratagem in the first decades of the twenty-first century has spawned a science and field of research called *agnotology*, literally, the science of ignorance, most suggestively explained in a couple volumes from the past decade, one by specialists in philosophy and the other by experts in the history of science. The first is a collective volume of essays edited by two philosophers, Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, titled *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance,* published by the State University of New York Press in 2007. The other, a collection of essays by various specialists in the history of science and the public interest, is edited by Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger with the title of *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance,* published by Stanford University Press in 2008. Neither volume

draws the connection between epistemology and hegemony, despite the fact that their areas of investigation are intricately enmeshed in colonialism and imperial history. The first is focused on the question of race, while the latter is trained on the management of information on product safety by the tobacco industry. The appearance of both volumes in an epoch of hegemonic control of information and the programmatic production of ignorance, what is known as the era of "spin," "branding," and "marketing," may not be altogether fortuitous. George Orwell might well see the emergence of this discursive phenomenon as a manifest symptom of what is elided in public discourse, including, alas, in the protocols of university governance, namely, the doublespeak of a neo-colonial, imperial era that reigns by purposive occlusion, disinformation, and the manipulation of knowledge for imperial expediency. The corrosive role of the media in the entropy of public discourse and the vitiation of any possible truth echoes the beginning of the previous century, but incisive analyses such as Upton Sinclair's 1919 book *The Brass Check* that exposed those orchestrated catastrophes in the service of capital and its hegemony always seem to have a penchant for getting waylaid somewhere in the warehouse section of the library. The waning of analytical critique in our own scholarly era may not be altogether unrelated to this symptomatology.

We should not be startled, then, by the fact that the twenty-first century is ushered in by a momentous lesson in hegemonic epistemology, delivered by the mouthpiece of the most powerful, certainly the best funded, government agency on the planet, the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld. At a news briefing from the Department of Defense on February 12, 2002, in response to a reporter's question on the preparations for the imminent invasion of Iraq, on the lack of evidence on weapons of mass destruction and on the spuriousness of claims regarding the Iraqi government's supply of such weapons to terrorists, Rumsfeld gave a reply that is now indelibly etched in the annals of hegemonic epistemology and the expedient management of ignorance and obfuscation as instruments of sanctioned violence. Here is the voice of empire's epistemic reason: "Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me,

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because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones." The page with the transcript of this news briefing has since been taken down from the Department of Defense web site, <Defense.gov>, thus illustrating yet another twist in the management of knowability, of knowns, unknowns, and what is foreclosed as possibility for being knowable.

Foot soldier and mouthpiece of the New World Order that had recently been decreed by George Bush the Elder, Rumsfeld was engaged in the verbal legerdemain Orwell called doublespeak on behalf of the impending imperial act of aggression with which George Bush the Younger ushered in the new century and the new millennium, thus setting the stage for a self-declared and still enduring perpetual war. Rumsfeld's centurial, millenarian, and apocalyptic rhetoric that echoed the evangelical zeal of the born-again Younger Bush, was, in fact, a mimetic iteration, as most self-convinced novelty is prone to be, of a poem by D. H. Lawrence from the previous century and another war that was to have ended all wars, a poem resonant with apocalyptic echoes that date to the visions of John of Patmos in the last chapter, Revelations, of the Christian New Testament. Lawrence's poem carries the Johannine title of "New Heaven and New Earth," and serves as a reminder to students and scholars of world literature of the worldliness of literature and the poesis, or making of the world as mimetic iteration of literature. For some this might be a startling reversal, or spectralization, as the ghostly critical idiom would have it, of the commonplace understanding of the relationship between world and literary representation. Poems like Lawrence's, in other words, trouble that reductive view of the existence of literature as manifest symptom of the world in which it is embedded, on the one hand, or of literary production as promissory note of a perpetually anticipated imminent futurity, on the other. Lawrence's poem is neither. It is at once an ambivalent diagnosis of a historical moment living through the ravages of World War I and an ambiguously

keen reflection on visionaries and prognostications of the future. Critical discourse, in its deluded self-perception as mid-wife, if not, in the mind of some critics, outright progenitor of these processes, perennially oscillates between this bipolar obsession that dates from antiquity and Plato's *Republic* to modern sociologists and their *World Republic of Letters*, in the first instance, and, on the other hand, the apocalyptic tradition of the Latin vulgate's "nondum," or "not yet," that runs from John of Patmos to contemporary postcolonial brokers who wager on the features of history's commodity market and the perennially expected yield of historical outcome as the imminent ideal community. Lawrence's troublesome poem seems to dramatize an anxious prosopopoeia of such visionary schemes, whether these be visions of scientific historians who prophesy the past, or of inspired sociologists who prospect in the potential equities of the future. The poem, written in 1917, is on the long side and echoes Lawrence's reflections on America and American literature at a time when he was seriously considering emigrating to the United States, with his ambivalence at the prospect in full bloom. Here is Lawrence's judgment of the place through his analysis of James Fennimore Cooper's equivocal patriotism and his five *Leatherstockings* novels. Lawrence noted: "it is perhaps easier to love America passionately, when you look at it through the wrong end of the telescope, across the Atlantic water, as Cooper did so often, than when you are right there. When you are actually *in* America, America hurts, because it has a powerful disintegrative influence upon the white psyche. [...] America is tense with latent violence and resistance" (56). In the twenty-first century, the history of the present demonstrates, that violence is far from being simply "latent," and, there no longer is a "wrong end of the telescope" since modern technologies have collapsed space and distance and, even when one might not be *in* America, America is ubiquitously wherever anyone happens to be in the rest of the world. The poem's New World, then, is the coming of, quote, "a madman in rapture," as the poem would have it. And Lawrence's is certainly not the Salvationist second coming of Kipling's hortatory poem of 1898, "The White Man's Burden," so meaningful to Theodore Roosevelt, more about which presently. Lawrence's prosopopoeia is a primal eschatology

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that displaces the primacy of all who came before, an emphatic exacerbation of Thomas Jefferson's and Ralph Waldo Emerson's disquietude about American primacy and secondariness. Neither Jefferson, nor Emerson, by the way, figure in the collection of essays on American literature Lawrence was also writing at the time. Here is the key passage from part VI of the eight-part poem: "Cortes, Pisarro, Columbus, Cabot, they are noth-/ ing, nothing! / I am the first comer! / I am the discoverer! / I have found the other world! // The unknown, the unknown / [...] Ha, I was a blaze leaping up! / I was a tiger bursting into sunlight. / I was greedy, I was mad for the unknown // I, new-risen, resurrected, starved from the tomb / Starved from a life of devouring always myself / Now here was I, new-awakened, with my hand stretching out / And touching the unknown, the real unknown / The unknown unknown!" (203)

How knowingly Mr. Rumsfeld might have been echoing Lawrence's poem may have to remain one of those known unknowns in the annals of agnotology. What we do know, however, is the correlation we recognize between the poetic persona dramatized in Lawrence's poem and the historical person of the political operative as crazed state apparatchik mad with power and the pathology of what at the time was decreed as the defining teleology of national policy that endures still as axiomatic tenet of US American realpolitik in all its righteousness, namely, "full spectrum dominance"—key doctrine and de facto governing principle of thoroughly militarized international and domestic agenda. That visionary doctrine goes by the official title of "Joint Vision 2020," and its script as US Department of Defense document dates from 30 May 2000.[2] The translation of that doctrine from declared agenda into global action is now self-evident; its baneful worldly consequences around the globe speak for themselves. In the case of Lawrence's poem, a critical interpretation as part of the larger context of Lawrence's oeuvre comes from a scholar of theology and psychiatry by the name of John McDaragh in a book chapter titled "Desire, Domination, and the Life and Death of the Soul." It appears in a volume edited by Richard K. Fenn and Donald Capps

2. See: <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=45289>

from the Princeton Theological Seminary. The volume is titled *On Losing the Soul: Essays in the Social Psychology of Religion* and was published by the State University of New York Press in 1995. I cite from McDaragh's essay on page 227: "In his long poem, 'New Heaven and New Earth,' Lawrence [...] in harrowing imagery [...] evokes the psychic hell of a kind of narcissistic implosion, the condition of someone whose defenses against the risks of mutuality and relationship have sealed him into self-sufficiency and splendid isolation. The poem suggests as well what happens when ideology of domination, as reified and politically realized in the masculine cultures of science and technology, runs to its desperate limits."

The harrowing world dramatized by D. H. Lawrence and so aptly characterized by McDaragh, will find its objective correlative, as T. S. Eliot would have it, in the world made by Mr. Rumsfeld and his neocolonial neocon cadres, just as his echolaliac double-speak reverberates with the revenant ravings of Lawrence's poem.

The mid-nineteenth-century decade between 1845 and 1855 in the history of the United States of America stands as a textbook example of the convergence of imperial impulse, willful ignorance, and world literature, a fateful triangle that becomes illustrative of the fate of dissent and also serves as precedent-setting template for wars of choice as instrument of capital and the securing of competing vested interests, economic and territorial, all behind the ideological screen of national consolidation. In terms of agnotology, this period in American history is witness to the most overt declaration of willful ignorance as political project, with all the pathologies of solipsistic invagination, xenophobia, and belligerence that John McDaragh diagnosed in the poetic dramatization by D. H. Lawrence in "New Heaven and New Earth." This is the self-declared Know-Nothing Party that emerged in New York in 1843, was officially named the American Republican Party in 1845, was renamed the American Party in 1855, and would be dissolved in 1860, only to re-surface periodically, in key elements of its political agenda and psychic symptoms, most recently in the spectacle of the Republican and Democratic Parties and their televised "debates" that in saner times might have proved a national embarrassment. But the political real-

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ity in the country at this moment mirrors the conditions that brought the Know-Nothing Party to the fore, and contemporary public discourse resonates as echo of that "nativist" precedent. In referring to itself as "native American" the Know-Nothing Party betrayed its racist agenda on various fronts, certainly in its erasure of the true Natives, the indigenous people of the country who had been forcibly expelled from their native territory in the previous decade under the presidency of Andrew Jackson, an ignominious chapter in ethnic cleansing for the benefit of white European settlers that culminated in the Trail of Tears between 1836 and 1839. The party's xenophobic anti-immigration hysteria, principally against Irish and German Catholics, but, no less significantly, though US historians tend to overlook this element, against the Mexican population that the war on Mexico and the appropriation of half its territory suddenly made part of the USA, should sound very familiar to anyone listening to the current political discourse, especially on the topic of immigration and what are significantly referred to as "illegal aliens" and, more euphemistically, as "illegal immigrants." The literary response to this pivotal decade in American history is succinctly analyzed in a recent treatise by Jaime Javier Rodríguez titled *The Literatures of the US-Mexican War: Narrative, Time, and Identity,* published by the University of Texas Press in 2010.

The potato famine in Ireland starting in 1845 led to a surge of Irish immigration, and the revolutions of 1848, particularly the March 13 revolution in Vienna that spread across the German states, brought a sudden increase in German, mainly German Catholic immigration, all of which was perceived by the white Protestant Americans as an economic, religious, and ethno-racial threat. The Know-Nothing Party could not very well round-up immigrants and dump them across the newly re-drawn Mexican border, as is the current practice of the US government. They proposed, instead, that all civil service and teaching positions be reserved strictly for white Protestants, and the waiting period for application to become a naturalized US citizen be extended to twenty-one years.

