

**THE
FUTURES OF
AMERICAN STUDIES**

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Futures

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The future . . . breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, presented, as a sort of monstrosity.—Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*

That is why I am unable to choose a single symbolic act to represent this most recent stage of the movement; our direction is so clearly paradoxical that no one can say just where we are now, let alone prophesy where we may be headed.—Gene Wise, "Paradigm Dramas in American Studies"

We have organized the various contributions to *The Futures of American Studies* within the context of an essay Gene Wise published over two decades ago. Perhaps the most frequently cited text on the history of the field, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement" (1979) attempts to assess the impact of social movements on the disciplinary and interdisciplinary formations of American studies and, in this, it serves as a crucial document for any project concerned with the temporalities of this twentieth-century interdisciplinary field.¹ Jay Mechling amply demonstrates the pertinence of the essay to conceptualizations of the future of American studies in his 1999 reevaluation of Wise in *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline*. For Mechling, "Paradigm Dramas" was an exercise in minor prophecy that opened the field to its "utopian" possibilities. He selected the following list of predictions from the essay as verifications of Wise's prescience: a pluralistic rather than a holistic approach to American culture, the rediscovery of the particular, the repudiation of American exceptionalism, and the rise of comparativist and cross-cultural approaches to American studies.² While the twenty-five years that have intervened make the present appear consistent with Wise's description of emergent futures, we are less invested in writing continuity with his essay—and thereby founding this *Futures* as the fulfillment of that past—than in examining the various strategies of temporal management through which "Paradigm Dramas" sought to negotiate the future.

Overall, Wise intended the phrase *paradigm dramas* to accomplish a range of disparate and overlapping functions: it would represent the field of Ameri-

can studies as involved in an ongoing conflict over its organizing schemas; it would continue what he called the reflexive turn that American studies had recently taken in the 1970s; and it would thereby provide guidance for the future course of the (inter)discipline. “When handling ideas in a cultural context,” Wise explained, Americanist scholars “have employed a ‘climate of opinion’ mode of explanation” (295). Insofar as this mode of understanding installed a relationship between the general culture and its particular components (ideas, individuals, or institutions), wherein the “particulars simply react” to the general, climate-of-opinion history proved “too rigidly hierarchical” to do justice to the “experience of our own fragmented culture” (296). To replace this metaphor drawn from the weather, Wise turned to keywords from the theatrical world. “Paradigm dramas” viewed “historical ideas not as ‘enveloped’ by their surrounding climates, but rather as a sequence of dramatic acts—acts which play on wider cultural scenes, or historical stages” (296). In this way, Wise put into service terms that advanced the dynamic aspects of the emergent field while recasting the entire history of American studies as the outcome of the monumental actions performed by exemplary figures such as Vernon Parrington, the founder of the American studies movement, and Perry Miller, the founder of the academic field. The collaboration between the movement Parrington represented and the academic discourse Miller fashioned to represent the movement’s imperatives shaped the institutional boundaries, objects of study, and methods of analysis of the field of American studies. As the effects of “offering a way to create order and direction from masses of disparate materials on the whole history of American experience” (298), the founders’ respective “paradigm dramas” lay claim to the power to conjoin the disparate purposes of the American studies movement with the scholarly imperatives of an academic field.

“Paradigm Dramas” must thus be understood not simply as a history of the field, but as a founding gesture. Like most founding gestures, this one gave monumental status to an origin retrospectively invoked, thereby giving the past authority over the contours of the present in a management strategy that seemed aimed to contextualize, if not override, the present threat of rupture and incoherence. In so doing, Wise sought to repair the conceptual ground of a field whose fissuring into multiple programs and subfields at once reflected and gave expression to the aspirations of social movements that had exceeded the “founding” field’s epistemological grasp. The canonical objects of analysis, protocols of reading them, and the interpretive narratives that had secured Wise’s field identity were brought into the ambit of the crisis he

diagnosed. In the wake of this encounter, Wise strained to invent a paradigmatic drama that would enable him to feel at home in any of the possible trajectories of the emergent field. That this effort would fail is certain from the outset, as the project of identifying with the field’s formative past at the very moment of its passing writes the present as subordinate, because always in reference, to the temporal priority of the origin. The reproductive mechanics of the past thus function to ward off through incorporation into temporal order the threat of present and future dissolution. This does not mean that Wise could accurately be labeled a conservative, though it is to say that in generating a coherent past for the field, he made history the foundation for managing the temporal uncertainty that diversification brought to both the nation and the field.

From our perspective, then, Wise’s prescience was tempered by his inability to locate a coherent identification with any of the alternative futures made possible by social movements, and hence the utopian possibilities Meching notes were not simply undercut, but in some sense foreclosed precisely at the moment when Wise seemed to open the future to a range of possibilities (what Wise called the “diversification” of the field [319]). But countering Wise’s project at this late date is not finally the point. We are more interested in examining the implications of the unacknowledged drama we have begun to chart than in arguing with any of the essay’s substantive claims. This drama involved Wise’s anxieties over the recognition that the field would not reproduce any of the paradigms that he characterized as representative of the American studies movement. The temporal crisis of his essay (and the problematic of time that his paradigmatic desire most powerfully demonstrates) provides a space for thinking about the anxiety over futurity that *America* as a nationalist icon and *American studies* as a field formation both evince. Wise’s paradoxical desire to escape the crisis that he believed pervaded the field of American studies and at the same time to reshape the field within the essay’s paradigmatic scenarios turned “Paradigm Dramas” into what Michel Foucault has called a heterotopia. Foucault proposed that a heterotopia be understood as different from—and to constitute an alternative to—utopia in that it occupied a special type of space, one to make new and different sense of all other spaces.³ It is Wise’s heterotopic desire to avert the cognitive impasse that the new interdisciplinary formations had precipitated within the field of American studies which brings certain passages in the essay into intimate proximity with what might be called the temporally uncanny dimensions of his heterotopia. These untimely passages, as we will

call them, do not belong to the historical moment of the essay's composition, but produce instead the conditions of possibility for reconsidering the temporal problematic of futurity both for and within American studies as a field. It is in this sense that we understand the present volume as part of an unfinished encounter with the emergence of futurity that Wise's essay provoked.⁴ Our title thematizes this concern by organizing a range of critical meditations as orientations toward the futures of American studies, thereby exploiting what, following Foucault, we might call the heterochronic potentials of "Paradigm Dramas."⁵

It is Wise's correlation of the field's paradigmatic social drama with a form of history making as futurity that discloses our somewhat perverse rationale for linking essays in this volume on the futures of American studies to "Paradigm Dramas." Insofar as the essays collected here are constituted out of knowledges that were unincorporable to Wise, each essay inhabits a possible future that Wise's claim for the priority of a monumental past functioned to foreclose. Moreover, while our essays differ among themselves in their assumptions about the present status of American studies and in their speculations about the future, individually and collectively they call into question Wise's attempt to represent the field's history (and thereby to manage its futures) in terms of the dramatic unfolding of field-integrating paradigms. The contributors to this volume do not assume that the field of American studies is reducible to the dimensions of a single overarching paradigm, nor do they think that the genealogy of the field can be adequately described as a struggle to predominate among conflicting paradigms. These essays thus wager the futures of Wise's present as the productive present of a field whose organization of objects of study, critical histories, and methodologies have not been brought into coherent order with either the recent past of social movement or the field's retrospectively constituted origins.

In setting *The Futures of American Studies* in the context of Wise's account of the field's disposition in 1979, then, we hope to produce the present dispositions of American studies out of the futures that Wise had foreclosed in the past. Insofar as the essays here deliver the future mutations of American studies from a past mode of representation in which it was incubating, they transform the defensive strategies expressive of Wise's future fears into the portals through which alternative futures will have entered American studies.⁵ To explicate the inextricable connections that we adduce between the futures of American studies and Wise's strategies of temporal foreclosure, we want to provide a deeper consideration of his strategies before discussing the essays in this volume. The introduction is divided into sections devoted to

considerations of Wise's strategies of temporal management, of the untimely moments in Wise's essay in which futurity emerged at the paradoxical sites of its foreclosure, and of the present futures of American studies as a field.

Paradigm Trauma

"Paradigm Dramas" is overtly cast by Wise as a critical journey "back over the history of American studies during the course of the twentieth century" in order to consider the two questions that he locates as definitive of the field: "What imperatives are there in the larger American culture and social structure, and in the culture and social structure of academe, which have made possible the quest for an integrating 'American Studies'?" and "How have these imperatives changed over time?" (294–95). As this opening suggests, Wise is not primarily concerned with challenging the ideal of an "integrating" American studies but with the ways in which social and academic pressures have affected the field's self-defining quest. His notion of "representative acts" and "paradigm dramas" are the means through which he will chart changing imperatives in order to "crystallize possibilities for integrated American Studies in each stage of the movement's history" (295).

Wise's staging of the history of the field begins prior to its academic institutionalization, which underlies in part the force of the word *movement* that defines it implicitly as a knowledge project more expansive than the academic field. Its representative act is characterized as a "revolt against formalism" and is embodied in the lifework of Vernon Louis Parrington, whose 1927 *Main Currents in American Thought* inaugurated the intellectual history paradigm that would define, through a series of elaborations, American studies until the mid-1960s (298). For Wise, Parrington is the intellectual founder of American studies because of the way he forged "an immensely usable past . . . usable not just in the obvious sense of making the past relevant to urgencies of the present . . . [but] also in offering a way to create order and direction from masses of disparate materials on the whole history of American experience. In this sense, he demonstrated in his scholarship how an integrating 'American Studies' might be done" (298). Parrington as a representative figure is critical, Wise writes, to "this pre-institutional stage of American Studies because he did it almost all alone" (300). By this, Wise is referring to the fact that Parrington never earned more than a B.A. and was turned away from Harvard for doctoral work in his mid-thirties because of his age. His monumental study, *Main Currents*, was a decade in the making and

made it to print through happenstance, not the securities of scholarship supported by academic institutions. As “a passionate mind encountering a dynamic world, sans the mediating forms of convention,” Parrington is cast as an outsider whose dramatic quest to articulate “what American experience is like” made possible the emergent consensus among scholars in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s concerning the field (298, 300).

