

Should American Studies Study Itself?

James E. Hartley

*Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images*

—T S. Eliot, “*The Waste Land*”

In the modern university, specialization is the rule. One of the by-products of this specialization is that looking across disciplinary bounds presents extraordinarily different views of the same subject. Such is the case when economists turn to literature. The world of business in literature does not look much like the world of business in economics textbooks.

Consider the lowly banker. To the economist, the banker is performing a rather important, if mundane, job. There are people who want to lend and there are people who want to borrow. Introducing those lenders and those borrowers is what a banker does. It is not all that complicated, or exciting for that matter. Indeed, the common joke in American financial circles for years was that bankers had a 3–6–3 job; they borrowed at 3 percent, lent at 6 percent and were on the golf course by 3:00. America is full of financiers of this sort—people helping two parties in a financial transaction meet each other. Middlemen, if you will—common, dull middlemen. At least that is the way it looks to an economist.

But, how does it look to the non-economist? Consider Tom Wolfe, whose doctorate is in American Studies, and his novel about the modern American financier. Toward the outset of *Bonfire of the Vanities*, Sherman McCoy, a bond trader, heads into his office. The lobby is decorated in a faux English style with trappings so ornate “you could feel the expense in the tips of your fingers by just looking at them.” Immediately on leaving the reception area, Sherman hears “an ungodly roar, like the roar of a mob” and sees the sight of the trading floor: “The writhing silhouettes were the arms and torsos of young men, few of them older than forty. They had their suit jackets off. They were moving

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about in an agitated manner and sweating early in the morning and shouting, which created the roar. It was the sound of well educated young white men baying for money on the bond market.”¹ Sherman heads for this sight “with relish.” He was, after all, one of the “Masters of the Universe.”

Masters of the Universe! The roar filled Sherman’s soul with hope, confidence, esprit de corps, and righteousness. Yes, righteousness! Judy understood none of this, did she? None of it. Oh, he noticed her eyes glazing over when he talked about it. Moving the lever that moves the world was what he was doing—and all she wanted to know was why he never made it home for dinner. When he did make it home for dinner, what did she want to talk about? Her precious interior decorating business and how she had gotten their apartment into *Architectural Digest*, which, frankly, to a true Wall Streeter was a fucking embarrassment. Did she commend him for the hundreds of thousands of dollars that made her decorating and her lunches and whatever the hell else she did possible? No, she did not. She took it for granted. . . .

. . . and so forth and so on. Within ninety seconds, emboldened by the mighty roar of the bond trading room of Pierce & Pierce, Sherman managed to work up a good righteous head of resentment against this woman who had dared make him feel guilty.²

Throughout the book, McCoy is shallow, cultureless, and soulless. It is a very petty little picture that Wolfe has painted here. And yet, Wolfe, who is easily one of the most perceptive social critics in America in the last 40 years, is also a noted conservative. So, why is he ridiculing that American icon—the Wall Street banker? But before we hasten to see this as ridicule, we note the curious fact that when *Bonfire of the Vanities* was published, it was a hit on Wall Street. Far from being offended by the portrait of Sherman McCoy, the Wall Street bankers loved it; they loved the term “Masters of the Universe;” they loved everything about that image. One can read Michael Lewis’s nice portrait of Wall Street in *Liar’s Poker* to see many real life Sherman McCoys in action.³

And it is not just Wolfe or the 1980s. Backing up 65 years, we find a parallel in Sinclair Lewis’ *Babbitt*. Toward the outset of that novel, we find Babbitt heading into his “modern” office, being greeted by the sound of a salesman on the phone, and finding himself pondering the details of his narrow life:

He hadn’t even any satisfaction in the new water-cooler! And it was the very best of water-coolers, up-to-date, scientific, and right-thinking. It had cost a great deal of money (in itself a virtue). It possessed a non-conducting fiber ice-container, a porcelain water-jug (guaranteed hygienic), a dripless non-clogging sanitary faucet, and machine-painted decorations in two tones of gold. He looked down the relentless stretch of tiled floor at the water-cooler, and assured himself that no tenant of the Reeves Building had a more expensive one, but he could not recapture the feeling of social superiority it had given him.⁴

Indeed, as we compare these two novels, we find a remarkable similarity in the

portrayal of the American financier. The common component was captured by H. L. Mencken, in his description of the essence of Babbitt:

He is a businessman of a special and narrow type. His marks are plain as day, and two in number. The first is that he is not very successful—that his business, as such things go, is petty and piddling—that he is anything but a leader in his line. The second is that he is full of highfalutin fraud and bombast—that he talks like a millionaire and a chautauqua orator rolled into one—that he tries to make the world believe, and even to convince himself, that his trivial and sordid money-grubbing is all altruistic—in brief, that he is not a businessman at all, but a philanthropist yearning and sweating for Service.⁵

McCoy is the Master of the Universe, the man who moves the lever that moves the world, and yet all he is doing is talking on the telephone, the “electric doughnut,” matching people who want to buy bonds with those who want to sell them.