The emergence of the Know-Nothing Party was not a spontaneous event but the manifest symptom of a hegemonic

mainstream political culture that was on a war footing and a relentless push for territorial invasion, occupation, and settlement, with the self-legitimating sanction of divine providence, fully righteous in the pursuit of turning an "ideology of domination, [into] reified and politically realized" conquest, to cite McDaragh once more. The year 1845 was the year in which John O'Sullivan gave the new administration of James K. Polk the war cry of "Manifest Destiny" in an article titled "Annexation" that appeared in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. The following year, 1846, would witness America's first war of choice, the war on Mexico launched in May and couched as pre-emptive action, in anticipation of the rhetoric that accompanies the more recent series of wars of choice that usher in the twenty-first century. A month later, on June 24 1846, to be exact, the US settlers in California proclaimed their settlements an independent republic, which promptly requested to be, and was, annexed, as was the territory of New Mexico. 1848, the year of revolutions in Europe, was the year of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo through which the US appropriated half of Mexico's territory, from Kansas to California. It was also the year in which, mirabile dictu, gold was struck in the newly acquired territories, prompting the California Gold Rush that ensued. In a lecture at Concord Lyceum titled "The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Government," better known by its subsequent published title as "Civil Disobedience" (1849), Henry David Thoreau pronounced his dissent and refusal to pay his taxes in protest against slavery and the war on Mexico. The Know-Nothing Party took a different view. Its declared primary concern was how to contain the Catholic Mexicans within the former Mexican territories even while appropriating their land, and to demonize the hungry horde of Irish Catholics and German Catholic political refugees who managed to cross the Atlantic. The Know-Nothing Party resonated with the overarching consensus of a society bent on war, territorial expansion, and the harnessing of natural resources as capitalizable booty to which imperial righteousness feels perennially entitled. By 1860, the Know-Nothing Party was disbanded, ceding the agonic arena to the patriotic gore and economic opportunism of the Civil War and its aftermath. The Civil War and the predatory Darwinism of the Reconstruction

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era were fundamentally a contest between alternative economic systems of capitalization—the slave-based plantation economy and the slavish exploitation of labor by the second industrial revolution. In contention, then, was the mode of use and maximal exploitation of the newly conquered territory and the economic potential of its human geography. Barely a generation after that bloodletting, yet another war of choice, called the Spanish American War, proved an inevitability, as did the reach across the Pacific into the Philippines which ushered in the twentieth century, dubbed the American century, and the new era of globalization with enhanced modes of extractive colonialism on a planetary scale.

The centurial transition, like the trans-oceanic imperial adventure across the Pacific, occurred quite naturally, starting with the heeding of a February 1898 exhortation by the British imperial poet Rudyard Kipling entitled "The Whiteman's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands," published in *McClure's Magazine,* in which Kipling urged Washington to pick up the imperial mantle from London with what he called, without irony, "the savage wars of peace" (stanza 3, line 2). The soon-to-be Vice-President, and shortly after President, Theodor Roosevelt was moved enough to copy the poem and send it to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge with a note that reveals his acumen as poetry critic and his imperial enthusiasm. Kipling's, Roosevelt remarked in his note, was "rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansion point of view." To my knowledge, Mr. Roosevelt does not say anything about the writings of Mark Twain and the philosopher William James, two leading figures of the Anti-Imperialist League whose views challenged Kipling's and Roosevelt's imperial logic. And, so, by April of 1898, two months after Kipling's exhortation, the US would declare war on Spain, acquiring dominion over Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, a prelude to what would become the American Twentieth Century. That transition is consolidated with Roosevelt's 1904 "Corollary" to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. "Roosevelt's Corollary," as it is known, would reassert geopolitical hegemony over the Western Hemisphere, a reiteration that discursively anticipated the mid-twentieth-century carving up of the globe between east and west into spheres of influence during the Cold War.

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When D. H. Lawrence was composing his poem "New Heaven and New Earth," in 1917, he had also begun writing his book of essays titled *Studies in Classic American Literature* which would be completed and published in 1923. His only book of literary criticism, it proved a touchstone for nineteenth-century American literary history and for what became the corpus of what he termed "classic American literature." Despite Lawrence's unorthodox insight and idiosyncratic language, his wry diagnoses proved determinative in the cultural criticism of such seminal figures as F. O. Matthiessen and his 1941 treatise that defined the American canon, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, and Leslie Fiedler, a student of Matthiessen's Harvard graduate seminar on American poetry and author of *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960). Both scholars of a non-conformist bent and Marxist ideological leanings, with an early critical interest in the homoerotic strains of American masculinity, their legacy from a tumultuous historical period at mid-twentieth century has proved formative of the American canon and its critical discourse. Lawrence's 1923 volume and William Carlos Williams' book of essays *In the American Grain* two years later would foreground the insurgent discourse of American literary historiography whose grain, or defining attribute, is being against the grain, as the ironies of Williams' iconoclastic sketches of America's iconic figures illustrate. Thus, a convergence of these critical voices with a number of literary figures such as James Fennimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville, all variously at variance with their own historical time, has engendered the core of a national canon still dissonant with the pathologies of domination and incorrigible bellicosity that characterize the society from which it has emerged. The irony of this historical dissonance was not lost on Lawrence or on certain literary historians who appreciated his wry, at times sardonic, critical insight.

Lawrence's book on American literature has certain American antecedents, particularly, in the irony and iconoclasm of James Russell Lowell, a demotic poet who voiced his critique of war-crazed America at mid-nineteenth century through the persona and colloquial voice of Hosea Biglow. *The Biglow Papers,* a satirical critique of war published in the bellicose year of 1848, with a second

series in the course of the Civil War in 1862, questioned, in vernacular verse, the social and political anxieties that made the Know Nothing Party possible. As wartime critique, Lowell's *Biglow Papers* could be read as the American version of Lucan's *Pharsalia,* the Roman anti-epic on the first-century civil war between Julius Caesar and the Roman Senate, a work that led to its imprudent author's becoming a suspect in the Pisonian Conspiracy of 65 AD and to being sentenced by Nero to commit suicide along with his uncle, the Stoic philosopher Seneca. Lowell and his contemporaries knew Lucan's *Pharsalia* well enough for the Confederate War Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery to have a line from it engraved in its base, "Victrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni"—"The victorious cause pleased the gods, but the vanquished pleased Cato." It is a consolatory dictum in tribute to the honor of the losing side, with Cato being the noble Stoic and the sole redeemable hero of a world gone mad with internecine cruelty and depraved blood lust during Nero's reign. So, if there should be an American prototype for Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature,* it would have to be Lowell and, specifically, Lowell's *A Fable for Critics, or A Glance at A Few of Our Literary Progenies from the Tub of Diogenes,* also from 1848. Only, Lowell's jeu d'esprit takes on a darker cast in Lawrence, even though the two coincide, more often than not, in their assessment of the writers they sketch. Where they do coincide most meaningfully is in the question of epistemology, of knowing and being. Their portrayal of Richard Henry Dana, Jr. and his 1840 sea voyage narrative, *Two Years Before the Mast,* is especially telling in this regard. One could justly speculate that the very appearance of Dana in Lawrence's book might well be due to Lowell's poetic sketch of this would-be-poet, a portrait that focuses on doing, being, and knowing, terms that Lawrence writes with capital letters when discussing Dana: "KNOWING and BEING are opposite, antagonistic states. The more you know, exactly, the less you *are*. The more you *are*, in being, the less you know.

"This is the great cross of man, his dualism. The blood-self, and the nerve-brain self. [...] The goal is to know how not-to-know" (121). And this, precisely, is the knowledge that eluded the Know-Nothing Party of Lowell's time, as Lowell well knew. In concluding his sketch, Lawrence notes, "Dana's small book

is a very great book: contains a great extreme of knowledge, knowledge of the great element.

And after all, we have to know all before we can know that knowing is nothing.

Imaginatively, we have to know all: even the elemental waters. And know and know on, until knowledge suddenly shrivels and we know that forever we don't know.

Then there is a sort of peace, and we can start afresh, knowing we don't know. (138)

I do not know that Lawrence knew the 1440 treatise by Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia.* But it would be safe to wager that the Latin student Lowell did. For those interested in the minutiae, chapter 3 of a 2011 book *Memos from the Besieged City,* from Stanford University Press, is titled "Of Learned Ignorance: Nicholas of Cusa and Cardinal Spaces of Culture" and is devoted to the German-Italian cardinal's epistemology. The elemental knowing that Lawrence attributes to Dana is in contrast to the ideological knowledge of his contemporaries, whether the utopian transcendentalists, the isolationist and phobic Know-Nothings, or the disciples of "Saviourism," as Lawrence refers to them, that is, those perennial Salvationists who take on Kipling's "White Men's Burden" for whom knowledge and its management are integral to their imperial calculus. "Saviourism is a despicable thing" (127), Lawrence declares unequivocally, and one can only imagine what his judgment would be today of those who maximize the return on their soteriological calculus by catalyzing it with political cynicism and predatory rapaciousness.

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THE LONG HISTORY OF "DOUBLETHINK"

A Response to Djelal Kadir's "Agnotology and the Know-Nothing Party: Then and Now"

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Professor Djelal Kadir's paper is a strong statement on one of the most powerful weapons the State possesses. The ability to control what people know, what they don´t know, and what they don´t know they don´t know, once was the privilege of the gods. Prometheus, the rebellious titan, was severely punished by Zeus for stealing from Olympus and giving to mankind the fire, or the knowledge of how to produce fire, which until then was the exclusive property of the immortals. The biblical Yahweh decreed the perpetual banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden because of their thirst for knowledge, or at least Eve's curiosity to unveil what the Tree of Wisdom was hiding from them. Such a sentence was worse than a death penalty, for it meant the exile from the perpetual happiness they enjoyed in paradise. It is no wonder that born-again Christians and other species of fundamentalists are fearful of anyone who defies the divine dictum: refrain from questioning and you will be admitted into the realm of blissful unknowingness, the heaven of agnosy where the ignoramus will forever live in oblivion. This fear of knowledge is, I have no doubt, the driving force in the growing consensus among US politicians of the need to promote a kind of university which focuses on STEM disciplines in detriment of the Humanities, for the latter instills in the youth curiosity, critical acumen, the capacity to discern what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false, the ability to read between the lines of the populist discourse that embraces ignorance as the apex of happiness: "I love

the poorly educated! They are the smartest people, the most loyal people!," as Prof. Kadir reminds us Donald Trump recently declared in public. While Trump has become the paladin of illiteracy, he is far from being the only voice demanding what I would call a "blue collar" education that prepares the youth to follow the path of the unquestioning and obedient laborer. Thus, for example, presidential hopeful Senator Marco Rubio not long ago claimed at a Republican debate that philosophy majors would be better off going into welding. The value of a vocational degree, he argued, was greater than the payoff that comes with contemplating the cosmos: "For the life of me, I don't know why we have stigmatized vocational training [...] Welders make more money than philosophers [...]. We need more welders and less [sic!] philosophers."[11]

Prof. Kadir accurately diagnoses the malady that has afflicted the United States ever since it was founded as a city upon a hill, a "model" society privileged by the Lord as the New Canaan of the New World, a promissory land where the Puritans were called to amend providential history by creating a perfect commonwealth with the Bible as its sole guide in all public and private affairs. A community of the chosen endowed with divine protection: "We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when He shall make us a praise and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, 'may the Lord make it like that of New England.'" John Winthrop's words have resonated in US political speech, on both domestic and foreign affairs, ever since they were first pronounced onboard the *Arbella* in the year of the Lord of 1630, and George W. Bush's famous words in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, "You are either with us, or you are against us" are a good illustration of the Manichean rhetoric already deployed by Winthrop. Winthrop's sermon provided the cornerstone of a political project that finds its justification in the uncontestable fact that: "God Almighty in his most holy and wise providence, hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power

1. Marco Rubio on Tuesday, November 10th, 2015 in the fourth GOP primary debate (Clayton Youngman).

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and dignity; others mean and in subjection." Thus, the rightful claim to the land by the "elect" and their unwavering will to defend their right from the hostile hordes of the enemy—and there are many "foes" to this providential design—are deeply inscribed in this foundational declaration of the legitimacy and holiness of the Puritan errand into the American wilderness—to paraphrase Perry Miller—an errand of "regeneration" that would require perpetual violence and bloodshed for its fulfilment, as Richard Slotkin convincingly argued in his classic study *Regeneration through Violence: The Myth of the American Frontier* (1973). In this respect, the newly elected US administration articulates its rhetoric in terms that fully evoke Winthrop's foundational speech and, like G. W. Bush, divides the world into friends and foes, as made explicit by the newly elected US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, whose first public statement reads: "Our goal with the administration is to show value at the UN, and the way to show value is to show our strength, show our full voice. Have the backs of our allies and make sure our allies have our backs as well [...] For those who don't have our backs, we're taking names, and we will make points to respond to that accordingly" (Roth).