Wise’s second representative act, which brings with it new contexts and imperatives for an integrating American studies, is embodied in the figure of Perry Miller, cast as the founder of American studies as an academic enterprise. For Wise, Miller’s now famous “jungle epiphany” in *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956) evinced “the urge to impose form upon experience, to seize upon the American past and insist that it answer questions he is driven to ask of it” (302). As with Parrington, the quality of mind at work at integrating American experience was not conventional: “It is the human drive . . . to explain things, to make one’s own experience, and the world around that experience, comprehensible” (303). But unlike Parrington, Miller experienced institutional prestige, claiming a “coveted professorship at Harvard” where the first Ph.D. in the history of American civilization was awarded in 1940 (to Henry Nash Smith) by the program Miller helped to found (303). By 1947, Wise tells us, “more than 60 institutions were offering undergraduate majors in the field,” and American studies as a whole was organized intellectually by a “substantive consensus on the nature of American experience, and a methodological consensus on ways to study that experience” (306). The key aspects of this consensus paradigm, what Wise named the “intellectual history synthesis,” included the following assumptions: 1) that there is an “American mind”; 2) that what distinguishes this mind is its “localization in the ‘New World’”; 3) that while the mind can be found in “anyone American,” its greatest expression is in “the country’s leading thinkers—Williams, Edwards, Franklin, Cooper, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Twain, Dewey, Niebuhr, et al.”; 4) that the mind’s enduring form is expressed in a set of recurrent themes: “Puritanism, Individualism, Progress, Pragmatism, Transcendentalism, Liberalism”; and 5) that while the study of the popular is important, “America is revealed most profoundly in its ‘high’ culture” (306–7). Wise is careful to assert that this consensus was not programmatic, in the sense that scholars were not forced to conform to its accepted meanings—“total conformity is not required for a communal paradigm to function” (307).

With the intellectual history synthesis thus operating as a paradigm that expresses both free intellectual inquiry and the spirit of the American mind

encountering and shaping all things “new,” Wise turns to the third stage of the movement’s history, the consolidation of consensus into the myth-symbol school, “the decade and a half following 1950” that “look like the ‘Golden Years’ of the movement” (308). Wise tempers the simplicity of this retrospective coherence by pointing out the corporate nature of American studies in this postwar era, marking it as the turning point for a fully insular academicization of the movement’s project. His representative act is a seminar taught by Robert Spiller and Thomas Cochran at the University of Pennsylvania which focused on twentieth-century American cultural values. American Civilization 900 was supported by a five-year \$150,000 Carnegie Corporation grant and was ultimately a kind of failure, with “too much organized activity and too much diffused prestige ever to focus down on its basic task—bringing together perspectives from history, literature, and social science to explain values in twentieth-century America” (309). As American studies expanded with corporate backing, the national movement did so as well, with the founding in 1949 of *American Quarterly*, and two years later the American Studies Association as a national professional body.

For Wise, it is the institutional structure of increased corporatism that tempers his affection for this stage of the field’s history, not a skepticism concerning the content of the enterprise still defined as the extrapolation of the intellectual history synthesis put into play by Parrington. By defining the underbelly of the “Golden Years” in this way—as the structural transformation of scholarship—Wise turns to the fourth stage of his history, which has all the hallmarks of a “depressing story” (317):

By the middle of the 1960s . . . the intellectual history synthesis which had served American Studies so well for so long was shattered; and academies across the country were threatened by forces which charged them with being bastions of reaction, not a haven for free, inquiring minds. Similarly, many saw American Studies not as a vanguard movement on the frontiers of scholarship—the movement’s prior image of itself—but as an overtly timid and elitist white Protestant male enterprise which tended to reinforce the dominant culture rather than critically analyzing it. (312–13)

In this, the “‘coming apart’ stage of American Studies,” the representative act is Culture Therapy 202, a course taught by Robert Merideth at Miami University (312–13). Cast against Parrington’s and Miller’s “dramatic personal gestures” to explicate American culture and Spiller’s and Cochran’s corporate institutionalism, which nonetheless hoped to “articulate that culture, not basically to criticize it,” Merideth symbolized the introduction of a

negative critical project, one that positioned the American studies scholar antagonistically in relation to the field's self-defining object of study (312). With critique now a centerpiece of American studies, Wise simultaneously describes and laments the consequences of cultural trauma when "emotional searing events like assassinations and riots" and "gigantic institutions . . . wreak havoc on people's lives" (314). It "was hard to assume without question," he writes, "that America is an integrated whole; division and conflict, not consensus, seemed to characterize the culture. . . . Hence we have seen, since the mid-sixties, a proliferation of subcultural studies focusing on one or another aspect of American life" (314). Viewed from this perspective, "American Studies has been in decline ever since" (314).

Wise does not end his history here, however, but seeks to define the characteristics of the present and its paradoxical possibilities for the field's future. To a certain extent, the last part of his essay works to resist the "depressing story" he has told about the undoing of the American studies movement by forms of social revolt that radically challenged what we tend to call today (though Wise did not) the nationalist project of the field's golden years: "[A] case can be made that measuring the movement through indices of growth and energy and activity, American Studies has never been stronger and healthier" (317). By growth, Wise means the proliferation of American studies programs; by energy and activity, he is referring to the vitality of the American Studies Association, which in 1967 began to hold national (as opposed to regional) conferences. Nonetheless, Wise offers no representative act to define the present; the "coming apart" stage of the 1960s is followed instead by a "direction [that] is so clearly paradoxical that no one can say just where we are now" (317). With this, Wise sounds his sour notes once again before a final attempt to move forward:

American Studies today lacks a single synthesis with the influence, say, of the old symbol-myth-image explanation. It also lacks any clear consensus on a "usable" American past. Hence intellectually the last decade has brought disintegration in the movement. But if in one sense dis-integration means decline, in another sense it may mean simply diversification. . . . We are less inclined now to take readings from a single vantage point on *The American experience*; instead, we look upon American from a variety of different, often competing, perspectives. (319)

The present is thus for Wise without a coherent order—it fails to embody the very historical paradigm of singular figures and representative acts that he

used to define the field's past. Positioned now as a witness to the disintegration of the paradigm he has called into being, he turns in the essay's final section toward what we call the emergent aspects of the field that have come to render the work of the first three stages marginal in their contemporary currency.

This new trajectory is broadly signified by the term *American culture studies*, which, like the more coherent stages Wise defines, features a fraternity of scholars who comprise its ranks and define its intellectual and institutional predilections. Wise credits the emergence of new understandings of culture with an institutional relocation of the field's training and scholarship from Harvard to Penn. Bruce Kuklick's 1972 critique in *American Quarterly*, "Myth and Symbol in American Studies," ushers in an "essentially negative" project: "He dis-assembled humanistic symbol-myth-image assumptions, but he advanced no alternative assumptions—humanistic or otherwise—to take their place" (320). Kuklick's work was built on by his colleague Gordon Kelly, who returned to arguments about method in American studies in order to develop more social scientifically oriented protocols for study in the field. This shifted the humanistic focus on literature and its specific articulation of high culture to new methodological grounds, decentering the author, the canon, and ideals of homogeneity in favor of explorations of the social as a structure dependent on context, the popular, and the everyday. The "'new ethnography' of the seventies" thus featured "every person [as] a culture bearer" and drew attention to the ways in which American experience was itself constituted out of a range of cultural activities and materials (323, 324).

In addition to the "concern for anthropological definitions of culture [and an] emphasis on social structures," Wise also defined a "'reflexive' temper" as a central characteristic of emergent American studies work (331–32). This reflexivity is best characterized in the intellectual and institutional labor of Jay Mechling, who studied at Penn and would become a leader in the American studies program at the University of California, Davis. Along with Robert Merideth and David Wilson, Mechling helped to design a new kind of curricular structure for the field; their published statement, "American Culture Studies: The Discipline and the Curriculum," won the *American Quarterly* award for the journal's best essay in 1973. The Davis group, as Wise calls them, was critical of the institutional position occupied by most American studies projects (then totally reliant on the disciplines, most often literature or history, for faculty and curricular support) and sought instead to become their own permanent programmatic or departmental site. In addition to his role in

redefining the institutional aspiration of the field, Mechling also chaired the standing committee of the ASA responsible for the annual bibliographic issues of *American Quarterly*: "More than any other single forum, the bibliographical issues have stimulated critical self-consciousness in the movement," Wise writes before listing the many new topics that the forums handled, including "film studies, American Indian studies, above-ground archaeology, folklore, women's studies, autobiography, still photography, structuralism, drama, Afro-American Studies" (329). In a crucial way, Mechling stands as a key figure in Wise's delineation of the fruitful possibilities of a new American studies; while not a representative figure, Mechling can nonetheless stake Wise's desire to guarantee the field's proliferation—its extension into futurity—through institutional autonomy and academic legitimacy, even if the content of the emergent field cannot yet be organized into a stage making intellectual synthesis.

This does not mean, of course, that Wise has given up on synthesis altogether. The implicit shift in his investments from a lineage of great thinkers to an autonomous American studies as an interdisciplinary endeavor revives some of the history that his essay so anxiously brought into being in order not to lose. It does this by offering him a way to reclaim the centrality of the critical mind and the possibility of interdisciplinarity as a form of integration. American culture studies requires, he writes, a "different quality of mind, a connecting mind which can probe beyond the immediacy of the situation to search for everything which rays out beyond it. Such a connecting imagination is precisely what integrating culture studies, at their best, are structured to encourage" (336). Thus returning on new ground to some of the very self-defining features of American studies from which he began, Wise can reaffirm his production of history as central to futurity by writing the implications of the social movements as reclamations of the past: "Finally, the quest for subcultural 'roots' of the last few years has resensitized Americans to the inescapable power of the past—has emphasized that a people which presumes to outrun its history never does so in fact. . . . Several in the movement seem more inclined now to take sounding on their own past as a means of identifying what American Studies is, and envisioning where it may be heading" (336). In this, his essay's final move, Wise refuses to encounter the futures brought into being that would challenge his identifications with the field's past by bringing the past—as a coherent form and referent—to mark the meaning of both the present and the future. Time as an unruly force that can circumvent both movement and futurity is thus managed—and in more ways, as we will show, than one.

Time Control

There is no future and we are in it.—unknown author, Graffiti

In its affective dimension, "Paradigm Dramas" possessed affinities with more recent expressions of what the Australian critic Meaghan Morris has provocatively called future fear—"the fear that most speculation about the future to which I could ever have access is 'academic' in the sense that society as I know it will likely collapse, or be transformed unimaginably, within my lifetime."⁶ Morris is concerned that the time scholars take to reflect about the future will always lag behind the speed of its eventuation and lack the cognitive wherewithal to accommodate the gigantic dimensions that the future has recently been made to assume—the millennium, the new world order, the epoch of globalization. Wise's anxieties differ from Morris's, however, in that they are not merely speculative but give reference to an academic field that had already been "transformed unimaginably" within his lifetime. Wise had encountered futurity as what was nonsynchronous with the time kept by the field and nonsymbolizable in its terms. An absent cause that could only be experienced in its devastating effects, futurity named, for Wise, what hurt.

Hence, his account of the field's past grandeur constituted an effort to mitigate his anxieties over the loss of temporal control and a defensive reaction against uncertainty. In the guise of providing an accurate description of the field's genealogy, the essay afforded him the occasion to struggle for symbolic control over the temporality that would usher in future organizations of the field. Take, for instance, the following passage:

With the demise of the Parrington paradigm, the movement has lacked a larger cultural synthesis, an image of a "usable" American past to lend it purpose and direction. Where the old synthesis got intellectual mileage from setting America off against Europe—New World against Old—*now we tend to see* both America and Europe on one side of a cultural and economic chasm, with the poorer, often newer, nations of the world on the other. Seen from this vantage point, America does not look as new and innocent, as idealistic, as pragmatic as it once did. Thus American Studies is deprived of its previous fascination with watching a freshly-born culture as, Adam-like, it goes about creating and naming and using new things in the world. (314–15; emphasis added)

Throughout this passage, Wise experiences the future in its effects on the field it has superseded, which means that he views the emergent in terms of

its catastrophic challenge to the paradigm it is displacing. Vernon Parrington's model of the usable past has toppled over like a fallen idol. The American Adam, along with the immense signifying machine through which the myth-symbol school made sense of the changes in his new world, have also undergone semiotic depletion within the landscape that they had formerly brought into symbolic order. In witnessing the destruction of the mythological figure out of whose symbols and images his field identity had been formed, Wise encounters the future's dismantling of his integrative powers: "Seen from this vantage point, America does not look as new and innocent, as idealistic, as pragmatic as it once did" (315).

In negotiating his way through the field's potential decline, Wise does not so much come to identify with the emergent as constrain it from within the foundational assumptions of the paradigm it has displaced. For instance, in describing the past perfect of America's innocence and newness, Wise personifies the organizing logic of the vanishing perspective and casts its affect as quintessential loss: "American Studies is deprived of its previous fascination with watching a freshly-born culture" (315). The emergent critique cannot alter the status of the new as foundational for American studies as a field; it can only deprive the field of that enabling perspective. Even the phrase "now we tend to see," which ostensibly describes his adoption of the emergent visual standpoint toward American things, restricts that position to an unwanted tendency. Wise's rhetorical strategy throughout the passage works to represent what "we" now see from the standpoint of what "we" now lack, which orders the relationship between the emergent and the residual antagonistically, as a contest between temporally contentious visual positions. The perspective from which Wise visualizes American studies as in decline cannot coincide with the viewpoint from which "now we tend to see both America and Europe" (314). The latter viewpoint cannot inhabit the same visual field that permitted the former view (that American studies has been in decline) without one or the other undergoing a corrective revision. The field can only be represented as in decline if "we" regarded American studies' previous vision as progressive. In sighting the emergent from the perspective it would displace, Wise paradoxically deploys the field perspective to which he can never return at the very instant of its critical demise. In this way, he retains the authority of the displaced paradigm in his anxious confrontation with a future that threatens not simply to eradicate it, but to lose all purpose and direction for American studies in the process.

Having thus described the transmutation of the field into an afterimage of its previous identity, Wise provides an account of the effects of this loss on

the field's positioning among the disciplines: "Pursuing further this declension theme, we can say that, unquestionably, American Studies is no longer working on the frontiers of scholarship. During the fifties and early sixties, symbol-myth-image scholarship came uniquely out of an American Studies perspective, and it influenced scholars in traditional disciplines too, particularly in intellectual history and in literary history. Very little of that is happening with American Studies now" (315). Here, Americanist knowledge is precisely what the emergent field can no longer know. The time of American studies—the historical time in which it flourished and its immanent structure of the repetition of the same—has been displaced. It has not been fulfilled or renovated; it has been displaced by a form of temporality that will not take place (i.e., become new) in its terms. The trauma that the loss of a paradigm for the present engenders is thus informed by two kinds of temporal splittings: between the past and the present as a continuous relation to the future; and between the present and the future as a coherent template for identity production. In his inability to found a paradigmatic identity for the future orientations of the field, Wise remains a spectral alterity within the emergent field of American studies.

While our analysis of Wise's rhetorical employment of a field-forming perspective provides the means for discerning his anxiety over futurity, it is just as important to read "'Paradigm Drannas'" as deeply anxious about the status of the past. Indeed, the essay struggled to conserve the past against the very charges that the emergent "subcultural" formations brought to bear on it.⁷ For Wise, such charges—of elitism, masculinism, corporatism, and racism—were nearly unutterable as issues generated by the intellectual history synthesis that his essay made foundational for the field. Instead, he shifts to the register of academic institutionalization, defining the corporatization of American studies in the 1950s as the political beginning of the field's radical end. The following passage is especially illuminating as an example of Wise's strategy of casting the underside of the golden years in institutional terms and thereby preserving the intellectual project of the field from a sustaining critique by the emergent knowledges of the sixties:

Perhaps because people in American Studies often fancy themselves "American Adams" (and now "Eves") . . . Americanists still tended to see themselves in the image of a Parrington—that is, lone intellectual adventurers freed by a personal vision of the culture, and driven to put scholarly form on that vision. This vision is not wholly false. *Virgin Land* and *The American Adam* and *The Jacksonian Persuasion* and *The Machine in the Garden* are all passionately personal books; they are not intended as simply objective "contributions" to corporate

knowledge. Yet the social and economic structure of American scholarship had been fundamentally transformed since the days of Parrington, and those who still envisioned themselves isolated "American Adams" by the 1950s and 60s were largely deceived. (310)

The temporal displacements that Wise here effects are striking: he locates the status of Parrington as a model available to that ever belated woman, "Eve," who can constitute a part of the American collective "now" through an identification with those "lone intellectual adventurers," even as that vision of American culture studies has been undermined by changes in the structure of American scholarship in those decades in which the very social consciousness of Eve was on the cusp of its collective articulation. In this way, Wise manages the past perfect of Parrington, whose exemplary vision and individualism—his quintessential American Adamness—needs to be preserved against (because it can already stand as the model for) the incursion of other historical demands, other forms of critical collective recognition.

The incorporation of Eve at the moment of delineating the rotten underside of the golden years functions symptomatically in a history designed to delineate the "vision" and "passionately personal" from the "corporate." Hence, the field's origins are preserved as definitively separate from the appropriations of the nationalist apparatus of the Cold War university, which is to say that, for Wise, there is nothing critically amiss about the intellectual history synthesis, with its masculine adventurers, that would inspire its appropriation by state and corporate forces in the period after World War II. Most tellingly, this shift from intellectual formation to institutional context enables him to suggest, however implicitly, that the anti-institutional forces of social movement that emerged in the 1960s were resuscitations of Parrington's individualist and alienated anti-institutional position that founded American studies as an intellectual movement. While Wise cannot define the sub-cultural formations of American studies in any way that can incorporate within them his identifications with the field, he nonetheless manages to narrate the field's origins in such a way that they appear internally resistant to "subcultural" knowledge as intellectual critique. When Wise looked to the Davis group and to the possibility of an institutionally autonomous academic project for American studies, severed from its reliance on the disciplines and capable of sustaining its object of study on its own, so to speak, his failure to render social movements as knowledge was complete.

Masquerading as an objective description of the field, then, Wise's "Para-

digm Dramas'" constituted an encompassing project of boundary management that assumed the form of attempting to establish control over the future of the field. Its putative capacity to synchronize the field's entire history within an encompassing drama was a compensatory mechanism designed to make up for the loss of the field's integrative powers. In representing the changes in the field's history in terms of paradigm dramas, Wise regulated the temporal dynamics of both social and disciplinary change.

The Shock of Futurity

The futurity Wise seeks to control entails a revision of the field and of the nation that would undermine, in its seeming negativity, the critical assumptions on which Wise's own generational identifications were borne. In place of the nostalgic representation of the field's past as dedicated to independent thought and a synthesizing methodological modality, the new social movements introduce, as we delineate in this section, a counter-history that cannot be employed as the next stage of a progressive narrative of American studies as a radical individual or intellectual movement.⁸ To the extent that Wise tries at his essay's end to find a potential heir (Jay Mechling) who can connect some of the impulses of the founding stages to the sixties and thus provide a positive and continuous future, he reproduces the forms of canonical history making that the academic institutionalization of social movements would so fervently contest. From this perspective, Mechling's 1999 return to Wise's "Paradigm Dramas'" in a collection on the "evolution" of American studies as a discipline confirms the one version of the future that Wise's essay found possible—a version that would substitute the now lost synthesis of American experience with an institutionalized project whose disciplinary history would keep the lost synthesis alive as origin, as the founding principle. History in this sense rescues the past from the present, while the institutionalization of American studies as a discipline provides the mechanism for ensuring that Wise's version of the past would have a permanent futurity. Wise's "'Paradigm Dramas'" must thus be understood as history making in the most profound sense, and in this it has deep ties to the field formation that Wise inherited and that the sixties seemed by 1975 to have radically redressed.