And yet, as Prof. Kadir also reminds us, there has always been a countercurrent of resistance and contestation to the European appropriation of the New World for its imperial designs. Henry David Thoreau's call to civil disobedience against the illegitimacy of the Mexican War is a good example of the dissenting voices that have opposed America's Manifest Destiny and its systematic erasure of the Other, whether Native American, Mexican, Black, Catholic, Communist, or whatever escapes the narrow straightjacket of racial and ideological conformity. Two examples from the colonial period come to mind. One is Fray Bernardino de Sahagún and his monumental *Florentine Codex,* and the other is Roger Williams and his exceptional *A Key into the Language of America*. Sahagún and Williams defied the European hegemonic project of erasure of all things Native. Hernán Cortés decreed the systematic destruction of all Aztec codices and any other cultural artifact the Spaniards could lay their hands on, well aware of the fact that depriving the Aztecs of their historical memory was the best tool to subjugate the powerful nation and subordinate it

to his imperialist enterprise. Meanwhile, Bernardino de Sahagún undertook the herculean task of preserving meticulously Aztec civilization, from its folkways to its myths and its deities, a communal undertaking by which Bernardino and his native disciples managed, even if unknowingly, to subvert the Spanish imperialist agenda by proving the cultural sophistication of the Aztec people. Moreover, Bernardino does not hide his growing skepticism and disappointment with the colonial project. No wonder the colossal work remained mostly unknown until the 19th century and Bernardino himself was the subject of suspicion from both the Inquisition and the State.

For the Puritan settlers of New England, Native Americans were an unwanted blotch in the tabula rasa, or blank page, of the New World on which they were to inscribe the final chapter of their providential history. Furthermore, they saw in the Indians fiendish beasts lurking in the wilderness, true agents of Satan ready to thwart the Puritan's saintly errand of regeneration in the land God had graciously bestowed upon them. Dissent from the official discourse was irremissibly punished with banishment, perpetual exile from the heavenly city upon the hill. And yet, Roger Williams, perhaps the most orthodox of all Puritans in this foundational period, however refused to endorse the providential project, for he was well aware of the illegitimacy of the whole scheme. And not only did Williams contest the assumption that the natives did not have any right to the land they inhabited, but he also vindicated a complete separation of church and state, which obviously was anathema for the ecclesiastical authorities who applied the biblical rule to the government of the colony. Instead, Williams befriended the Indians, learned their language, and refused to act as a Christianizing missionary. Thomas Morton and his *New English Canaan* (1637) is another monument to resistance against imperialist agendas. Morton is the first known American colonist to denounce the strategy of land seizure and ethnic cleansing that the Pilgrim Fathers and the London Company that financed them very soon implemented in New England. In other words, he undertook a doomed battle against corporate America, a case that vividly resembles the current situation in the United States under the newly elected presidency. A presidency that follows

Rumsfeld´s praise of misinformation and imposed ignorance by the state, as Professor Djelal Kadir reminds us in his article. While I write this brief response to Dejal in the aftermath of the Presidential Inauguration on January 20 2017, the country is immersed in a controversy that encapsulates in a nutshell the election process for the 45th US President, one of the most divisive in history, perhaps only second to the election of Abraham Lincoln, which triggered the secession of seven Southern states and the subsequent Civil War. Like then, in the current political climate some states are hinting at seceding from the Union, California being the most outspoken in what has become to be known as the "Calexit." The day after the Presidential Inauguration, White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer angrily rebuked the press for showing pictures proving that the crowd attending the ceremony had been much smaller than in Obama's 2009 inauguration. Spicer argued that Trump had attracted "the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration—period—both in person and around the globe." Spicer later said he was not only talking about the crowds in Washington, D.C., but also people viewing on television and streaming video online (NBC News, January 27, 2017). A day later one of President Donald Trump's aides, Kellyanne Conway, defended the Press Secretary by arguing that Spicer had provided some "alternative facts" in his briefing, a concept that from a logical point of view is obviously absurd and yet, from a political point of view, is highly revelatory of the real agenda of the new presidency. In his novel *1984*, a book that is experiencing a second revival in the United States and elsewhere, George Orwell would call it *doublethink*. While I have my doubts about Spicer's, Conway's, and even Trump's knowledge of Orwell's dystopian classic, this new governing team has intuitively learned the usefulness of doublethink to manipulate the masses, and I am quite certain that in time they will perfect the strategy of this duplicity of thought and its best tool, the *Newspeak*, a controlled language whose grammar was designed by Orwell himself. Little wonder it is that Orwell's classic dystopia is currently experiencing a revival and climbing the best-sellers lists, at a time when the Know-Nothing Party and its racist agenda, as Prof. Kadir reminds us in his paper, is once again spreading its tentacles to asphyxiate the democratic institutions of the United

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States. As I write these closing remarks, the new administration has imposed overnight a ban to immigration from some countries that have been classified as dangerous for the safety of America. Like the Know-Nothing Party of old and its strategy of demonizing Irish and German Catholics seeking political asylum, as well Mexicans and Indians, the current presidency has decided to turn certain nationalities, and certain religious faith, into the scapegoat for all the evils that threaten the City upon a Hill and its divine errand into the wilderness. Interesting times, frightening times, but hardly new.

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ABANDONING AMERICA THE BETTER TO SAVE AMERICAN STUDIES

A Proposal

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Following the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential elections, an American friend of mine, a scientist living in the Netherlands, posted a triptych of "Diatribes" on Facebook. The first one began:

> We're in Crete at the moment to celebrate our anniversary, but of course the timing means we're mostly talking about the election. In contrast to most people we know in the Netherlands, many people we have talked to here are fairly pro-Trump. When asked why, the answers mostly cluster into three groups: those who think Trump is an "outsider" and will provide a well-needed shakeup to the "corrupt" government, those who think he is a successful, "self-made" businessman who will fix the US economy, and those who just think Hillary is a "bitch." The people we are speaking to are not American, so it's almost like a spectator sport for them and everyone in the world feels they have a right to an opinion on the US, which to be honest is fair because as a "superpower" our decisions will ultimately affect them as well. [...] But anyway, because these people are not directly responsible for Trump's win, I somehow I [sic] find it easier to rationally try to consider and discuss with them their points of view, which obviously echo many of the reasons people give for voting for Trump in the US, and to think a bit more about how these viewpoints have leaked across the ocean. (14 November 2016, 1:15 pm)

Captured in a very informal fashion here are some essential aspects of what we might call "demotic" international American Studies: the everyday, variously banal and heated practice all across the world of watching what happens in the US, with the imperative feeling that you—whoever and wherever you might be in this world—"have a right to an opinion on the US" because what

happens in the US will extend across oceans, continents, borders and media to shape your life.

What is unusual in the post is the window it offers onto an American directly and personally engaging this global perspective. It appeals to her at this moment precisely for the distance it offers, the breathing space, as it were, from US developments that are otherwise too painful and distressing. While her US citizenship enables and impels her personal participation in the election process, the Cretan setting allows her to temper her affect and, for an extended moment, take on the role of a spectator. Crete allows her the distance from cascading emotion and intensifying politicization, from the direct confrontation with "America," the better to undertake critical analysis.

At the same time, for the Cretans with whom my friend is discussing Trump—as for most other global spectators—there is only limited possibility for finetuning the distance at which they engage the US. The political imbalance between the US and the world translates into a corresponding imbalance in directing closeness and distance at every level, from the most intangible to the most brutal. Since the Cold War, the US has asserted a mandate to intervene anywhere in the world its interests are at stake; the rest of the world, however, has few such possibilities to "close the gap" at its own initiative. By necessity there is limited room to act, primarily by reacting to the vagaries of changing US desire and fears, administrations and interests. Osama Bin Laden's attack on 9/11 was an attempt to disrupt this logic by piercing US space at his own instigation, not only physically but also ideologically, semiotically and affectively. As such, he was exceptionally effective, even as US hysterical overreaction plunged the Middle East into an exponentially fracturing and expanding terrain of gruesome civil wars.

Correspondingly, the world's "distance" from or closeness to the gaze and impact of US power is a political, ideological, identarian and affective process more than a geographic one. While this sounds obvious in an age of globalized technology, media and politics, the effects are striking. The consequences become immediately apparent, for example, if we consider the very different structures of power, intimacy, accommodation and aversion

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that the US maintains with distant Israel versus with neighboring Mexico. The US shares with Mexico an entangled history older than itself, a vast borderland stretching two-thirds its length, more than half a trillion dollars in trade and millions of citizens. While relations on the ground are dynamic, creative and richly textured, the border is at the same time in Gloria Anzaldúa's words *una herida abierta*, an open wound, a scab hemorrhaging. Here a combination of physical, geographic intimacy and political distancing become the perfect incubators for inhumane exploitation. So even while the US and Mexico form a vast tapestry of social, cultural, artistic and economic relations—the "Greater Mexico" of Américo Paredes' incisively visionary formulation (Paredes and Bauman)—*formal* US relations with Mexico have entailed an asymmetry forcefully imprinting on that tapestry practices of harsh extraction and exclusion (Weintraub, Contreras, Huntington, Piccato, Gould, Thelen "Democracy in Mexico," Aguayo, Valdés-Ugalde). This has birthed a complex blend of lived intimacy, vibrant syncretism, negotiated hierarchy, institutional exploitation, carceral and militant alienation, and inhumane violence, whose effect is to position Mexico at once "too close for comfort" and "too far for agency" relative to the centers of US culture, identity and power.

The development of Hemispheric American Studies has produced rich and critical bodies of work addressing these developments. Crucially, however, it has done so by reconfiguring the "America" in American Studies into a regional/continental conception. This is essential and critically cutting-edge relative to persistent national, exceptionalist conceptions of the United States in US political, social and cultural imaginaries. And yet there is a fundamental weakness relative to current events insofar as a hemispheric approach fails to fundamentally engage the place of continental regionalism in an intensely globalized world. This is a world in which questions of distance and nearness, entanglement, identity and aversion increasingly hopscotch across the planet, no more bound by continental boundaries than they are by national ones. In such a world, US fears of immigrants while consistently anti-Hispanic, for example, are at the same time hysterically anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, anti-Syrian and anti-refugee.

Some years ago, in 2009, the New Southernist Jon Smith writing a review of Levander and Levine's anthology *Hemispheric American Studies* argued:

> If the work on such spheres is as brilliant as so much of the scholarship in this volume, I certainly look forward to [the] emergence [of unknown "other spheres"]. Yet I cannot help thinking that as a theoretical and practical matter, the hemispheric approach to American studies [...] may have reached its apogee [...]. The reasons are embarrassingly obvious, and I am hardly the first to observe them: the supplanting, across disciplines, of postcolonial discourse by globalization discourse [...]; the question why, comparatist and transnational possibilities having been revealed, one would limit oneself to merely hemispheric incomparabilities and connections [...]; and the point (again) that, no matter how much the editors intend their title to "put pressure on the word 'American,'" the practical effect is to put pressure on the word "hemispheric," which in the present context remains the new *new*, the latest adjectival satellite to orbit the unchanging phrase "American studies." (Smith)

While recognizing the richness of the interpretations offered in the specific collection under review, Smith rightly questions if a hemispheric framework is adequate to the condition of our world. This is a world that is, in crucial though not all ways, more global than hemispheric. The critical relevance of this point becomes particularly clear when we juxtapose the place of Mexico in US history, politics and imaginary to that of Israel. Deeply embedded in the Middle East, it is at the same time a country that in practice is constituted by US society and administrations as "closer" to the US and whose responses to and activism within the US—institutional and individual—far exceed the formal impact of neighboring Mexico. Even as Mexico's geographic closeness to the US entails not only syncretism but also a critical and at times vicious distortion of the nature of those relations and Mexican perspectives, Israel's geographic distance allows an ideological and cultural sense of intimacy (though one, at moments, equally distorted).

Located a continent and more than 7,000 miles away in western Asia, with less than one-tenth the trade with the US ($35 billion) compared to Mexico, even as the US Jewish population (6 million) is less than one-fifth that of Mexican-Americans (33 million), Israel has nonetheless for decades experienced not just consistent and comprehensive bipartisan US support but strong affective

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identification in which informal lines of entanglement between the US and Israel (social, religious, cultural) and formal political ones reinforce one another (McAlister, Ben-Zvi, Tov, Inbar & Gilboa, Little). This conjunction has translated into three billion dollars of annual foreign aid; an extremely close military and intelligence relation; US silent assent to Israeli nuclear weapons and acceptance of legalized land grabs, military occupation, and discriminatory laws for non-Jewish Israeli citizens; dozens of UN Security Council vetoes protecting Israel; and one of the closest international alliances, even as sizable portions of US and Israel populations strongly identify with one another.