The American studies in which Wise received his training named the academic site where the disciplines of literature, history, politics, sociology, and government were assigned the task of both studying and understanding

the United States' geopolitical boundaries. Often referred to today as "exceptionalist" in its conceptual orientation, the field operated by spatializing assumptions drawn from the realm of international politics in which the United States was represented as a circumscribed territory. At the same time, it temporalized these assumptions within the narrative of the nation's history as autonomous and liberatory. American literature and American history tended to homogenize the popular memory that they also produced, and literature and history departments supplied the institutional sites wherein the field of American studies collaborated with the press, the university system, the publishing industry, and other aspects of the cultural apparatus that managed the semantic field and policed the significance of such value-laden terms as *the nation* and *the people*. The myth-symbol school of American studies was central to this formation, generating an imaginary homogeneity out of discrepant life worlds. In proposing that every moment of historical time constituted the occasion for the potential repetition of the sacred time of the nation's founding, the national mythos supplied the means of producing what Benedict Anderson has called the empty homogeneous time of the imagined national community.⁹ The national mythology's endless repetition of the moment of the nation's founding produced the basic unit of "progress," which the processes of "Americanization" at home and abroad were implicitly made to "universalize."

At once a mode of inquiry, an object of knowledge, and an ideological rationale, the transdisciplinary reach of the myth-symbol school traversed academic disciplines and claimed the power to integrate their incompatible knowledges within a single interdisciplinary agenda. This interdisciplinary formation was constructed in reaction against what its practitioners described as the fragmentation of knowledge accompanying specialized academic disciplines. Thus the logic of the nation as a knowable whole was grafted onto the concept of interdisciplinarity as it was made to serve a unifying function. Through an interdisciplinary approach, Americanists used the myth-symbol school to rework daily life into images encouraging belief in the isomorphism of the sovereign people, U.S. territory, and national culture. The knowledges produced thus served the ever increasing needs of a centralized state apparatus.

By the late 1960s, the aspiration for radical social transformation produced within the new social movements led to the repudiation of the American studies movement precisely for its complicit identification with the exceptionalist state apparatus that the field purported to interpret. The radical democratic discourses developed within the feminist, civil rights, and gay and

lesbian movements of the 1960s dramatically reshaped the nation's social and political landscape. Arguing that their task was to break the constraints of an enveloping imperial culture, architects of the sixties counterculture moved away from the privileged standpoints provided by myth-symbol and other unifying paradigms to reveal the field's internal critical limits. These movements thereby involved American studies in a project of reformulation, one that resulted in a reconfiguration of its intellectual position within the academy. It is that reconfiguration that generates for Wise a crisis over futurity as the older exemplary acts and unifying paradigms are hobbled in the face of certain disintegrating social impulses.

As is now well known, the academic response to these movements resulted in the formation of interdisciplinary fields, disciplinary subfields, and academic programs that refused either to accede to American studies' dominant assumptions or to be reduced to its categories. These academic fields emerged at the intersections of a range of critiques: of feminism by women of color, of heterosexist liberalism by gay and lesbian activists, and of U.S. imperialism by both antiwar and third-world activists. Challenging education as a specific form of citizen construction and normative cultural reproduction, proponents of these movements formed programs in the 1970s to register their critique, resulting in the (uneven) proliferation of African American studies, Latino/a studies, Asian American studies, Native American studies, gay and lesbian studies, and women's studies. Each of these fields challenged the hegemonic understanding of objects of study, identities, and scholarship that had predominated, bringing pressure to bear on the belief that American studies comprised a unitary field of knowledge. They demanded that American studies be construed as a critical and self-reflexive rather than as a normative category. As a consequence of these challenges, professors of American studies could no longer un-self-consciously claim to do justice to their subject without critically evaluating the field's role in the reproduction of social and economic inequalities. Members of American studies and participants in these movements thus engaged in a relationship of negative reciprocity: scholars in emergent identity-based (inter)disciplines defined themselves and their projects against those of establishment American studies and vice versa. As a consequence, American studies became the Other against which cutting-edge scholarship was to be defined, and national identity movements and anti-imperial discourses became the Other the field excluded to effect coherence. As we have discussed, Wise tellingly described this moment as the "coming apart" stage of the American studies movement.

If we understand the drama of Wise's essay as a struggle to regulate the

field's conceptual order, we might read its symbolic action as an attempt to persuade members of the emergent interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary discourses to reorganize themselves in the normative image of members of a paradigm community—or risk the abandonment of a coherent future. After all, Wise's history of the field, parsed into four paradigmatic moments, is itself a form of pedagogical instruction about the relation between the modalities of movement and academic institutionalization. Parrington's act of founding American studies as a social movement was followed by Miller's institutionalization of the American studies movement as the myth-symbol paradigm. Against this celebratory interaction came the third and fourth stages: the American Studies Association's consolidation of the field into a professional enterprise, and the crisis precipitated by the social reaction directed against that enterprise. In staging the institutional history of the field in this way, Wise represented the challenges that new social movements posed to the future organization of the field as a recapitulation of the paradigmatic relationship between the social movement Parrington organized and the myth-symbol paradigm with which Miller transformed it into an academic field. According to the temporal logic underwriting this dramatic turn of events, Miller's paradigm retroactively transformed the social imperatives of Parrington's movement into the objects of study and methods of analysis of the field of American studies. The symbolic action of the essay thus works to position the criticism which activist scholars directed against the field of American studies as a repetition of the field's foundational antagonisms. The field crisis in Wise's present was thus transformed into an event that had already taken place at the time of the field's institutionalization, and hence the historical transformation then taking place was symbolically suspended so that the shock of different futures could be contained in the repetition of the field's founding.

Untimely Passages

Insofar as Wise's essay constituted an effort to recover the use value of the past, it might be understood as having performed the work of producing a temporal common sense for the field of American studies. The temporal dynamic of its hegemonizing discourse reaffirmed progressive models from the past as the precondition for the reproduction of the present in the future. Wise recognized the challenges that heterogeneous movements posed to the

ideology of U.S. progress underwriting the temporal logic of the field. That is why the temporality out of which Wise reorganized the field's history denied these socially transformative projects any standing within the field's history. Despite his having refused them the right to become present within the terms of his drama, however, Wise nevertheless felt the temporal pressure they exerted. Indeed, Wise's very efforts to assimilate their field-transformative modes of eventuation within the temporal contours of his consensual dramas led to his encounters with temporalities that the field could not synchronize. It is toward these nonsynchronous temporalities that we now turn.

In the following passage, for instance, the futurity that "'Paradigm Dramas'" refused to represent (as in, 'to make present in the present') happened—as the social movements produce a generalized force of eventfulness that traversed the entire field: "Hence we have seen, since the mid-sixties, a proliferation of subcultural studies focusing on one or another aspect of American life. But we have very little of wide influence in the movement attempting like the old symbol-myth-image works, to integrate the whole culture. Intellectually American Studies has never recovered from the earthquake-like jolts of the sixties, and the consciousness those events forced upon the culture" (314). This passage constitutes a struggle over the control of the productive and reproductive functions of American studies and, by implication, over the legitimate definition of U.S. society. As a strategy of time control, Wise might be understood here to mobilize a hegemonic understanding of the disputed terrain of American studies by making the differences represented by social movements into subcultural "aspect[s] of American life" and thereby incorporating subcultural studies within the relations of domination and subordination that had previously organized the field. This reading would be predicated on the fact that the passage leaves unaddressed the material conditions of inequality which the relations of subcultural to cultural inevitably reproduce. Hence, the shared assumptions that produced the continuity of the field now effectively silence (indeed continue to silence) critical interrogation of the social structure's asymmetries of power and their resulting economic and social inequalities. The silence can be identified as a set of values that, on the one hand, deny social divisions and, on the other, identify them as being natural and inevitable. Thus positioned within the institutional boundaries of American studies as "subcultural studies," these alternative disciplinary formations were made to share the values, attitudes, and norms of the dominant—if not directly then at least in their categorical subordination to an aspect of American life.

As an instance of untimely passages, however, the passage opens up radically different temporalities. For when he depicts the crisis that subcultural studies effected within the field in terms of “earthquake-like jolts,” thereby returning to the metaphor of weather that he previously rejected, Wise finds in the forces of nature a language for describing what remains nameless from within the paradigmatic dramas used to cast the intellectual history and shape of the field. Unpredictable, without origin, but temporally disruptive, the subcultural traverses the field and shakes its foundation. Such seismic changes mutate into multiple interruptions of the temporality through which the field had formerly measured its progress. These subcultural formations do not “progress,” however, they proliferate and, in this, their disruptive temporalities are productive of altogether different futures at the sites of their emergence. Unable to take place within the temporal register through which Wise regulated the field, futurity becomes associated, in affect if not always in Wise’s narration, with the past’s self-shattering. But this is not the whole of it. For as that which could not become present within the field’s available representations, the forces that these field movements put into play carried with them temporalities that were nonsynchronous with the field’s contemporaneity. Because they multiplied into subcultures rather than reproducing themselves within the dominant paradigm, their disruptive temporalities literally interfered with the continuation of the field. The utopian possibility that Meckling notes takes place here, where the subcultures’ powers of proliferation exceeded Wise’s ambit of control, proliferating beyond the limits of his strategy of temporal management.

At another important moment in his essay, the chronology authorizing Wise’s drama shows signs of alternative knowledge by exceeding the limits of the territorial imaginary that underwrote the myth-symbol school of American studies’s golden years. As Wise described it, the golden age fulfilled the intellectual imperatives of the field’s origins and lasted from its academic founding until the mid-sixties. During these years, American studies worked at “the frontiers of academic scholarship” by encroaching on the boundaries of other academic disciplines and reshaping their projects into the inclusive metaphors of the myth-symbol school (315). It was able to accomplish this work because of a limitation inherent to academic disciplines. Traditional academic disciplines establish a set of rules out of which they produce a regulated order of knowledge and authorize specific practices through which that order can be regulated, even as they may lack the overarching rationale that American studies eagerly supplied. But in the following passage, the field

is described as having come unmoored from the bounded territorial imaginary on whose frontiers it formerly accomplished its encroachments and to have lost the rationale through which it assimilated other disciplines to the national telos. Such unmooring precipitates an untimely convergence between academic field and social movement:

In scholarship, we have become something of a “parasite” field—living off the creations of others. . . . We do this in two different ways. In some cases, we draw from new work in the traditional disciplines—from the discipline of history, for example, we draw from family studies, demography, community studies, and, more generally, from social history; from literature, we draw from autobiography and structuralism; from anthropology, we draw also from structuralism, cognitive anthropology, techniques of field work, and remnants of culture-personality analysis. In other cases, American Studies has drawn from, or rather given a home to, studies which have their real base of vitality in the culture at large. This is particularly true of women’s studies, perhaps the most vital and interesting new field in the movement today. But it is also true with black studies, Hispanic studies, American Indian studies, ecology studies, and so on. (315)

While our earlier discussion of “Paradigm Dramas” emphasizes Wise’s anxiety over the loss of control of the field’s past and future dispensations, this passage is remarkable in its confrontation with the residual (the past) and the emergent. Here, Wise represents the transformation of both a self-enclosed field of American studies into a hybridized borderland and the centered field identity into a parasitic border dweller who is not the source of integrative activities but is itself the outcome of a series of negotiations.

As a border dweller in between social movements and the disciplinary formations it formerly made out of them, Wise’s American studies comes to inhabit two different temporalities—it has regressed to its past condition of a social movement dependent on the hospitality of established disciplines for the institutionalization of its knowledge, and it is also a contemporary academic field which can either draw from the vitality of the new social movements or give a home to them. It is the mutual interference between its status as a field and a movement that has transformed the American studies over which Wise aspired to exercise temporal control into a hybridized zone where the emergent inhabits the residual. Here, already existing disciplines intersect with social formations whose demands are not compatible with the disciplines’ cognitive categories and are unanswerable in their terms. In this

untimely scene, the multiple cognitive and sociopolitical negotiations that take place at this busy intersection cannot be subordinated to the operations of a paradigm. The failure to manage the time of emergency that " 'Paradigm Dramas' " charts thus serves as a critical instance of the unfinished encounter with the future that essays in this volume will retrospectively address.

Radical Imaginaries:

How Futurity Will Have Entered the Field

In the previous section, we focused on two untimely passages in Wise's essay where futurity erupted within the field, inhabited his field identity, and generated the mutual interference between field formation and social movement. Such irresolvable tensions between social movements and the already instituted field can be conceptualized as a relationship of disruption between the field-imaginary and what Cornelius Castoriadis calls "the radical imaginary." For Castoriadis, the radical imaginary activates the knowledge of the historicity that the field-imaginary has disavowed.¹⁰ In this, the radical imaginary exploits the paradoxical sites in which the field-imaginary encounters the lack of closure in its system of signification, opening spaces for the emergence of futures that do not reproduce the field's contours and that cannot be reduced to its categories. Future-oriented and linked to the emergence of unanticipated transformations and unpredicted rearrangements of the institutional order, the radical imaginary announces the possibility of a break from previous historical determinations. For our purposes, it is imperative to think the radical imaginary outside the already constituted categories within the institutional boundaries of the field-imaginary and to link this outside with the disruptive temporalities of the social movements traversing the field.

While Wise experienced the radical imaginary's effects on the field as an occasion to counter futurity's disruptions through temporal management strategies, we have organized this volume as a return to " 'Paradigm Dramas' " in order to install different relationships to the emergent futures he seemed unable not to fear. Rather than authorizing his strategies of denial, the essays collected here relocate his foundational gestures in the hybridized zone in between emergent and residual whereby futurity enters the field.¹¹ These Americanist scholars exploit the radical imaginary and construct multiple pasts and imagine disparate futures out of the nonsynchronous historical materials embedded within American studies as a heterotopia. " 'Paradigm

Dramas' " might be described, then, as a site wherein American studies undergoes change through the taking place within the present dimension of the futures the social movements that Wise had denied epistemological emergence. But as readers will see, the predicted correlation between the academic field and the movements that it only partially accommodates differs across the essays in significant ways. Through various conceptualizations of the dynamic interactions between American studies as a social formation and as an interdisciplinary formation, the essays collected here engender different morphologies for the futures of American studies. In an effort to differentiate their modes of temporalization, we have designated the rubrics *comparatist* and *differentialist* to describe the futures that have emerged out of the challenges which disparate social movements posed to the discourses organizing the academic fields. And we have proposed *counterhegemonic* and *posthegemonic* to specify the different temporalizations that academic knowledge assumes when they empower the work of social movements. While most of the essays comprising these intertextual relays do not specifically engage Gene Wise's essay, individually and collectively they materialize the futures he foreclosed. That is to say, they inhabit the problematic of present futures and past presents that animated Wise's essay in its unfinished encounter with the future that American studies now occupies.

Open Futures: Posthegemonic American Studies

Playing off this line of intertextual commentary, the opening essay of *The Futures of American Studies*, Janice Radway's "What's in a Name?" returns to Wise's discussion of Parrington as a pretext for convoking the multiple past histories sedimented in the pluralization of the term *studies* so as to retrieve congeries of groups comprising the American studies movements. As the 1998 presidential address to the American Studies Association, Radway's essay challenges the naturalization of such categories as the nation-state and questions the reification of the American studies movements as a single unitary culture. By convoking the convention around the question of the name its members wished to be called, Radway operationalized Castoriadis's notion of the radical imaginary. The question "What's in a Name?" introduced a temporal disruption between the already instituted association and one of the instituting acts that the already instituted order could not accommodate to its existing categories. For if the name of "American" could not secure for the

association a place in the future to which its members would want to answer, perhaps a crisis in the name could. *America, Americanness, and Americanization*: all of these terms have their own intelligibility. By raising the question of the name, Radway challenged practitioners in the field to account for how the unintelligible and unrepresentable can be brought to bear on the field.

Radway's practices of citation and redescription of Wise's essay released a range of possible futures that "Paradigm Dramas" had foreclosed. She quoted Wise's assertion that the first substantive consensus on what he called the American experience was dominated by the conviction that "There is an American Mind . . . and that mind is more or less homogeneous. Though it may prove to be complex and constructed of many different layers, it is in fact a single entity" (Wise 306). Whereas Wise had written "Paradigm Dramas" to buttress the members of the American Studies Association against the threats posed to the nationalist hegemony, Radway asked the members to reconsider whether it was the "American Mind" that brought them into affiliation with one another. Her address dissociated the ASA from the field-imaginary that had fostered destructive hegemonic masculinity and white supremacist attitudes so as to reinstitute the American Studies Association outside a nationalist denominative. Radway's broad survey of the changes which had transpired within American studies underscored the importance of the contributions of women's studies, black studies, queer studies, international American studies, ethnic studies, Asian American studies, and post-colonial and poststructuralist theory to American studies.

The interrogative power of "What's in a Name" drew on the declining power of the nation-state to subordinate the emergent disciplines of the sixties and seventies to the mandates of the national narrative. Radway laid claim to the radical democratic idea mobilized by such challenges to nationalism and structured in an understanding of what she calls the "intricate interdependency" of questions of race, gender, identity, and sexualities outside the framework supplied by the nationalizing narrative. In "The International within the National: American Studies and Asian American Critique," Lisa Lowe argues that any effort to come to terms with the futures of American studies involves a reckoning with the imperialist history that has led some members of the association to be ashamed of the name. Lowe evokes the future out of the formerly disavowed knowledges of the U.S. colonial and imperialist histories to which racialized subjects bear singular witness. As an example of such a reckoning, she explains how the construction of the "Asian American" resulted from the convergence of U.S. nationalism with policies

of racial exclusion, gender subordination, and labor stratification. At the heart of Lowe's argument is an examination of the complicity of such political and legal institutions with this history—and with the structures of academic knowledge formations that continue to bifurcate the realms of the economic, political, and cultural. Lowe discovers that existing immigration laws do not merely reflect existing social relations, but that they reproduce the relations of social and economic production, and that these relations are further inscribed in the way the university organizes the relationship between identity studies and traditional disciplines.

Lowe finds the feminized masculinity of the "Asian American male" evidence of the gendering and the racialization of immigrant labor that must be recalled if the future is not to reproduce indecent relations of production from the past. José Muñoz's "The Future in the Present: Sexual Avant-Garde and the Performance of Utopia" alludes to a related temporal dialectics elaborated on in C. L. R. James's work *The Future in the Present*. But instead of struggling to eliminate a historical practice, Muñoz draws on the utopian potentials of the future as a context in which to investigate the singular temporalities of what he calls the sexual avant-garde. In *The Future in the Present*, James observed that present instantiations of actually existing socialist reality had affirmed their future actuality. Muñoz finds a comparable dialectical utopianism in the live sex acts performed in the New York City gay clubs which Mayor Giuliani was, at the time of the essay's composition, in the process of closing down. But Muñoz is unlike James in that he worries over the ways in which their future orientation might remove the presentness of these live sex acts from history. He therefore proposes that these performances not be relegated to a single temporality, but that they be understood to take place simultaneously in the present and in the future.