Not only do Israeli and US Jews continue to have a sense of shared destiny despite significant political, cultural and religious divergences ("American and Israeli Jews: Twin Portraits from Pew Research Center Surveys") but support for Israel is even stronger among US Evangelicals than among US Jews (Lipka). Much like overwhelming support among evangelicals for Donald Trump in the presidential election (Shellnutt, but see also Carter), support for Israel, while often framed through a Biblical and Judeo-Christian discourse, entails most strongly of all a more general alignment of affect and identity that in the US still largely crosses religious, political and economic lines (even as they are becoming more important in shaping attitudes towards Israel). Quite similarly, and notwithstanding significant differences in experience, sensibility, and history, Israelis overwhelmingly perceive the United States as their closest ally and friend (Physical distance is both erased and essential to this intimacy of identification, while religious, cultural and political differences are flattened along the way).

It is crucial to note, however, that US emotional identification with and sense of closeness to Israel—in part through the concerted efforts of the constellation of organizations, religious leaders, publicists, scholars and media platforms encompassed by the "Israel Lobby" (with AIPAC's influence in Washington ranked second only to that of the NRA)—dovetails both with the powerful interests of the US arms and oil industries and with the US will to project power in the Middle East (Hamdan). The intensity of the US-Israel "closeness" depends, then, on the ways in which identarian, realist, religious and liberal concerns reinforce one another in a rather

exceptional fashion under conditions of high politicization, polarization and regional conflict. Crucially, at the formal political level, the process is reciprocal. So, when Donald Trump recently signed an executive order to expand the border wall between the US and Mexico—under highly politicized and polarized US domestic conditions—Israel's right-wing nationalist Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu tweeted his unvarnished support, citing the wall that he himself had erected between Israel and Egypt.

In doing so, Netanyahu's tweet enacts a political and ideological "closeness" to an explicitly pro-Israel Trump/United States while creating "distance" and fury from Mexico's Jewish community (Woody), a range of Israelis (Ravid), and North American Jews threatened by Trump's flirtation with anti-Semitic standpoints (Dawsey, Silow-Carroll), angered by Trump's discrimination against Muslims (Dolsten) and now moving to create sanctuary synagogues (T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights). The latter, rather significantly, follow in the footsteps of the sanctuary church movement that first emerged in the 1980s to protect Central American refugees crossing the Mexico-US border to escape state violence but denied asylum by the Reagan administration for political reasons.

As in the case of US identification with Israel, in which "hard" interests line up with "soft" identifications, Netanyahu's tweet aligns with Israeli economic interests enthusiastically offering their expertise and products to expand and further securitize the US-Mexico border fences ("Israeli Technology to Keep US Borders Safe," Christopher, "Texas and Israel Finding Solutions for Border Security," Ferziger). At the same time, US militarization of its border is used to legitimize Israel's own walls in the West Bank and at the border with Egypt. That is to say, we today confront the ironic, counter-intuitive situation where the intensified construction of securitized borders in the name of *national* security and the exclusion of alien threats becomes at the same time a means to perform, argue and materialize a particular *international* political, cultural and economic solidarity. It is a situation that engenders, reproduces and internalizes precisely that which it seeks to prevent: a further diffusion of the national and the global into each other. Even as the particular arguments for such borders

are nationalist, increasingly today their legitimation is the extent to which they are part of what is in fact a highly globalized reactionary response. Our condition today is such that technology, multinational capitalism and global migration have permanently disrupted the nation-state both as horizon of (moral, social, economic and political) community and as a fantasized possibility of pure, homogeneity. If in the 19th century, the consolidation of nation-states was part of the forward-looking trajectory of innovative modernization (*even when national origins were anchored in hoary, mythic pasts*), today the vector of rising authoritarian, right-wing nationalism is nostalgic, backward-yearning, fearful. It seeks to protect and return us to an imaginary recent-yet-impossible-to-locate past as a way of fleeing the present: to stop time as it were. Unable to stop time, it seeks to prevent movement: of people, culture, welfare and democratic participation.

Where does this leave American Studies—as a field and as a demotic global practice? In order to answer this question, it is useful to consider the ways in which such border regimes and anti-migrant securitization more generally entail the simultaneous intensification and disruption of national sovereignty. On the one hand, our nation-states make ever more extravagant attempts to secure absolute control over territorial demographics in the name of safeguarding democracy, social relations, and the nation's existential future from pollution, corruption and capture by a feared and despised (migrant/ethno-racial) minority. This control can only come, however, through weakening, bracketing, ignoring or repudiating the rule of law as a neutral and objective practice applied equally to all regardless their social status, power, or place in society.

Then tension between these—securitization at the expense of the democratically egalitarian and inclusive rule of law—is conjoined with a second tension. In theory, liberal democracies are committed to recognizing and protecting universal human rights as such: universal. At the same time, however, the nation-state system explicitly is based on a fundamental distinction between the citizen and non-citizen. The result is that our states feel less compunction to enforce the rights of non-citizens and great pressure, often, to violate them. At the same time, geopolitical

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inequality means that some nation-states will have great impact on the lives of people living far beyond their territorial borders. Correspondingly, the prime institution that we have to enforce human rights—and more generally engender democratic societies—are the very same ones that are most active in violating them domestically and internationally.

Given the global power and influence of the United States, it is time for American Studies to engage this fundamental social, political, legal, ethical and existential challenge of our time. The question is: drawing on the traditions of critical thought within American Studies how might we imagine what comes after the nation-state […] even as this may entail imagining what comes after "America"? This entails, among other things, a critical reassessment of the place of the world, and of demotic global analyses of the United States, in American Studies. It also requires considering the place of the world in not just the academic discipline but also the actual political practice, organizations and formal institutions of the United States. Currently, the highly-evolved global demotic American Studies aflow across our planet lacks formal global political representation. At the most basic level, regardless of the impact of US foreign policy on the world, the world cannot shape or find itself formally represented in the political system of the US. In this sense, the world's demotic American Studies is anything but democratic. Quite the opposite: foreign nationals—whatever the influence of the elections on their lives—are formally excluded from the political process even as within the US itself the mass of global responses to US events play a drastically understated role in politics, as in the news, media and popular culture.

Over the course of the most recent elections, for example, Trump along with other politicians and pundits certainly referenced China, Russia, ISIS, Iran, Israel, Mexico and Europe. Yet these were overwhelmingly one-dimensional caricatures, cartoon figures used to make campaign arguments by staking out one's own position rather than engaging another. On occasion—most notably after one or another of Trump's more extreme comments regarding making Mexico pay to build a wall, the possibility of the US withdrawing from NATO or unleashing a trade war with China—there might have been a quick glance to see what the response outside

the US had been, but rarely more than that. Within the frame of the elections, the role and significance of the world was various but underwhelmingly insubstantial: a broad canvas, the set against which US economic, military and moral action could unfold; or alternatively a fuzzy and faded lifeworld overshadowed by polychrome US political fireworks; or a set of specific but chimeric targets (i.e. "terrorists," "Syria," "Mexico") for one or another muscular nationalist project. In short, within the US election process and the horizon of its imagination, the world functions much as a colony.

The irony of this is that Trump and his election are preeminently the outcome of and a response to global developments rather than their impetus. His call to "make America great again!" is nothing if not reactive—and a relative latecomer at that. For much of the past two decades, after all, we have seen a rise across Europe and Asia of populist nationalism paired with a succession of authoritarian strongmen, highly skilled in political performance, promising to defend their countries in the face of international threats and humiliation; to make them great again; to clean out corrupt elite and stand up for the common people; to root out domestic and alien threats; to restore order and all this while safeguarding the welfare and economic development of their countries. The most notable of these currently include Turkey's Erdogan, Japan's Abe, China's Xi, the Netherlands' Wilders, Hungary's Orban, France's Le Pen, Poland's Jarosław (and the late Lech) Kaczyński, Isreal's Netanyahu, the Philippine's Duterte, India's Modi, Russia's Putin, and even Britain's Theresa May. And after all these, comes Trump.

Some commentators have noted the resemblance. The vast majority of analyses, however, have sought to read Trump's success within an overwhelmingly US context: on the one hand, in terms of the ideological, strategic or organizational failure of the Democratic Party or of Hillary Clinton or of urban coastal progressives and, on the other hand, as the backlash against a Black president in a still fundamentally racist country, a highly polarized and distorting media machine, and/or a backlash against three decades of neoliberalization and the (socio-)economic precarity it has produced among middle and lower class whites, all in the context of decreasing US stature, influence and success in the world. American Studies

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certainly has within itself extremely rich resources for understanding these different elements, most especially the cultural, racial, gendered and sexual political fields—and media industry—within which Trump's vulgar, brutal public persona have taken shape alongside his racist, bankruptcy- and lawsuit-driven, business and real estate practices. Regarding the rural and suburban white underclass and squeezed middle classes, American Studies will have to scramble more—as anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, journalists and pundits have had to—but here too there is a rich tradition of studying marginal and rural cultures, histories and folkways that can offer insights and understanding.

Quite striking in all this, however, is the absence of a corresponding scramble, in public and in academic domains, including American Studies, to understand and engage the global context—most especially Trump's embeddedness in a rising host of strongmen who have finetuned an ability to effectively blend neoliberal economic ideologies, nationalist chauvinisms, aggressive masculinity and media-savvy, populist-authoritarian governance. There appears to be a deep existential drive to understand Trump's success as a sign of US social and political crisis. This is not complemented, however, by an equally deep existential drive to understand the global socio-economic, political and identarian dynamics undergirding Trump's success and the international crises/crises this marks with a correspondingly detailed, attuned and tangible incisiveness.

In certain respects, this is simply a reflection of the fact that the global does not yet have a grip on our existential sensibilities in a fashion that the national does. Existential feeling is not something willed, after all, though like all feeling it is social and learned. The absence of it, then, is the conjoined effect of a persistent institutional nationalism in our educational systems; of methodological nationalism in our scholarship, journalism and punditry; and of persistent exceptionalist sensibilities in the entire political spectrum from Right to Left. While conservatives may hail the US as, in their eyes, the most democratic, most free country in the world, even those progressives most inclined to critique chauvinistic nationalism and exceptionalist sensibilities have at the same time exhibited regular inclinations to export US identity politics and US

critical and scholarly practices across the world in the name of universal liberation and justice (about which, more below). For many, though certainly not all of those writing and debating within the US setting, this is undergirded by a profound lack of concrete knowledge and experience of the worlds beyond the US specifically and beyond the Americas more generally.

Crucially, this extends to a widespread lack of knowledge and familiarity with the significant immigrant communities *within* the US. This is especially the case when it comes to those that are not Hispanic, including Indian, Chinese, and Filipino communities that constitute the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th largest immigrant nationalities-of-origin in the US after Mexicans. So, for example, Loren Glass in a review of Brian T. Edwards' *After the American Century* argues that Edwards' fails to account realistically for the limited resources of Americanists when he exhorts Americanists to expand their close reading of US cultural expression to encompass the full global field in which such expression circulates. Certainly, as Glass points out, few Americanists will spend extended periods in Iran and Morocco as Edwards has. And yet there are a multitude of possibilities in a country such as the US with significant vibrant immigrant communities (including Iranians and Moroccans); with universities well-endowed with libraries, expertise, technologies and networks that offer significant virtual, multi-medial and textual access to distant worlds; and with scholarly incomes (among the tenure-tracked), schedules, grants, and awards that entail a relatively privileged wealth of resources, infrastructures and possibilities, particularly compared to those of scholars outside the US.