Amy Kaplan's contribution to this volume is also interested in the ways in which the forging of discrepant temporalities can perform the work of social transformation, but unlike Lowe and Muñoz, who devote their attention to the utopian dimensions of social change, Kaplan demonstrates the ways in which the state harnesses uneven temporalities to the work of empire building. In "Manifest Domesticity," Kaplan discerns an equivalence between the social logic of domesticity and the political logic of empire. In particular, Kaplan demonstrates how the discourse that produced this equivalence engendered a series of analogies out of it which correlated the work of clearing the domestic landscape of indigenous tribes with quotidian labors ordinarily associated with cleaning house. Kaplan describes how the ideology of do-

Americanist scholar. The relation to the field-imaginary that Heller takes up in this essay might be understood as a counter to the one that Wise wrote "Paradigm Dramas" to consolidate in that she does not fear the loss of her field, but turns her essay into the occasion to enter the zone in between her field identity and its disidentification (and in between the field's present and future) that Wise had foreclosed. As she taught this national masterwork to students at Moscow State University, their dialogues produced a zone of cultural interaction in which the play underwent dramatic changes in condition, what Heller calls the Russification of *Death of a Salesman*, which entailed removing it from the properties of autonomy, artifact, Americanness, and canonicity. Like Willy Loman, the play itself became commodified as a negotiable form of cultural capital. By allowing the radical imaginary to operate in this context, Heller welcomes the opportunity to reimagine herself as the Russians saw her, even as this change of outlook requires her to decenter her Americanist identity so as to understand it from another critical perspective.

Winfried Fluck's "The Humanities in the Age of Expressive Individualism and Cultural Radicalism" constitutes a comparable effort at decentering a dominant U.S. perspective. His analysis of the New American studies is grounded in the differences between the scholarship in American studies that grows out of the European American Studies Association and what Fluck describes as the new Americanists' expressive individualism. Instead of honoring the claim that this scholarship is the necessary outgrowth of the bankruptcy of the European Enlightenment's foundational narratives of human emancipation, Fluck proposes that expressive individualism is premised on the European Enlightenment's privileged addressee—the liberal individual. But in turning the market rather than culture into the arena in which their work is produced and in whose terms it is to be valued, expressive individualists have also turned the overvaluation of differences into the primary form of value. If individual differences constitute the only way to create and exchange value, then the proliferation of increasingly eccentric interpretations comprises expressive individualists' mode of scholarly production. As a consequence of expressive individualists' displacement of culture with the market, the pursuit of truth has been displaced by the proliferation of different meanings.

For this situation to change in the future, Fluck concludes his exercise in comparativist scholarly traditions, U.S. Americanists must critically reevaluate the conditions of their scholarly production. In "Autobiographies of the

Ex-White Men: Why Race Is Not a Social Construction." Walter Benn Michaels has examined the mode of scholarly production with a comparably intense form of critical scrutiny. But in place of proposing that the market be supplanted by the cultural sphere as the proper site of scholarly inquiry, Michaels investigates the mistakes in logic that have overseen the transformation of the demands of social movements in the multicultural into academic disciplines. Michaels opens this provocative analysis with an examination of the contradictory social logics informing the recommendation of the editor of the journal *Race Traitor* that whiteness be abolished. While Fluck might have found the recommendation (as well as Michaels's reading of it) symptoms of the worst excesses of the ideology of expressive individualism, Michaels deploys the social logic of race to interrogate its correlation with the discipline called whiteness studies. Whereas the discipline called for whites to disidentify with the white supremacist positioning of an unmarked subject position, Michaels proposes that this call in fact continues the genocidal logic that made the abolition of blackness and Indianness a potential historical reality. Michaels produces a distinction between race as an ontological and race as a performative category to argue that those proponents of whiteness (and ethnic and identitarian) studies who claim that race is a social construction have confused actions and choices with identities.

In "Color Blindness and Acting Out," Carl Gutiérrez-Jones conducts a careful examination of the cultural implications of Michaels's decision to analyze the knowledges produced within ethnic studies and identity programs from the standpoint of their contradictions in logic. Rather than considering Michaels's project an example of an academic maverick who is intent on establishing a unique position in the profession, as Fluck might have, Gutiérrez-Jones finds Michaels's resistance to the antiracist demands of scholars in identity studies symptomatic of a collective reaction formation. Gutiérrez-Jones has thereby resituated Michaels's project within the context of the white male backlash against the renewed attention to multiculturalist questions in general and to race in particular. He thereafter proposes that the substitutions that Michaels has produced, which would replace terms such as *race*, *culture*, *identity*, and Holocaust with the logical contradictions out of which they are composed, betoken a series of "stranded judgments." According to Gutiérrez-Jones, Michaels's strictly logical accounting of the issues of race and ethnicity conceal the white male's feeling of racial injury.

Futures Imperfect: Differentialist American Studies

When Gutiérrez-Jones characterizes Michael's response as representative of white liberals' rage at the inroads of identity politics into the U.S. academy, he writes from the perspective of a scholar working in ethnic studies. Gutiérrez-Jones's commitments to comparativist programs in U.S. American studies predispose him to defend whiteness studies as comparable to ethnic studies in its political commitments. But in "Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity," Robyn Wiegman finds whiteness studies an expression of the white supremacy that it pretends to disavow. Wiegman's analysis agrees with Gutiérrez-Jones that white liberals are presently overtaken by a collective trauma over the loss of their privilege. But she finds the field itself to be organized out of strategies of disavowal that bear greater similarity to Gene Wise's fortress American studies than to contemporary ethnic studies programs. Like Wise's "Paradigm Dramas," the proponents of whiteness studies construct a field out of a traumatized sense of the loss of a former identity.

Throughout her essay, Wiegman examines the ways in which transforming white identities into objects of study does not disinvest but reinvests those identities with white supremacist academic power. By examining the emerging disciplinary apparatus of whiteness studies, Wiegman explores the ways in which this new field brings into crisis the relationship between disciplinary commitments to objects and the social and historical contexts through which objects are empowered as sites of knowledge in the first place. By examining the disciplinary apparatus of whiteness studies at the historical moment of its emergence, Wiegman discloses the difference between its claim to solidarity with the particularist identities of minoritarian movements and the universalist privilege concealed within this claim to be a marked, hence particularized, identity. Insisting on the differences between the empowering knowledges formed within social movements and their transformation into disciplinary objects, Wiegman establishes the distinction between comparativists and differentialists. Whereas comparativists exploit the similarities between social and academic formations, differentialists position their projects at the site of this intersection in order to scrutinize the distinctions.

In "Identities and Identity Studies: Reading Toni Cade Bambara's 'The Hammer Man,'" Lindon Barrett turns this intersection into the analytic practice that he calls, following Kimberlé Crenshaw, "intersectionality." Unlike the modes of interpretation that would construe race, gender, and sex-

uality as more or less stable analytic categories, intersectionality commits Barrett to undertake the critiques and transformation of these social categories. Barrett examines how the categories of identity—ethnicity/race, class, sexuality, gender—which are made into salient stable categories by the cultural codes of the dominant culture, intersect, transfigure, and remain complicated in one another. Ethnicity and race are socially reproductive categories, for example, and they propagate a heteronormative vision of racial identities that forecloses recognition of their gender insubordination. In order to get at the difference between how these categories work intersectionally and how they are put to use in academic disciplines, Barrett asks how American studies can "engage the mutually constitutive categories of ethnicity/race, gender, and sexuality without replicating the cultural inequities which they seek to expose"? When American studies produces knowledges that ignore intersectionality, Barrett concludes, it reiterates rather than contests given ideological systems.

Instead of comparing more or less stable social categories, Wiegman and Barrett have examined how these categories are produced at and as the site of the intersection where disciplines and movements become one another's futures. But they have conducted their analyses of this site within U.S. territorial borders. The transnational and international aspects of differentialist American studies are made vivid in "Hemispheric Vertigo: Cuba, Quebec, and Other Provisional Reconfigurations of 'Our' New America(s)." Here, Ricardo Ortiz builds on José David Saldívar's reading of José Martí's *On America* to reconceptualize transnationality along intersectional lines. More specifically, he uses the configuration of an unprecedented North American system along an Ottawa-Miami-Havana axis as the conceptual matrix through which to interpret a cross-national and multicultural performance. Ortiz discusses Gloria Estefan's decision to perform her 1997 Montreal concert in Cuban Spanish rather than English in terms of the contradictory alliances that decision organized. For Ortiz, transnationality names a property that belongs to a social movement. It is produced by a form of social motion that also produces the people who can be understood to belong to this movement and complicates their understanding of historical rootedness. Ortiz demonstrates how American borders fail to resist traffics in cultural and other forms of capital which in their increasingly vertiginous circulations further the disintegration of the cultural and national spaces these borders had traditionally defined.

Ortiz discerns in transnationality the resource for opening the intra-

national perspective of American studies to pan-hemispheric considerations. But in "Marriage as Treason: Polygamy, Nation, and the Novel," Nancy Bentley is concerned with the ways in which U.S. nationalism was itself produced out of the citizenry's differentiation from an alien nation construed as internal to national borders: the phantom presence of Mormonism as an internal yet foreign religious nation against which and in terms of which nineteenth-century U.S. culture was formed. Bentley analyzes the interdependence of "consent" and the "sovereignty" status of the citizen through their collective cultural differentiation from Mormonism. Specifically, she explores how nineteenth-century antipolygamy novels produced a symbolic space wherein the sovereign citizen and the sovereign state co-constituted themselves. Bentley's account of how these novels materialize the social force exerted by the notion of consent is compelling. She proposes that a woman's consent was construed in these narratives as at once a literary sentiment and an active social force deployed by judges in articulating their legal reasons for opposing polygamy. She concludes that these fictive works significantly transformed the legal and civil status of women.

Bentley's interpretation of the role played by popular novels in constructing a hegemonic understanding of a woman's powers is informed by the difference that feminist theory makes to the official understanding of U.S. legal history. Whereas Bentley constructs a bridge conjoining novelistic representations of consent with the procedural logic underwriting juridical decisions, Gillian Brown has produced a thematic bridge linking the recovered memory of child abuse with the liberal democratic discourse out of which the United States had emerged. Throughout "Litigious Therapeutics: Recovering the Rights of Children," Brown cites Thomas Paine's and John Locke's conceptualizations of the injured child as the imaginary basis for political and civil entitlements. She thereby demonstrates an inextricable relationship between discourses that might have otherwise been construed as utterly incompatible. The vulnerability to harm that the child is helpless to overcome conjures a picture to which Thomas Paine alluded when he represented the American colonists as children who suffered at the hands of George III. According to Brown, it was Thomas Paine's picturing of them as wounded children which aroused the colonists' commitment to the future. In their struggle to obtain independence from their abusive parent, the colonists had conveyed to their posterity the redress that liberal individualism affords.