Loren Glass, for example, is a scholar affiliated with the University of Iowa (my own alma mater), located in Johnson County, Iowa. In the 1990s, Johnson County was home to one of the two largest concentrations of Iranian immigrants in Iowa, most of them in Iowa City and enough to sustain a study of Iranian immigrant adaption to US society and culture (Chaichian). More generally, the immigrant population of Iowa has been growing significantly since then, playing a crucial role in compensating for the departure of young Iowans and preventing predicted labor shortages, particularly following the automatization of meat packing plants ("Map the Impact of Immigration Across the Nation"). Towns

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with plants, such as for example Marshalltown, may today have populations that in fact are more than 25% Latino (Barabak), even as the state-wide population of Asians (primarily Chinese and Indian) has increased to the point that Asian-owned businesses employ more than 10,000 Iowans. In complementary fashion, more than 11,000 students in Iowa are foreign-born, with more than 4,000 attending Glass's institution, the University of Iowa ("New Americans in Iowa"). More broadly yet and just across state lines a few hours to the east of Iowa City, the Chicago metropolitan region continues to be one of the great immigrant destinations in the US, home today to nearly 10 million foreign-born residents, making this the 4th largest population of immigrants in the US ("US Immigrant Population by Metropolitan Area").

The problem, by way of counterpoint to Glass' claim, is not one of means in a time of shrinking humanities budgets. Even a (tenure-track) scholar of limited means can find the resources to study either recent immigrant communities within the US or conduct research abroad through a combination of language study and strategic short-term international visits, complemented by virtual networking and research, interviews, digital archives, social media and so forth. Indeed, in the social sciences, ethnic studies and American Studies itself there exist a long tradition of studying immigrants in the US as well as, to a lesser extent, their worlds and cultures of origin across the world.

Rather than the problem being one of means, it is one of conception. American Studies has come to a crossroads as it were, brought there by the culminating effects of developments within the field itself, within the United States and in the larger regional and global dynamics within which the US is embedded. Fundamentally at the core of this development is the issue of whether "America" will remain central to American Studies. Recurring criticisms of the transnational turn in American Studies have been that it makes its object of analysis too "large" and encyclopedic, encourages amateurism or, as paraphrased by John Carlos Rowe "abandoned the study of the US nation in the very historical moment that US nationalism was powerfully reshaping public discourse and international relations" (Encyclopedia). Even an advocate of transnational approaches such as Shelley

Fisher Fishkin, responding to the possibility that this might make American Studies too centrifugal, declares:

> When we do research centered on cultural forms, processes, or products not born in the US or on events that didn't happen in the US, our focus remains on the ways in which those forms, processes, products, or events had an impact on America or Americans in some way (either materially or intangibly or both, shaping their understanding of the world). (Fishkin)

Crucially, Fishkin declares rather than argues the point. As such, agreement depends on a certain fetishization of the term "America": because it is enshrined in the name we have inherited for the field from generations past, the nation-state to which it is assumed and declared to refer must remain its prime point of orientation, the anchor holding the field together as such. But this is in fact far from obvious. To begin with, given the shifting, fragmented, contested and at moments incoherent meanings assigned to "America," the asserted self-sameness between the "America" of American Studies and the field's putative core object of study is a misleading sop. In entails relying on the indexical "America" as if it referred to a real object, in an age when the phantasmal, fragmented and centrifugal process of nation-states is part and parcel of the challenge we face. The point then, is to embrace our understanding of the fictive nature of nation-states rather than flee in consternation. It is precisely attempts to maintain and safeguard that fiction as real lead to horrid violence. Holding on tight to an outdated concept the better to magically ensure coherence of both a field and its object, however, will not change the direction of history only make it more difficult to analyze.

Correspondingly, the argument of the remainder of the paper will be that to flourish as a force for incisive sensibilities, commitments, aesthetics and politics (rather than conserving ones), American Studies must leave room at its core for a strand of thought that anchors its conceptual apparatus not in the lodestone "America" but in concepts and commitments that exceed it as a nation-state, just as geopolitically, culturally and existentially the US is more than ever part of a world that exceeds it. The argument here will be that central to American Studies, implicitly as well as explicitly, has been a commitment to and grappling with the existential para-

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doxes of democracy as a fundamental element of the American Experiment. The US was one of the earliest countries to develop mass democracy, driven in the first instance by universal suffrage for white men decades before this was common in most other countries. This suffrage depended on the structural disenfranchisement, objectification, extraction of profit and brutalization of Blacks, Indigenous peoples, women and the land itself. Today, even as the US struggles to achieve comprehensive suffrage in practice within the territorial bounds of its state, it re-enacts globally the logic of profitable disenfranchisement through a range of undemocratic instruments from transnational corporations, to multi-national political organizations, to military intervention.

A host of global economic, political and technological developments mean, however, that US preeminence is increasingly de-naturalized, alongside more generally the de-naturalization of the nation-state as the preeminent political community, cultural, economic and existential horizon. At a time of structural interpenetration, syncretism, and inter-dependence, the nation-state is not feasible—even as for the moment it remains our most powerful form of socio-political and moral community. While for some this condition raises the specter of dissolution as traumatic loss—of national coherence, power, relevance and identity—it marks, in fact, that we are in a transitional moment. A new system of global relations is emergent, without having yet taken shape clearly. This spurs some to hang on all the more tightly to what they imagine we were; but it also creates imperatives to become what we would have liked to have been: comprehensively democratic and just at a scale and to an extent never yet achieved. The United States and the "America" of American Studies can be critical elements of this, even as they are not the defining ones. From this angle of approach, it is possible to do American Studies without necessarily referencing "America"—just as it is possible to do a feminist analysis without (necessarily) referencing women. Some will disagree, perhaps fiercely, with the first and/or the last assertion, but this is the intent of my paper: to open discussion, suggest possibilities that have not yet been explored sufficiently. Is it time to make the project of "America" subject to projects of global justice such as (but not limited to) that of "democracy" (as this includes

debates about the meaning and politics of "democracy" itself)? Is this not the only way to break with the legacy and the continuing structures of imperialism and extractive hegemony embedded in the DNA of the international system of nation-states?

American Studies, as a field centered on a national imaginary enacted globally, has been circling around this issue. Correspondingly, others before me have made elements of this argument: the centrality of democracy, the importance of citizenship, the need to reimagine American Studies in light of globalization, anti-imperialism and so forth. Given constraints of space, I can only touch episodically and selectively on a few of these, with the intent, however, of pushing the argument just a bit farther than it has been. The point here is not to do this comprehensively and irrefutably, but by way of suggestion, the better to open a path to discussion and debate.

A good starting point is to consider the ways in which Winfried Fluck critiques recent developments in American Studies with the intent of returning it to its historic project. In an article entitled "Theories of American Culture (and the Transnational Turn in American Studies)," Fluck tracks shifting reiterations of resistant, critical Americanism from the early iterations by highbrow (white, male) elite as these influenced the earliest academic Americanists, to post-1960s critical revisions of the myth and symbol school via everything from New Historicism to anti-imperial New Americanism to highly politicized identity politics focused on race, gender, and (Foucauldian-infused understandings of) power. As Fluck correctly points out, these developments pinpointed the problem of grounding resistance— the possibilities for resistant subjectivity— in hegemonic systems. Lacking such a ground, and the possibilities for such subjectivity, raises the specter of precluding all possibilities for agency. This, according to Fluck, explains how "the idea of multiple or hybridized identities has become the new mantra in Cultural and American Studies" (Fluck 69–70), foregrounding questions of borders, rims, diasporas and encounters. Crucially, Fluck conceives of this as a process of "continuous retreat" in which one possibility for resistance after another is discredited leaving American Studies practitioners increasingly "desperate"

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[...] for a configuration or location that would still be able to provide an oppositional perspective. In that context, transnational studies can be seen as yet another attempt to escape the deadend of cultural radicalism's power analysis. Since, theoretically speaking, all potential resources of resistance within American society have been used up, the only possibility that remains is to go outside of the nation-state and to transcend its borders. (Fluck 71)

Fluck's analysis is striking for its rather too easy dismissal of American Studies' commitment to engaging minority, marginal, borderland, and transnational subjects as various romantic, desperate or dogmatic. That is, Fluck clearly has read widely and understands the arguments he distills, but lacks perceptive sensitivity to the existential imperatives at stake here—notably the wrenching question of how the US might create a society that does justice to fundamental ideals of equality and freedom that it cannot seem to stop violating with great brutality and hypocrisy at every historical turn. Rather than engaging this, Fluck instead concludes his essay with the call to drop the search for resistant subjects and scholarly practices and instead recognize the US as a "paradigmatic, agenda-setting modern society" whose global power will persist, though as an empire whose international dominance is "barely visible." Correspondingly, the task of American Studies should be to analyze US sources of cultural power according to the method of De Tocqueville, dissecting the "particular set of economic, social [and] cultural conditions" giving shape to US society, arts and politics (Fluck 74).

Fluck's analysis, while certainly a bracing fillip to consider possible analytic shortcomings in centering American Studies on resistance, minorities, margins, flows and borderlands, ultimately is something else: the nostalgic call to return to structures of thought, forms of scholarship and critical intellectual politics inadequate to our times. Fluck argues that transnational American Studies entails the dissolution of the study of the sources of US power and as such is a "serious mistake." Correspondingly, he wants American Studies scholarship to go "back inside" the US. This is, of course, impossible precisely because what is "inside" and "outside" is increasingly and by now comprehensively unclear. To return to the question presented in the introduction: is Donald Trump a phenomenon of US society or a US example of a decentered, highly globalized

process? What of the pro-Israel lobby in the US as it recently aligned itself with Netanyahu and against Obama? What of the popularity of South Korean Hallyu stars, music and media among a growing global fan-base that includes North Americans; the success of media formats (such as Idols and Telenovelas) conceived and purchased from abroad; and, most recently, the influence of Russia-mediated news items, hacking and leaks in shaping the views of US voters? What about the fact that today one in seven US residents is foreign-born, many linked in real-time to homelands, politics, economic, social and cultural circuits across the world? And what about US susceptibility to reconceiving its identity, interests, security agencies, laws, imaginaries and global military mission along lines deeply responsive and reactive to the narrative of a global war proposed on September 11th by a Saudi Arabian activist called Osama Bin Laden?

One could suggest that, increasingly "desperate" to hold onto the "romantic" figment of the clearly bounded nation-state, Fluck argues for an approach that current events make clearly untenable. Yet the core concern Fluck foregrounds near the end of his article, the problem of US power in the world, is one I share. At the same time, Fluck's sense that current Americanist methods leads to a dissolution of the study of the sources of American power is equally accurate. This is, however, not a problem. Rather it is a reflection of the larger geopolitical process challenging all societies as a result of the combined effects of neoliberal globalization, mass migration, new technology and media. All these ensure that the figment of the territorially-border nation-state is visible and in plain sight as just that: a figment. To restructure American Studies in a fashion intended to ignore this, will not change the condition of our scholarship, arts and politics of the moment, only our (in)ability to analyze it at its most critical, challenging and disruptive junctures.

One of these entails the fact first raised at beginning: that global vernacular American Studies is demotic but not democratic. As such, it overwhelmingly marks the exclusion rather than participation of those globally impacted by US politics and society. This enacts a fundamental divide when it comes to the study of US society and politics between those privileged as US citizens and residents able to translate their critique into social, political,

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intellectual and aesthetic influence on the society they engage and those disenfranchised from any such agency and influence, notwithstanding the comprehensive global influence of the US as it variously intervenes, brutalizes, negotiates and seduces across the world. Indeed, those who are the object of US actions without recourse to any means of shaping them, the geopolitically disenfranchised, constitute the majority of those engaged in demotic American Studies. This majority is the object of US policy, corporations, militaries, NGOs, media, and consumer culture— and thus acquires both an expertise and an interest in critically reflecting on it— without, however, the possibility of ever becoming its subject. They are destined to observe and be acted upon, without being able to act or speak in such a fashion as to be felt and heard. (9/11 can usefully be understood as a highly exceptional disruption of this logic, but one that in its brutal inhumanity obviated any serious possibility for productive and democratic engagement subsequently.)

In part this is a simple matter of geography; but it is also both a side-effect and an enabler of the persistence of a global power imbalance in which the US remains culturally, militarily and economically preeminent, despite its significant loss of allure, persuasive power, status and dominance of the international system and of multi-national organizations, norms and narratives. Developments elsewhere are ignored because of the very basic fact that they can be, more even than because of the centrality of US exceptionalist thought as such. Power creates its own exceptionalism, related to yet different from the exceptionalism of national narratives and identities.