Brown's picturing of its institutions within the context of the recovered

memory syndrome radically undermines the liberal tradition's self-portrait. In "American Studies in the Age of the World Picture": Thinking the Question of Language," William V. Spanos associates Americanists' world picture with U.S. imperial ventures worldwide. But unlike Brown, Spanos is not interested in supplying the U.S. picture with a critical genealogy. He has instead undertaken a mode of analysis that would release a difference internal to the U.S. picture of itself that cannot become representable within any of the official portraits. To make vivid the difference between this spectral figure and official representations of the nation, Spanos stages its emergence from within the frame of Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" narrative. Fukuyama claimed that U.S. history ended with the collapse of its Russian enemy and with the global triumph of neoliberalism. Spanos adds the memory of the Vietnam War to the end of U.S. history. This extraneous image of the exercise of genocidal violence against a recalcitrant Other reveals the specter within U.S. history. It is this internally disavowed figure, Spanos observes, that produces the national desire to reduce all of the globe into the U.S. imperial imaginary.

Futures Past: Counterhegemonic American Studies

Wiegman, Barrett, Ortiz, Bentley, Brown, and Spanos have all called attention to the distinction between the aspirations for change informing the movements which intersect the field and the different objects and projects to which these energies are put in the academy. But from the time that he published the bibliographical essay, "The Special American Conditions: Marxism and American Studies" in 1986, Michael Denning has been engaged in reshaping the disciplinary formations developed in the field of American studies into an instrument for social transformation. In that essay, Denning explicitly mentioned Wise's interpretation of the significant relationship between the needs of the Cold War and the myth-symbol school of reading.¹² But instead of accepting Wise's description of the field-integrating function of the school, Denning analyzed the way in which Matthiessen in particular had deployed myth-symbol approaches as substitutes for Marxist analyses of culture. In reading back into their texts the Marxism it had been designed to censor, Denning retrieved a dimension of American studies as a field and as a configuration of movements that Wise could neither suppress nor acknowledge. In his efforts to recover the past for which Wise's mode of

telling the official stories had served as a substitute, Denning returned to the moments that Wise ascribed to the founding of American studies as a movement and specifically to the figure Wise described as most responsible for demonstrating in his scholarship how an integrating American studies might be done: namely, Vernon Parrington.

According to Wise, Parrington did not merely supply the movement with a usable past, he also endowed the whole of the American experience with a purpose (298, 314). In transforming Parrington's literary career into a synecdoche for the "whole of the American experience," Wise suppressed the conflicting accounts of U.S. history that emerged out of completely different strains within the American studies movement. Denning's *The Cultural Front* demonstrates how the very intellectuals from the 1930s and the 1940s who had been powerfully influenced by certain aspects of Parrington's work had also collaborated in antiracist projects that forged counterhegemonic linkages between American studies as an academic field and as a participant in an international social movement. According to Denning, this group proved Gramsci's claim that "a new social group that enters history with a hegemonic attitude, with a self-confidence which it initially did not have, cannot but stir up from deep within it personalities who would not previously have found sufficient strength to express themselves fully in a particular direction."¹³

Disrespectful of Wise's efforts to integrate American studies into a homogeneous movement, the counterhegemonic essays gathered in this collection, like Denning's book, have reconnected the pasts buried under hegemonic representations with the possible futures for which they substituted. In place of an alternative hegemony, these essays reimagine the field as an international space that engenders multiple collective identifications and organizational loyalties. Individually and collectively, they convolve networks of association and of intersections that create and reflect social spaces mediating with distant and dissimilar ones.

"Work and Culture in American Studies" continues the argument of *The Cultural Front* and enables Denning to elaborate on the claim that race and ethnicity had become the means through which the working classes experienced their lives and mapped their communities with a much needed theoretical rationale. This essay is part of Denning's larger project to bring the vital political and social traditions that the Cold War had suppressed back into connection with contemporary social and political conditions. Here, Denning constructs a genealogical account of the emergence of culture as the encompassing category for the field of American studies which established the centrality of the cultural front to the construction of American studies as a

social formation. Denning is interested in particular in retrieving from that historical moment a labor theory of culture that would undermine the privileging of mental over manual labor. He argues that the conceptual processes which are invoked to distinguish cultural artifacts from the material outcomes of labor do not in fact sustain the distinction that they are intended to enforce. Insofar as both forms of cultural work arise out of the execution of preconceived designs, they are inextricably linked forms of cultural production.

In "Sent for You Yesterday, Here You Come Today": American Studies Scholarship and the New Social Movements," George Lipsitz turns to Denning's *The Cultural Front* to elaborate on the significance of this alternative past for the future of American studies. Lipsitz explains how the intellectual work and artistic productions of the cultural front were unlike Parrington's in that their projects were not confined to academic inquiry but emerged directly from their social activism. Their work disclosed "the relationship between politics and culture, between ethnic identity and class consciousness, between the myth of American exceptionalism and the always international identities of the U.S. nation-state and between cultural theory and cultural practice." When Lipsitz associates his project with the historical formation that Denning has retrieved, he intends to demonstrate how the knowledges produced within that historical movement can address questions posed by the global economy.

Whereas Lipsitz and Denning return to the historical era in which popular front politics functioned as the rallying point for a variety of counterhegemonic formations, Günter Lenz's "Toward a Dialogics of International American Culture Studies: Transnationality, Border Discourses, and Public Culture(s)" demonstrates the impact of a wide range of discursive formations—British cultural studies, the discourse of the borderlands, and the critique of U.S. imperialism—on the field of American studies. The counterhegemonic aspect of Lenz's account inheres in his description of American culture as itself the product of a range of complex processes. "American culture is not the homogenized powerful, imperializing or globalizing Other," Lenz remarks, "but it is in itself multiplicitous, inherently differentiated and conflicted, and always changing in active response to alternative multicultural and intercultural discourses and experiences." It is as a consequence of these internal divisions that programs in American studies assume different shapes in relation to their institutional locations and out of their specific negotiations with the impact of globalization.

Like Lenz, Paul Lauter is committed to breaking away from centrist mod-

els of Americanism to consider the economic processes, institutional projects, and political effects of American studies as a field. One of Gene Wise's contemporaries, Lauter has repeatedly turned his positioning as a scholar in American studies into the occasion of adopting his field identity to address changing political circumstances rather than to construct the defense against change. Lauter's initial understanding of American studies was grounded in his own struggles with the imperatives of the Cold War state. But as a student at NYU in the 1950s, he also learned from other interdisciplinary programs like ethnic studies and women's studies about how to establish linkages between academic disciplines and social movements, as well as how to align knowledges, practices, and laws in ways that could effect social change. In "American Studies, American Politics, and the Reinvention of Class," Lauter deploys his lived history of what Denning has called cultural front politics to demonstrate their pertinence to contemporary questions.

If Denning returns to Wise's account of Parrington's integration of the American studies movement in order to recover a political history of the movement that Wise had suppressed, Lauter exemplifies how that restored history could be placed in the service of forging a counterhegemonic role for the new American studies. In "The End of Academia: The Future of American Studies," Eric Cheyfitz builds on this conversation by arguing that non-comparable logics organize academic rationales and political formations. He thus insists that a distinction be preserved between the academic politics that in some universities have resulted in a multicultural curriculum and concrete forms of social action. In insisting on such distinctions, Cheyfitz does not refuse solidarity with the counterhegemonic projects of Denning, Lipsitz, and Lauter, but he does insist that the failure to recognize the differences between these realms can lead to the most fraudulent kinds of academic posturing as a masquerade for political work.

In "Nation dot com: American Studies and the Production of the Corporatist Citizen," Russ Castronovo analyzes American studies in the context of what Bill Readings has described as the global university. He examines the ways in which American studies unintentionally offers the university a corporatist model that would profit from the scholarship of even the most critical Americanists. The globalization of the American economy and culture, Castronovo observes, might have turned even the most transnational and interdisciplinary initiatives of the field into a continuation of corporate capitalism by other means. But if American studies has become the institutional space in which to continue corporate capitalism, it has also provided the opportunity to reflect critically on its assumptions and resist its hegemony.

In sorting the essays for this volume under one or another of these rubrics—comparativist, differentialist, counterhegemonic, and posthegemonic—we are interested primarily in considering the ways in which each of these field-movement projects animates a different temporalization of the future and in how these temporalities converge, overlap, and deconstruct each other. While the comparativist model suggests that a significant transformation of the field has already been accomplished, the differentialists' interrogations of the categories through which the comparativists have represented their model reject the idea that this model constitutes a movement forward. Moreover, if the counterhegemonists return to subaltern political pasts to materialize alternative futures, the posthegemonists might be understood to disclose the ways in which those alternative futures install hegemonies of a different order.

In staging the emergence of these disparate futures of American studies at the fault lines and within the untimely moments of Gene Wise's "Paradigm Dramas," we have attempted to unreify the temporal dimensions within which the field has produced its past imaginaries and to wrest adumbrations of the *international*, the *transnational*, and the *postnational* out of the Cold War consensus. In supporting this project, the essays collected in this volume undertake the analyses, contestations, and reversals of American studies' temporal norms. In releasing the futures that quite literally haunted Wise's history-making text, these mobile temporal formations also refuse the self-satisfactions of presentism and encourage the reconceptualization of the field of American studies as itself a heterotopia. The relationships obtaining among the essays gathered might thus be described as elaborating a heterotopology, a relational field comprised of different and intrinsically fluid social formations that engenders multiple collective (dis)identifications and organizational (dis)loyalties. Produced by discourses and social processes that do not conform to distinct identity categories, these essays effect field identities that are open-ended rather than self-enclosed processes. Since these field identities name the vehicles through which these discourses reproduce themselves, no hard and fast distinction separates what is produced and what regulates the production. Field identity appears instead as the result of a series of never completed partial identifications.