Donald Pease touches on this in his contribution to Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Gaonkar's *Globalizing American Studies*. Drawing on the work of Laura Stoler in the process of engaging Djelal Kadir and Amy Kaplan, respectively, he points out that not only nation-states but empires too produce their own exceptionalism. In this sense, US exceptionalism is itself anything but exceptional. As Stoler remarks, all "imperial states operate as states of exception that vigilantly produce exceptions to their principles and exceptions to their laws […]. [As such, the US is] a consummate producer of excepted populations, excepted spaces, and its own exception

from international and domestic laws" (quoted in Pease 57). It is this that leads Donald Pease to propose a project of comparative imperial exceptionalisms as one possible solution to exceptionalism's apparently ineradicable persistence in both US global politics and in an American Studies dedicated to contesting it.

While this offers an elegant solution at the intellectual level, a critical analysis of US exceptionalist imperialism relative to that of other empires leaves the project of anti-imperialism itself hanging. In that particular sense, Pease's proposal is a solution that is promising but incomplete. US imperialist exceptionalism is certainly embedded in a larger global history; yet what this makes clear is that the challenge is neither national (US) exceptionalism nor imperialist exceptionalism as such. Rather it is the imperialist relations of the global domain in and of themselves. These, in turn, overlap with and disrupt the structured anarchist-realist logic of competitive nation-states as it has evolved since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. To be effective and intellectually consistent then, an engaged, critique of exceptionalism (in the rich, complex range of formations discussed by Pease and Stoler) has to be embedded in a project conjoining anti-imperialism to a rethinking of the hegemony of nation-states as the preeminent form of political institution under modernity.

Donald Pease's discussion of Kadir and Kaplan makes clear that any such critical project requires an alternative, Archimedean point as it were, from which to push and critique. In Pease's account, Kadir enacts this via critically activating a "good exceptionalism," while Kaplan does this through seeking to discipline Kadir for what to her are the dated insular, white, male, Euro-American norms of the exceptionalism he references, in the interests of her own conjoined anti-exceptionalist and anti-imperial commitments. In the process, Kaplan however implicitly activates a form of "disciplinary exceptionalism" that reaffirms her particular US Americanist norms, values and methods as preferred and hegemonic ones in order not only to dismiss Kadir's argument but also to claim the authority to tell international Americanists, many of them already rather critical of their marginality to "American Studies" proper, what their proper international project ought and should be. Kaplan reenacts as it were the classic logic of the imperial

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metropole, judging, sidelining and silencing the purported inferior, the better to civilize and uplift those still in the "waiting rooms of [disciplinary] history."

In place of the project that Kaplan proposes, a comparative study of imperialisms, Pease argues that imperialism produces its own exceptionalism and what is called for, then, is a comparative study of imperial state exceptionalisms. The shortcoming in Pease's approach is the way in which this centers, and in that sense reifies, the imperialist dimension *at the expense of offering an alternative*. However incisive, sensitive, rigorous and comprehensive the critique, at the end of the day we are and will be still be left with a system of imperialist internationalism in place as the horizon of our analyses. Certainly, we will have deepened and enriched our understanding of it, in the process of historicizing and denaturalizing it. The question of what will take its place, however—the better to limit the violence that set the analysis in motion—is unasked and unanswered.

At its most specific, the instigating context for Kadir, Kaplan and Pease is the post-9/11 violence of a self-consciously resurgent, even celebratory, US imperialism encapsulated in the Bush Doctrine. All too clear, however, is the extent to which this specific context is an imperialism that moves comfortably along and extends the primal violence of the American project mapped so powerfully by Richard Slotkin since the 1970s, along with the primal exceptionalism dissected by Pease a year earlier in *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009). Correspondingly, as Edwards and Gaonkar note in their introduction,

> Pease's magisterial essay may be seen as a cleansing gesture rather than a substitutive gesture [...]. For Pease, American studies is so deeply compromised and contaminated by the exceptionalist interpretive tradition that one has to go through a cleansing process before relocating and renewing American studies." (Edwards and Gaonkar 4)

Edwards and Gaonkar's *Globalizing American Studies*, then, can be read as consciously meant to build on the space cleared by Pease's analyses of US exceptionalism. Within the covers of their book, following Pease's essay, they present a set of chapters by authors of highly diverse plumage. The collation of their multiple locations,

languages, disciplines and interests in this one nodal book seeks to embody and enact—through the book's cumulative effect of synecdochal globality—that relocation and renewal of American studies for which Edwards and Gaonkar call in their introduction. This is a renewal able to break with the structuring exceptionalism so distinctive, still, for both the field and the larger American Century in which it came into its own.

Edwards and Gaonkar's anthology is, among other things, part of a larger movement towards a comparative American studies, though carried out with a range of voices and critical approaches that make it noteworthy and striking. And yet, the question lingers: what then? Where does this critical alternative to exceptionalist narratives leave us? If exceptionalism, brought back to its most basic elements, is the conceit that "America" does not obey the laws of history to which all others have been subject, is not the ultimate effect of an effective critique to simply make the US a country and empire like all others? As riven by factions, by inward and outward violence it dares not face, by failures of justice, all for the sake of making some sort of political and moral community possible, some of the time, for some of its people (but not others)?

The core problem here, in fact, is neither exceptionalism nor nation-state imperialism as such, but rather the fact that we have reached the limits of the nation-state system as a whole. Emerging out of Westphalia, crystalizing fully in the (late) nineteenth century and globally hegemonic in the post-colonial, post-war period, the nation-state as institution and as narrative able to organize our practical and existential lives has reached its horizon of possibility. It is increasingly unable to summon our most creative and ambitious collective energies; to organize the most transformative dynamic means, processes and pathways for the future; to bring into being coherent collective militant, moral and socio-economic structures and activity. It remains an institution and force with which to reckon, and will most likely for the coming century and perhaps longer, but its most vibrant, powerful creative moment, as a global institution, is spent. Where we see it most visibly at work today, it is a reactive and retrenching entity, conservative rather than innovative. We turn to the nation-state increasingly as a brake on change, rather than as its instigator. While the process is too pluriform and too

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complex to ever be linear, uniform or straight-forward, its overall direction is increasingly clear. As far as the preeminent institution for organizing our socio-political, economic and ethical life goes, we are in a transitional age, where the old is in decline even as we do not yet know what the new will be.

It is not so much the American Century that is ending—the framing context from which the arguments of Edwards and Gaonkar emerge—but rather the preeminence of that world system of states within and in relation to which "America" as imaginary, as exception, and as a military, economic and cultural empire became more powerful than any before; not as a self-made entity, but rather as one produced in a fashion at once contingent and overdetermined by the forces of that system. Embedded here is a complex argument about causality, agency and history; one too complicated to develop and rehearse here. In brief, however: if indeed we accept Benedict Anderson's argument that nations—as this includes the United States—are first and foremost figments, are *imagined* communities, then they cannot at the same time be agents of history, as such—though indeed, imagining them as agents may itself produce real historical change in our social, material and existential lives. Correspondingly, a nation-state like "America" giving birth to itself, being the agent of its own history, is rather like pulling yourself up by your bootstraps: pleasurable in cartoons, impossible in practice. Where the core of our concern and our allegiance must lie, then, is not with nation-states—including the idealized versions of them in the name of which we critique their failures in practice—but instead with those processes shaping our societies and world.

This, in fact, is what happens implicitly in the critiques of exceptionalism, imperialism and imperialist exceptionalism that the Americanists discussed above, among others, develop. Sustaining and driving these critiques is an implicit ideal of a world not organized by the violence, exclusion and expropriation so typical of imperialism, notably that of the George W. Bush years into the present. What that ideal, that alternative actually might be, however, is not named as such.

It is possible to propose, however, that we name it. One plausible candidate is that of "egalitarian pluralism." Certainly, this is a fairly

safe description of one of the prime ideals that has marked American Studies since at least the 1960s (even as aspects of it could be traced back to earlier periods). Until now, this is an ideal that has been most critically articulated and embraced in relation to diversity within the United States and attempts to achieve an inclusive justice through vibrant activism, political organization, legislation, affirmative action, transformation of the arts, along with institutional, epistemic and curricular reform. At the same time, this ideal is clearly also a core element of the transnational, international and comparative turns in the discipline. Yet in that regard these wings of the American Studies field have not allied themselves obviously or consistently with any actual set of movements, specific political projects or organizations, legal issues, artistic developments, institutions or innovative academic or epistemic practices.

Rather strikingly, the engagement of US American Studies with the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions Movement (BDS) offers further support for this. Deeply felt and hotly contested, both by those for and those against the official alignment of the American Studies Association with BDS, the debate extends to and corresponds with a much larger field of politics on US university campuses related to Israel-Palestine relations. All this is further enflamed by the fact that, on the one hand, the US is either directly or indirectly involved in multiple wars and conflicts in the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Syria and Israel) and has a highly conflicted relation with Iran while, on the other hand, the US domestic political field is deeply polarized in part around these issues of international war and relations. This means that there is a "natural" correspondence between campus debates and mobilizations and national political debates—as this in turn extends into classrooms, departments, research and publications. In other countries, less involved in the Middle East and/or less polarized and/or with less politicized university cultures, this fit is less natural.

Certainly, international support for BDS includes many critical progressive and politically engaged scholars in other English-speaking settler countries (Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand) along with the UK and Ireland. Beyond the Anglophone

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world, however, its reach is much thinner, to the point even of being strongly repressed in continental European countries like France and Germany (notwithstanding that the EU has voted to label Israeli settlement imports differently than those from Israel proper, much to Israel's extreme displeasure). Even in those countries, such as the Netherlands, where the largest pension fund PGGM has withdrawn investments from Israeli banks, visible support entails tiny pockets rather than a movement as such. The result is that BDS and the ASA's support for it are either simply unknown or rejected by the majority of European American Studies scholars.

One of the distinctive features of American Studies in the US has been its deep, explicit and explicitly political relation with the society beyond the university, having been particularly strongly shaped by identarian, anti-war, student, civil rights, folk culture and urban renewal movements since the 1960s. Institutional American Studies outside the US has been similarly entangled, though this has taken a different shape where the most important infusions have come from US government support via embassies, scholarships, networks, cultural exchanges and businesses. The drastic (though selective) reduction of such infusion after the Cold War, in conjunction with significant geopolitical and geo-economic shifts, means that international American Studies departments and scholars have to scramble for both funding and relevance. Crucially, this relevance is most likely to come through the expertise they have to offer national governments, businesses and audiences in "how America works." The effect of answering such national needs, however, is to drive Americanists back into the folds of the classic disciplines constituting what in effect becomes US/American Area Studies: international relations, history, literature, popular culture, and sociology. This can ensure relevance to political and policy elite; public recognition of scholars and departments; and corresponding funding and protection amidst university cutbacks and reorganizations. When successful, however, all this comes at the expense of cutting-edge academic innovation (as this overwhelmingly cuts against disciplinarity) and at the expense of critical engagement with political issues against the mainstream grain (as this cuts against professional and public authority). Within such contexts, the relevance and significance of committing to something

like resistance to imperialism and imperialist exceptionalism or active support for global justice and egalitarian pluralism are far from obvious.

So, for example, someone like Heinz Ickstadt argues that American Studies "should accept its name as its limitation and its boundary—that it cannot be a global and postcolonial, not even an international American Studies in the sense of inter-American and inter-continental investigation" (Ickstadt 554). Ickstadt's concern is on the one hand the problem of overreach leading to superficiality and on the other hand the question of academic organization and politics. As his own experience in Germany has shown him: the national focus of the Kennedy Institute ultimately made it a much more successful institution than the multi-national centers of Latin American and Eastern European Studies, precisely because they were not able to reconcile their national differences within the centers. Crucially, however, this argument of Ickstadt's is an institutional one, not a substantive one. In other words, there is a tension between the substantive development of a need for a globalist American Studies adequate to our times and the institutional possibilities for such a development.