If, by way of these operations, the temporalities of the futures of American studies can be imagined as partaking of the heteronomy animating the radical imaginary, they might consequently be described as a heterochronic. The futures of American studies, that is to say, might be conceptualized not as what comes after the most recent organization of the field but after the

manner in which they struck Gene Wise a quarter-century ago—as what is other than presentable in the field of American studies.

Afterward: Futures Now?

Throughout this volume we have operated on the assumption that thinking about the futures would release the field's most creative aspects. And we have promoted this understanding by staging this release within the context of Gene Wise's aversions to futurity. But we cannot conclude this volume without considering an alternative conceptualization. In "ConsterNation," Dana Nelson provocatively argues that any gesture of "future thinking" emanates from a desire for a realm that is free from political struggle and thus constitutes blockage in the organization of what she calls radical democracy. And she further views the deterritorialization of the nation into postnational, international, and transnational formations as the projection of an antidemocratic formation. She asks whether the dilemma posed between the political value of multicultural agendas and the ideological and bureaucratic forces mounted against them constitutes a false choice. And she wonders whether that false choice constitutes the rationale for the desire for the escape to futurity. If "ConsterNation" names the feeling of helplessness and confusion as we look again to America's alternative multicultural or patriotic future, Nelson wants to rethink politicalness as disagreement.

Dana Nelson wants this future now—so do we.

Notes

- 1 Gene Wise, "Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement," *American Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1979): 293–337. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text. The piece was republished in *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline*, ed. Lucy Maddox (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 166–210.
- 2 Jay Mechling, "Commentary," in *Locating American Studies*, ed. Maddox, 211–14.
- 3 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27. Wise's essay was radically heterotopic in that it contained within its spaces the historically incompatible temporalities of American studies as an academic field and as a congeries of heterogeneous social movements. Wise's efforts to avert the epistemological crises which resulted from the coexistence of these discrepant temporalities led him to construe "Paradigm Dramas'" as a space in which

to make new and different sense of all other spaces within the field of American studies.

- 4 Nearly all of the essays included here began as plenary talks at the Dartmouth College Institute of American Studies in the four years leading to and including the quintessential mark of futurity, the year 2000. We want to thank Sandra Gregg for her ongoing wisdom and organizational skills in providing leadership for the institute's direction and the many scholars who have participated over the years in deliberating on the issues raised here.
- 5 The proposition that essays in this volume transpose Wise's anxieties over futurity into resources of hope might improperly suggest that our emergent futures gratify a hope that Wise had articulated. Through his repeated acts of foreclosure, Wise acknowledged that the field's possible futures had already inhabited its spaces—but as that which he felt compelled to disavow. The futures that emerged could not be assimilated to already constituted categories or included within existing arrangements. Neither could they ratify an ideology of progress. Insofar as futurity happened through the catastrophic destruction of the field machinery through which Wise had accomplished these disavowals, he would have experienced these resources of hope—and indeed the actualization of the field in such terms—as the fulfillment of his worst fears.
- 6 Meghan Morris, "Future Fear," in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, ed. Jon Bird et al. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 38.
- 7 "Paradigm dramas" as the vehicle for Wise's historical narrative of the field also functioned to keep in play a critical genealogy that the emergent discourses of the sixties were definitively challenging. As we have discussed, the myth-symbol synthesis of American literature and American history concentrated its core beliefs within key foundational texts—*Errand into the Wilderness*, *American Renaissance*, *Virgin Land*, *American Adam*, *The Machine in the Garden*—which oversaw the translation of American studies as a movement into the methodological assumptions, objects of inquiry, and modes of analysis through which the founders had instituted American studies as an academic field. To render this past usable in the face of the sixties crisis, Wise used *paradigm dramas* to articulate the myth-symbol paradigm with the anthropologist Victor Turner's account of the social dramas through which cultures reflected on and thereafter transformed themselves. Turner had modeled his explanation of "social dramas" after Northrop Frye's description of literary mythology as educating the social imagination. Frye proposed that the literary understanding of drama might be extrapolated into an analytic category capable of representing as well as effecting social change. In placing Turner's model into the service of defining the conflicts over the future of American studies, Wise reaffirmed the explanatory power of the myth-symbol paradigm to which Turner's model was indebted—at the very moment that the paradigm had lost its epistemological authority throughout the academy. See Victor Turner, "Social Dramas and the Stories about Them," in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 152.

- 8 The following critical reappraisal of the American studies movement advanced by the scholar-activist Christopher Lasch is representative of the radical knowledge produced within the new social movements: "The infatuation with consensus; the vogue of disembodied 'history of ideas' divorced from considerations of class or other determinants of social organization; the obsession with 'American Studies' which perpetuates a nationalist myth of American uniqueness—these things reflect the degree to which historians have become apologists, in effect, for American national power in the holy war against communism." Lasch, "The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom," in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, ed. Barton J. Bernstein (New York: Pantheon, 1968), 323.
- 9 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).
- 10 Castoriadis writes: "This element . . . which gives . . . a specific orientation to every institutional system, which overdetermines the choice and the connections of the symbolic networks . . . the basis for articulating what does matter and what does not . . . is nothing other than the imaginary of the society and of the period considered." Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 145.
- 11 Two important essays, not reprinted in this volume, produce the radical imaginary from Wise's history-making essay. Amy Kaplan's "Left Alone with America": The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture" rereads the moment in Wise's essay in which he describes Perry Miller's "jungle epiphany" as a casebook example of paradigm formation. For Wise, Miller's scholarly project carried "the urge to impose form upon experience, to seize upon the American past and insist that it answer questions he is driven to ask of it" (302). He thus concludes that Miller's project did not arise from "the conventional desire simply to make a 'contribution to scholarly knowledge,'" but was instead animated by his need to break through the academic conventions that he regarded as impediments to the gratification of his "primordial drive" (302). When Amy Kaplan returns to this scene foundational to the institution of American studies, she proposes a different understanding of Miller's epiphany. Whereas Wise described American studies as a field whose representative action entailed the containment of the culture's diversity within a paradigm that symbolized it, Kaplan's redescription of this scene generates a supplemental scenario within what Wise described as the founding moment of American studies. Kaplan found what Toni Morrison has described as the "Africanist presence" in Miller's "epiphany," and she reads this as the disavowed context for the institution of the field of American studies. In place of locating, as did Wise, Miller's remarkable synthesizing powers, Kaplan diagnoses Miller's staging of his academic vocation against the backdrop of his imperial adventure in the Congo as symptomatic of the involvement of his "primordial drive" with the history of U.S. imperialism. According to Kaplan, the transactions conducted in this occluded scene entailed struggles over racial

equality and colonialism as the unacknowledged knowledges which the field's epistemological categories had reproduced yet disavowed. When Miller invested himself with the authority to describe European settlers' imperial adventures in the North American wilderness while in the Congo, he tacitly represented, as Kaplan observes, the Congo and the New England wilderness as equivalent spaces within the imperial world system. Although Miller characterized his vocation to recount the Puritans' "errand into the wilderness" as an ambition comparable to Gibbons's *Decline and Fall*, Kaplan finds a more appropriate cultural antecedent in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Because the supplementary events Kaplan discerns within Miller's scene could not be assimilated into Wise's paradigm drama, this extraneous scenario effected a disruption of the drama through which Wise had recovered the coherence of the field. In redescrbing the founding moment of American studies as an academic field, Kaplan reveals the conceptual limits of Wise's American paradigms by supplanting them with the discourse of the "borderlands," the name Kaplan uses for the paradoxical site of contacts, collisions, and encounters that produce new hybrid cultures. "The site of the borderlands," Kaplan explains, comprises "multidimensional and transterritorial" spaces that "not only lie at the geographical and political margins of national identity but as often traverse the center of the metropolis." Borderland intellectuals would sacrifice certainties for the contradictions and ambiguities that inform present and future field identities. Their borderlands discourse would link "the study of ethnicity and immigration inextricably to the study of international relations and empire." Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone with America": The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 16–17.

At the same time, Kaplan's formulation of the discourse of the borderlands draws on José David Saldívar's description of this paradoxical space in *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), esp. 49–84. Here, Saldívar represented the borderlands as the discursive terrain in which U.S. representations of American things engage in dialogic transactions with other cultures' descriptions of American things. Saldívar produced a dialogue with Kaplan in his 1998 essay "Remapping American Cultural Studies," where he returned to her revisionist description of Perry Miller's jungle epiphany to insist on indissoluble differences between the assimilationist practices of U.S. imperial culture and unassimilable ethnic minorities. According to Saldívar, the discourse of U.S. imperialism has depended on a conceptual apparatus that the field of American studies has reproduced. The apparatus was comprised of a relay of mutually constitutive terms, recognizable signs, metaphors, and master narratives. This apparatus preexisted cultural contact and permitted its projection onto other cultures. In tracing the coordinates of a different mapping of the field of American studies, Saldívar deployed a reading of Captain John Grey-

ory Bourke's imperial adventure along what he called the "American Congo" in support of the claim that America was itself a cartographical artifact produced within the discourse of U.S. imperialism. In elaborating the significance of borderlands to his remapping of the field, Saldívar characterized the cultures emerging at these margins as negotiating non-nationalistic claims to representation and identity. See the chapter "Remapping American Cultural Studies," in Saldívar's *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 159–83, esp. 161–64.

As a result of the usages to which Americanists like Kaplan and Saldívar have put them, Wise's transitional scenarios have not remained anchored to the past. Obeying the logic of what Freud has analyzed as a primal scene, Wise's dramas have translocated into sites for the construction of alternative futures that he could not have imagined in the past. "Paradigm Dramas" might be described, then, as a site wherein American studies undergoes change through the taking place within the present dimension of the futures the social movements that Wise had denied presentification. But the predicted correlation between the academic field and the movements that it only partially accommodates differs in significant ways.

¹² Michael Denning, "'The Special American Conditions': Marxism and American Studies," *American Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1986): 357.

¹³ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 145.

POSTHEGEMONIC