At the same time, Ickstadt's argument misses a crucial component of American Studies historical character, namely its distinctive fusion of the scholarly with the political. So, to begin with, the support for BDS follows in the footsteps of the deep momentum let loose in the 1960s by the Radical Caucus of the ASA—opposed to the Vietnam War & demanding the inclusion of Third World scholars—and sustained in the 1970s and 1980s by the turn to fully incorporating Women's Studies, African-American Studies and more generally the whole pallet of (radical) Identity Studies—this whole complex of fiercely critical scholarship is deeply committed to transforming the United States' relations to and within itself, but also to the world. In line with this, and extending it yet further, the ASA's vote to align with BDS was in explicit contravention of long-standing US international policy and the larger social imaginary's intense identification with Israel. Indeed, the public fury with which this position was greeted by university administrations, politicians, pundits and pro-Israel activists was one of the developments that helped to turn BDS into a highly visible

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national issue, to the point that today US politicians are not only passing legislation within the US against BDS but attempting to strong-arm European governments into repressing BDS movements within their own territories.

That is to say, the stance for BDS inserted American Studies once again into US geopolitics, but now in direct opposition to the desires and projects of the State Department, where 70 years ago Americanists were loosely, though not always comfortably, in alignment with the State Department and where 45 years ago—at height of the Vietnam War—many were opposed but in a fashion that reflected larger opposition in US society as a whole, while not taking it so far that the organization as such took a formal stance in explicit contravention of US government policy.

So BDS builds on, yet goes much farther than, certain radical traditions within American Studies that link scholarship to activism, research to citizenship. This has been a fundamental element of American Studies from the beginning, including at the time of its "elite white male" beginnings in the 1950s. As Alice Kessler-Harris puts it: "The heart of American Studies is the pursuit of what constitutes democratic culture" and as Heinz Ickstadt elaborates:

> [...] [this is] the radical heritage of an American studies movement that had always aimed at having more than a purely academic agenda and that had always wanted to be more than another professional organization since it was committed, as Gunter Lenz recently wrote, "to reunite the 'scholar' with the 'citizen' in a truly democratic society." That the "pursuit of what constitutes democratic society" has to be seen as an ongoing process is self-evident. [...] French theories (and their feminist and post-colonial variants) may have sharpened the tools of this process but its drive comes from this logic of subversive democracy that lies at the heart of American studies itself. (Ickstad 548)

And yet crucially, even as the imperative for such a project linking scholar and citizen in a drive for subversive democracy is as intensely necessary as it has ever been, it is also handicapped by a crucial inheritance from the 19th century: namely that democracy has been understood, developed and contained within the territories of particular nation-states. We have a system in place that has restricted democracy to the domestic political sphere while leaving the international sphere the domain of what in international

relations is called anarchy. It is full of rules and conventions, yet lacking any higher authority to impose justice or ensure that states abide by their commitments, much less that they move toward a democratic globality. The result, to this day, as we see around us, is a world in which notwithstanding a virtually global commitment to democracy, the conditions of globality remain those of a lawless rule of the most powerful—whether these be states, corporations, militaries or violent extremist movements. The effect of this has been to largely exclude the project of radical, subversive democracy from our discussions of American Studies, including anti-imperial, comparativist and international American Studies.

At the same time, a second crucial obstruction to the radical project of a globalist democracy, is the fact that even when American Studies goes international, the focus remains on the ways in which the gaze from elsewhere is directed at America. The fact that this gaze at America is one of many gazes directed both within and abroad—in relation to one another—that is, that a gaze is embedded in a tapestry of gazes, *including ones directed elsewhere than at America*, is insufficiently incorporated. So, for example, from my own location in the Netherlands comes the question: how does the Dutch response to America relate to the Dutch encounters with and responses to Indonesians, Southern Africans, British, French, Germans and, most recently, Muslim migrants—as these occur and have occurred in conjunction, collaboration and tension with the gaze directed at America? The methods, archive and scholarship we have, as they are currently constituted, make it difficult if not impossible to answer such questions even as they are of direct current relevance.

Invariably, then, the emphasis on American Studies as fundamentally about "America" has the effect of reinforcing the centrality of America as an ethical, political and social project in a fashion that distorts its place and role in the world. By way of developing an alternative, a particularly useful place to start is with the work of Günter Lenz on the politics of transnational and transcultural American Studies. He develops a very rich discussion that builds not only on transnational American Studies, but also draws on theories of cosmopolitanism such as those of Appiah and Mignolo,

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on the one hand, and of political philosophies of democracy on the other—such as those of Seyla Benhabib and Iris Marion Young. This brings him to make the questions of democracy and of globality central to those of the American Studies project, arguing:

> What is needed is a genuinely *dialogic* and *transcultural* notion of cultural critique and of inter-, post-, or transnational American Culture Studies in order to bring into view the—always two- or multi-directional—processes of transculturation and rearticulation of the political role of, e.g., American media and of the products of the popular mass culture in various parts of the world and of the cultural repercussions and preconditions of the different processes of what is summarily called globalization. (Lenz et al.)

At this point, I would take Lenz's argument even one step further: not only in support of a dialogic, transnational American Studies rearticulating the role of America in the world, but more broadly and deeply investing in creating globally just relations. It is an American Studies deeply invested in an argument for dialogic, cosmopolitan democracy as a global project, fully in line with the historical American Studies tradition of scholarship in the interests of radical democracy. "Democracy" here, it should be noted, is a question more than an answer: another way of asking "how might just and flourishing global relations look from the perspective of inclusive, egalitarian pluralism?"

The proposal here, as I conceive it, is not to comprehensively displace either American Studies in its classic De Tocquevillian guise, nor as a form of international area studies, nor as a practice of critical engagement with deeply national, yet globalized, globalizing and anti-imperial identity politics and painful conflicts on how best to speak truth to power. Rather the argument is to add a further, and today essential, critical strand. This is to approach the question of the subject, object and method of American Studies from an explicitly pluralist, democratic sensibility that subsumes "America" to the "global" and to global projects for just pluralist relations as mediated through what Lentz, following in the footsteps of Aihwa Ong foregrounds as "flexible" transnational citizenship. As in the public, political field, the relations between these approaches to doing American Studies may range from col-

laboration to fierce agonism (in the sense elaborated by Chantal Mouffe). This indeed is the point: to structure the field as we seek to structure the world, in the interests of justice and along the lines most suitable to our emergent age. Even if that may mean, at least at moments, abandoning "America."

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SUBSUMING "AMERICA" TO THE "GLOBAL"

A Response to Markha Valenta's "Abandoning America the Better to Save America"

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Markha Valenta's passionate and wide-ranging essay raises several thorny issues that would require a much more elaborate response than the one I can offer here. Her title, at least to my ear, sounds nicely ambivalent. It could easily be the title of an article meant to criticize—as many have done—the "transnational turn" as a move to make American Studies legitimate and more palatable in a globalized world. However, though fully aware of the complications entailed in any internationalization of American Studies, she by no means wishes to abandon this project. Indeed, Valenta wants to sustain and expand the scope of transnational American Studies in order to reach a genuine decentering of the US. She cites the example of how discussions of Trump's victory have tended to see it almost exclusively "as a sign of US social and political crisis," without paying enough attention to "the global socio-economic, political and identarian dynamics undergirding Trump's success and the international crises/crises this marks." The problem, in her view, is that even the most astute proponents of international/transnational American Studies—scholars like Djelal Kadir, Amy Kaplan, Brian T. Edwards, Shelley Fisher Fiskins, Donald Pease, and others, whose work she incisively comments upon—seem always to circle back to the US at the end of their analyses, as if they were unable to truly "abandon America."[1] In what seems to me the key

1. I should add that while often used interchangeably, the terms "international" and "transnational" in some scholars' eyes (see for example Kadir) designate different theoretical constructions.

passage of her argument, she laments that "when American Studies goes international, the focus remains on the ways in which the gaze from elsewhere is directed at America. The fact that this gaze at America is one of many gazes directed both within and abroad—in relation to one another—that is, that a gaze is embedded in a tapestry of gazes, *including ones directed elsewhere than at America*, is insufficiently incorporated." The only way to truly provincialize (my term) the US, therefore, "would be to approach the question of the subject, object and method of American Studies from an explicitly pluralist, democratic sensibility that subsumes 'America' to the 'global' and to global projects for just pluralist relations."

Before I say something about the critical perspective she advocates at this juncture in her reasoning, let me express a minor, though perhaps not irrelevant reservation. I am all for understanding current politics, culture, and literature in a more "global" context, and I do agree that the nation has become in several ways an insufficient analytical category, but I am also worried that subsuming "America" to the "global" may also end up having results far from the ones Valenta, I believe, wishes to achieve. Let's take Trump's election. Sure, Trump must be understood as the product of global conservative and populist socio-political dynamics, but I know of no other democratic country in which a candidate gathering over two million votes *less* than his opponent would be able to *win* an election. This is something that must be related to the exceptional (I use the word in its "neutral," etymological sense) conditions of an antiquated political system about which not enough Americans seem to feel uncomfortable. This is an "exceptionalism," with a small "e," that we can cannot afford to ignore, or so I think. The way presidential elections are run in the US, the obstacles many voters must face for casting their ballot, the racial discrimination that prevents millions from voting, not to mention the "exceptional" numbers of those who cannot vote because they are in jail, are to my eyes all signs of a country with a very serious democratic deficit that is in several ways unequalled in comparable (and many non-comparable) countries. So, yes, let's subsume "America" to the "global," but let's not for-

get what makes "America" in several ways unique, often in very negative ways.

In her effort to undermine the US-centric imaginary of current transnational American Studies, Valenta resorts to the very suggestive image of a "tapestry of gazes" directed at the US but also *elsewhere*. Again, I agree, and I would like to believe that my strictures on the US political system are in large part the effect of looking at the US with "Italian" eyes (which of course is not to say all Italians would agree with me). However, as the "tapestry of gazes" grows larger and aims at a global reach, one wonders *who* would be able to apprehend it in all its wealth of colors and texture? Isn't that "tapestry" another name for the unreachable totality of world relations, another name—that is—for a form of global knowledge that very few scholars, no matter how learned, polyglot, and incredibly smart, would be able to envision, let alone master? It is one thing to have a theoretical knowledge that one's gaze is just one of many, and quite another to be able to relate that gaze in relation to an infinity of others. Valenta singles out the Edwards and Gaonkar anthology *Globalizing American Studies* as a valuable, though in the end only partially successful attempt to construct a truly globalizing perspective. Yet, much as I, too, admire many of the essays in the collection, I cannot help but notice that *all* the contributors to the volume hail from major *US* universities. Moreover, in at least one case—admittedly the only case where I can claim some real expertise—we are offered a textbook exemplification of "overreach leading to superficiality" (as Valenta summarizes one of Heinz Ickstadt's reservations concerning transnational studies). In Wai-chee Dimock's reading of Niven and Pournelle's *Inferno*, Benito Mussolini emerges as the proponent of an "alternative" view of World War Two, which, however, can only be the Fascist view. Dimock seems to buy into the revisionist theories of the controversial (to say the least!) Italian historian Renzo De Felice, but her footnotes suggest that she may have read only English-language reports on De Felice's work, published in US journals, and she fails to mention a single Italian-language source. Perhaps only some form of concerted team work could approach something like a "tapestry of gazes"—provided, of course, that such team work were encouraged by academic institutions.

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As she ably discusses various theorists of international/transnational American Studies, Valenta rightly notes that what drives their critiques of "America," Exceptionalism, and imperialism, "is an implicit ideal of a world not organized by the violence, exclusion and expropriation" and yet, "what that ideal, that alternative actually might be, however, is not named as such." She proposes "egalitarian pluralism" as a suitable candidate for that ideal, though perhaps, as we struggle to find an "Archimedean point [...] from which to push and critique," we need more than a concept—we also need a *practice*. Her discussion of BDS is an interesting and helpful one, but BDS is far from being a mass movement comparable to the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 60's and 70's. I do not wish to fault Valenta for not being more specific about the ideal she advocates, especially given the relative brevity of her essay, and I should add that I have no doubts whatsoever that I share the basic ethical values underpinning her notion of egalitarian pluralism. However, I do wonder why the word "socialism" never appears once in her argument, just as I wonder, more generally, about the virtual erasure of the Cold War in most discussions of international American Studies. I raise these twin points because it seems to me that some reflection on a time when there was an "outside" to America is long overdue. I hope it is understood that I feel no nostalgia for the days of the Soviet empire, but it is a fact that social democracies flourished also under the political and ideological pressure of what lied "outside" the so-called "free world." Horrible as those days may have been for the people who lived behind the Iron curtain, those were also the times when in Western Europe the welfare state was built, with health care and education finally made available to millions of people who had been excluded from the benefits of economic growth. Whatever one might think of Bernie Sanders, and of his "socialist" identity, he has the merit of having at least brought back to everyone's attention that "ideals" need also be rooted in social models. Can there be an "egalitarian pluralism" without a socialist restructuring of the economy? Shouldn't we first reconsider critically the past, before facing the challenges of the present and planning for the future? How can literary and cultural stud-

ies help us do that? Markha Valenta's thoughtful intervention is to me a pressing and welcome invitation to keep asking these questions.

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ABSTRACTS
AND NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL GILES

World Literature and International American Studies: Convergence, Divergence, and Contest

This paper considers the relation between the institutional formations of World Literature and International American Studies. It compares and contrasts the association between World Literature and Comparative Literature to that between International American Studies and the American Studies movement emerging out of the United States. It goes on to argue that World Literature is anchored to a universalist teleology, one linked historically to an idealist intellectual genealogy. By contrast, International American Studies involves a more materialist, multidirectional emphasis that differentiates it from the US appropriation of globalization to further its own strategic interests.

Keywords: World Literature, Comparative Literature, International American Studies, Globalization.

Paul Giles is Challis Chair of English at the University of Sydney, Australia. He was president of the International American Studies Association between 2005 and 2007. His most recent books are *Antipodean America: Australasia and the Constitution of US Literature* (Oxford UP, 2014); *The Global Remapping of American Literature* (Princeton UP, 2011); *Transnationalism in Practice: Essays on American Studies, Literature, and Religion* (Edinburgh UP, 2010).

MARIA CRISTINA GIORCELLI

The Difference that Language Makes: A Response to Paul Giles' "World Literature and International American Studies: Convergence, Divergence, and Contest"

Keywords: formation of International American Studies, World Literatures, academic politics

Maria Cristina Giorcelli is Professor Emeritus of American Literature at the University of Rome Three. Her fields of research are: mid- and late-nineteenth-century fiction and Modernist poetry and fiction. She is co-founder (1980) and co-director of the quarterly journal *Letterature d'America*. She has edited twelve volumes on clothing and identity (*Abito e Identità*), out of which the University of Minnesota Press has published

four volumes under the title *Habits of Being*, coedited with Paula Rabinowitz. She was President of the Italian Association of American Studies (1989–1992) and Vice-President of the European Association for American Studies (1994–2002).

ULFRIED REICHARDT

Theories of the Global, Global Literature, and American Literature in a Globalizing Age

The paper discusses theories of the global and approaches to the concept of the world, presents definitions of literature in a globalizing age, and examines proposals how to approach world literature in literary scholarship, including ones that regard world literature as a system and ones that focus on individual texts. Finally, the essay argues that in our digitally restructured knowledge world, contemporary novels reflecting on the transformations of media and of knowledge formation have to be considered as versions of world literature as well.

Keywords: World Literature, globalization and literature, theories of the global, concepts of the "world," digitalization

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MARINA CAMBONI

The Limitations of Theory: A Response to Ulrich Reichardt's "Theories of the Global, Global Literature, and American Literature in a Globalizing Age"

Keywords: Limitations of theory, globalization, global literature, American literature

Marina Camboni has been professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of Macerata and former President of the Italian Association for North American Studies. Author of *Networking Women: Subjects, Places, Links Europe-America, 1890–1939. Towards a Rewriting of Cultural History* (2004), *Words at War: parole di guerra e culture di pace nel "primo secolo delle guerre mondiali"* (2005), *Incontri transnazionali: Modernità, poesia, sperimentazione* (2005), *Città, avanguardie modernità e modernismo* (2008), *Translating America: The Circulation of Narratives, Commodities, and Ideas Across the Atlantic* (2011).

CRISTINA IULI

Figuring Atlantic Legacies: Impossible Archives, Missing Histories, Literary Counter-Memories

This paper considers how neo- or trans- Atlantic studies conceives of the Atlantic and its legacies in relation to the idea of the archive, that is, of a body of works related to traces of a trans-Atlantic American past, to its principle of organization and analysis for literary studies, and to the critical descriptions of American Cultures in the context of a long trans-Atlantic network. It addresses how recent works on critical race studies and decoloniality, on performativity and memory and on comparative circum-Atlantic spectrality frame an original way to address how the literary imagination challenges the historical voids produced by modern Western amnesia.

Keywords: trans-Atlantic; archive; critical memory; American literature

Cristina Iuli teaches American Literature and American Studies at Università del Piemonte Orientale, and at the American Studies Master Program of the University of Torino, Italy. She specializes in Twentieth Century and contemporary American Literature, in literature and science, in the theories and aesthetics of modernity and in literary historiography and Transatlantic American Studies. She is author of *Effetti Teorici: critica culturale e nuova storiografia letteraria Americana* (2002); *Giusto il tempo di esplodere: il romanzo pop di Nathanael West* (2004); *Spell it Modern: Modernity and the Question of Literature* (2009). She has published essays on Gertrude Stein, Gregory Bateson, Richard Powers, Don Delillo, *The Big Lebowski*, Joseph McElroy, Nathanael West, on literary history and on Transatlantic American literature in several journals, including *Modernism/modernity*, *Arizona Quarterly*, *The European Journal of English Studies*.

UGO RUBEO

Building a Counterarchive: A Response to Cristina Iuli's "Trans-Atlantic American Studies and the Transatlantic Pedagogies: Some Methodological Perspectives and Questions"

Keywords: archive, counterarchive, memory, Trans-Atlantic Studies, Cristina Iuli

Ugo Rubeo is professor of American Literature at Sapienza—University of Rome. His publications include a study of the cultural ties between the US and Italy (*Mal d'America*, 1987), a comprehensive analysis of Twentieth Century African-American Poetry (*L'uomo visibile*, 1990), and a close reading of E. A. Poe's only published novel, entitled *Textual Dynamics in Poe's* The Narrative of A.Gordon Pym (2000). Apart from a number of essays dedicated to a variety of 19th and 20th century American authors, from Poe to Hawthorne to James, and from Fitzgerald and Faulkner to Bellow and Auster. He is also the editor and translator into Italian of Henry James' *The American Scene* (Milan, 2001) and the editor of a collection of essays on Post-Modernist literature, entitled *Parodie della fine* (2015).

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MENA MITRANO

American Studies *as* Italian Theory

Considering Roberto Esposito's narrative of Italian Theory, according to which Italian Theory first started as a US-based phenomenon and only later irradiated in other parts of the world, this paper explores the consequences of that narrative and the questions that it might raise for American Studies: Might Italian Theory rightfully belong to the Americanist's domain of inquiry? If so, what impact might it have on the identity of the Americanist? What is an Americanist? The paper argues that this new wave of theory illuminates the confluence of American Studies and critical thought, both involved in a simultaneous movement of deterritorialization that pushes them outside their established boundaries.

Keywords: American Studies, literary and cultural theory, Italian American Studies, Italian Theory

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CARLO MARTINEZ

Dispersing the Field as "Reciprocal Healing": A Response to Mena Mitrano "American Studies as Italian Theory"

Keywords: reflexivity, American studies as Italian Theory, literary theory, cultural theory, American Studies, the New Americanists

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DJELAL KADIR

Agnotology and the Know-Nothing Party: Then and Now

Belligerent ignorance has always proved strategic in the hegemonic goals of empire. The imperial history of the present is no exception. The Know-Nothing Party was founded in the USA in 1843, a pivotal year in America's history of territorial expansion. It was disbanded as a national political party in the no-less pivotal year of 1860, a year in which patriotic gore would turn on itself as the grossly misnamed Civil War. Nonetheless, the political and ideological tenets of the Know-Nothing Party endure with global repercussions in the twenty-first century. The literary and historiographic diagnoses of this deliberate bellicosity founded on the cultivation of ignorance have ranged from poetic to critical discourse starting in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, in the twenty-first century, what the Germans termed schrecklichkeit ("ruthless terror") to describe the horrors of World War I continues to be visited on peoples and nations targeted by imperial hubris and economic rapacity through a cynical strategy of expediently manufactured ignorance.

Keywords: agnotology, doublespeak, empire, epistemology, hegemony, media, realpolitik, xenophobia

Djelal Kadir the Edwin Erle Sparks Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature at Pennsylvania State University. He is the Founding President of the International American Studies Association and former Editor of the international quarterly World Literature Today. His authored books include: *Juan Carlos Onetti* (1977); *Questing Fictions: Latin America's Family Romance* (1987); *Columbus and the Ends of the Earth: Europe's Prophetic Rhetoric as Conquering Ideology* (1992); *The Other Writing: Postcolonial Essays in Latin America's Writing Culture* (1993) and *Memos from the Besieged City: Lifelines for Cultural Sustainability* (2011). He is co-editor of *Other Modernisms in An Age of Globalization* (2002); co-editor of the three-volume *Literary Cultures of Latin America: A Comparative History* (2004), of the six-volume *Longman Anthology of World Literature* (2004) and of *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (2011).

MANUEL BRONCANO RODRÍGUEZ

The Long History of "doublethink": A Response to Djelal Kadir's "Agnotology and the Know-Nothing Party: Then and Now"

Keywords: humanities, state control, ignorance, American Literature, World Literature, world culture, American Studies, Comparative Studies

Manuel Broncano (Ph. D. Salamanca 1990) is a Regents Professor of English at Texas A&M International University. He is currently the president of the International American Studies Association (IASA). Before moving to Texas, he taught for two decades at the University of León (Spain). Broncano has published a number of scholarly works on various American authors such as Flannery O'Connor, Willa Cather, Faulkner, Melville, Poe, etc. His latest book was released in 2014, *Religion in Cormac McCarthy's Fiction: Apocryphal Borderlands* (Routledge). Broncano has also kept an active agenda as translator. His latest translation is Giannina Braschi's *United States of Banana* (*Estados Unidos de Banana*, AmazonCrossing 2014).

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MARKHA VALENTA

Abandoning America the Better to Save American Studies: A Proposal

This paper argues that the most fruitful future for American Studies is one that subsumes it to global projects, critical sensibilities, political, intellectual and aesthetic fields greater than itself. Correspondingly, the prime referent of American Studies ought not to be a reified "America" but rather the paradoxes, tensions and contestations between democratic and inhumanely extractive relations that gave birth to and continue to shape the US/Americas, even as their reach and flow far exceed "America." The US—as icon, social field and political actor—is as much the effect as the source of global forces. The most important of these today are ones that qualify, selectively dissolve, concentrate and reconfigure constitutive elements of the nation-state and political geography. Taking this seriously—as the US follows in the footsteps of other countries that have been producing one chauvinist strongman leader after another—means making American Studies not about either "America" or the US but about the world. One particularly promising avenue entails scholarship engaging and contributing to a radical, globalizing democratic culture that is, in fact, deeply aligned with some of the most important traditions and sensibilities in American Studies itself.

Keywords: globalization, democracy, politics, America, American Studies

Markha Valenta is an interdisciplinary, transnational scholar at Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Her work addresses the globalization of identity politics since the late 19th century, with an emphasis on issues of religion, world cities, materiality and geopolitics. A second project concerns the politics of Muslim minorities in secular democracies. Her approach is comparative, dialogic and relational, focused on the US, the Netherlands and India. In addition, she writes regularly for openDemocracy and participates actively in Dutch public debates on related issues.

GIORGIO MARIANI

Subsuming "America" to the "Global." A Response to Markha Valenta's "Abandoning America the Better to Save America"

Keywords: transnational turn, American Studies, democracy, internationalization of American Studies, refocusing American studies, globalization

Giorgio Mariani is Professor of American Literature at the Sapienza University of Rome, where he chairs the Doctoral program in Scienze del Testo. He served as President of the International American Studies Association from 2011 to 2015. He is the author, editor, and co-editor of numerous volumes on American literature and culture. His essays and reviews have appeared in journals such as *American Literary History*, *Studies in American Fiction*, *Leviathan*, *Stephen Crane Studies*, *Letterature d'America*, *Nuova Corrente*, *RIAS—The Review of International American Studies*, and others. His latest book, *Waging War on War. Peacefighting in American Literature* was published in 2015 by the University of Illinois Press.

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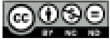

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RIAS Vol. 10, Spring–Summer, № 1/2017

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