The puzzle is really not why Wolfe and Lewis would portray the American financier in such a light; the puzzle is why these portrayals are so accurate. The source of why this is so puzzling is found in a hint provided in another passage from Wolfe: “How these sons of the great universities, these legatees of Jefferson, Emerson, Thoreau, William James, Frederick Jackson Turner, William Lyons Phelps, Samuel Flagg Bemis, and the other three-name giants of American scholarship—how these inheritors of the lux and the veritas now flocked to Wall Street and the bond trading room of Pierce & Pierce!”⁶

What would Thomas Jefferson make of Sherman McCoy? It is not terribly hard to find out. In a letter to John Banister, Jefferson explains the “disadvantages of sending a youth to Europe” for higher education:

If he goes to England, he learns drinking, horseracing and boxing. These are the peculiarities of English education. . . . He acquires a fondness for European luxury and dissipation, and a contempt for the simplicity of his own country; he is fascinated with the privileges of the European aristocrats, and sees, with abhorrence, the lovely equality which the poor enjoy with the rich, in his own country; he contracts a partiality for aristocracy or monarchy. . . . he is led by the strongest of all human passions, into a spirit for female intrigue, destructive of his own and others' happiness, or a passion for whores, destructive of his health, and, in both cases, learns to consider fidelity to the marriage bed an ungentlemanly practice, and inconsistent with happiness; he recollects the voluptuary dress and arts of the European women, and pities and despises the chaste affections and simplicity of those of his own country. . . . he returns. . . . unacquainted with the practices of domestic economy, necessary to preserve him from ruin.⁷

All those bad products of an English education, that list of social ills, could equally well stand in as a character summary of Sherman McCoy. He has the same elitist aristocratic bent, a fondness for luxury and voluptuary dress, a distaste for domestic economy and simplicity, and a mistress who brings destruction to his own and others' happiness. Yet, McCoy went to Yale.

So what did happen to these legatees of the giants of the American educational system? Why have the heirs of Emerson and Thoreau turned out to be the very types of men those philosophers disparaged? Why are these financiers so bereft of any signs of culture or learning? To see a possible solution, let us step back and consider the genius of the idea underlying all that is American, the essence of the American Experiment.

Michael Novak, in his marvelous book, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, described it well.⁸ American society was founded upon a three-part system of separate political, economic, and moral-cultural orders. The political order was characterized by limited government and a respect for the rights of man; the economic order was characterized by free enterprise in a market economy; the moral-cultural order was characterized by a broad pluralism. There was thus a division of power in American society; no longer would feudal lords hold virtually unlimited power over their subjects; no longer would the head of state serve simultaneously as the head of the state church.

This separation of the realms of power among separate groups did much good; it provided a level of freedom or liberty heretofore unknown in the world. One could criticize the political authorities without fear of commercial or religious reprisals. It allowed enterprise to flourish, generating the greatest wealth-making machine in the history of man. It allowed a greater measure of religious freedom than had ever existed before.

And it is not hard to imagine, when thinking about the American Founding Fathers, what sort of men they imagined rising up in each sphere. The country would benefit from men like Jefferson at the political helm; the religious realm would be dominated by men like Jonathan Edwards, that great theologian and preacher who also served as president of Princeton University; and in commerce, there would be men of culture and learning like Nicholas Biddle and Robert Fulton.

But with this separation of powers came specialization of exactly the sort that Adam Smith described in the other great work of 1776, *The Wealth of Nations*. The result was businessmen who knew a great deal about business, but had little to no appreciation of religious or cultural matters or the art of politics. Max Weber, in describing the success of the American experiment talked of the Protestant work ethic.⁹ But over the years, that Protestant work ethic lost its Protestant roots and became the Babbitt or McCoy work ethic—working hard for transitory material pleasures. Businessmen specialized in what businessmen do. The Babbitts and McCoy's and their counterparts in religion and government simply became specialists. If Sherman McCoy seems to have no soul, well, it's because it's not in his area of expertise.

Jefferson would be appalled, of course. What happened? Was he blind and missed the obvious result of the division of power he created? I would argue, no—that something else happened along the way. Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers knew about the potential for this sort of narrow specializa-

tion, but they relied on another great force in America to work against it—education. While founding a nation, Jefferson was also founding a university, the University of Virginia. And his plan for the university shows his idea on how to raise up future generations worthy of becoming leaders in America. Jefferson imagined a system of elementary schools that would teach everyone how to read and write. But, then for those few destined to become leaders, there was also to be higher education. The first step in higher education was the general schools, which one would attend before going on to the professional schools. And what was to be the subject matter that students would learn there? Jefferson identified the three main branches of learning:

- I. Language. In the first department, I would arrange a distinct science. 1, Languages and History, ancient and modern; 2, Grammar; 3, Belles Lettres; 4, Rhetoric and Oratory . . .
- II. Mathematics. In the department of Mathematics, I should give place distinctly: 1, Mathematics, pure; 2, Physico-Mathematics; 3, Physic; 4, Chemistry; 5, Natural History, to wit: Mineralogy; 6, Botany; and 7, Zoology; 8, Anatomy; 9, the Theory of Medicine.
- III. Philosophy. In the Philosophical department, I should distinguish: 1, Ideology; 2, Ethics; 3, the Law of Nature and Nations; 4, Government, 5, Political Economy.¹⁰

It was the liberal arts that were to keep the souls of Babbitt and McCoy intact. The university would fulfill its mission by taking the young and teaching them broadly; the students would learn science and history and literature and politics and so on, regardless of what they were going to do. It was, in other words, a thoroughly impractical education—one designed for the soul, not for the career.

But, over the years, the American university lost track of its mission as the professors became both alienated from the American experiment and the role of the liberal arts in that experiment. The product of the modern American university is perfectly captured by Wolfe: “The only thing that had truly stuck in Sherman’s mind about Christopher Marlowe, after nine years at Buckley, four years at St. Paul’s, and four years at Yale, was that you were, in fact, supposed to know who Christopher Marlowe was.”¹¹

One clue to the process by which this happened was provided by Richard Rorty’s discussion of the evolution of leftist academics. Rorty argues that there was a large break in leftist thought in 1964 when the New Left, epitomized by the student radicals, began to replace the Old Left, epitomized by Rorty. For Rorty, the deplorable fact about these two Lefts is that they are “unreconciled” with each other, and his work hopes to effect a reconciliation.¹² I would suggest, however, that 1964 was not as large a break as Rorty would have us believe. Instead, Rorty’s New Left was merely the logical next step in the program begun by Rorty’s Old Left. In *God and Man at Yale*, written shortly after graduation, William F. Buckley argues that the professors of Yale had already aban-

done Yale's traditional religious mission as well as any belief in free enterprise.¹³ The professors at Yale had by the 1950s become, in other words, anti-religious and socialist. Thinking of Novak's three pillars of American society, academics had become hostile to the traditional American moral-cultural and economic orders, leaving only the political. Regardless of the nature of the problem, be it political, commercial, or religious, liberal intellectuals turned to the political realm for a solution, exactly as Rorty describes. The quest became one for a better set of laws.

Then the radicals came along in the 1960s and said, "Politics won't work either; political power is corrupt and limited government is flawed." And the liberal intellectuals simply crumbled in the face of this challenge. As many commentators of the time have noted, academics abandoned the traditional supports of the American experiment without a struggle.¹⁴ The liberal arts were tossed out, education was made "relevant," and the soul of the university was destroyed.

With time, to use Kimball's phrase,¹⁵ the radicals became tenured, and the result is a near-monolithic ideology governing American academia. The ideology holds all three of the traditional parts of American society in contempt; the prevailing academic ideology is atheistic, socialistic, and totalitarian. The situation in the American academy today is reminiscent of the New York socialite who exclaimed in 1968, "But Nixon couldn't have won; I don't know anyone who voted for him." No doubt she didn't know a single person who voted for Nixon. In the modern American university, it is similarly difficult to find anyone who opposes the *Zeitgeist*. Conservative intellectuals are scarce there, and not because of a dearth of conservative intellectual thought. As Kirk shows,¹⁶ there is long tradition to such thought, and, as Nash shows,¹⁷ it has thrived in the post-war United States. But, it has thrived largely outside of academia in think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institution.

This current state thus did not arrive overnight; it was decades in the making. So, why didn't a counter-movement arise within the academy? Why didn't there emerge a set of faculty who stood against the trend, arguing for the study of what was unique and interesting about America, arguing for keeping the parts of the American experiment linked together? Surprisingly, such a set of faculty did arise, and they even founded a discipline: American Studies.

The earliest versions of distinctive programs in American Studies began in the mid 1930s and such programs spread rapidly. By 1946–1947, there were at least 60 institutions offering an undergraduate degree in American civilization and at least 15 Ph.D. programs.¹⁸ The requirements for these programs varied widely, from being simply combinations of American history and American literature (e.g. at Harvard), to broader programs such as that at Smith, in which students were required to take "American courses in history, literature,

art or music, and philosophy, education, religion, government, or sociology.”¹⁹ Many of these early programs also put an emphasis on honors students, and these programs were quite rigorous. Again, at Smith, “superior students who take honors in American civilization do directed reading in the second semester of the junior year, write a paper in the first semester of the senior year, take an integrating proseminar in the second semester, and write three examinations: one on American cultural history as a whole, one on concrete interrelationships of two fields in the major, and one on the investigation of specific topics assigned in advance.”²⁰

The early proponents of creating these programs in American Studies were very explicit about their aims. The programs were designed to combat two trends in the academy. First, subjects relating to America had been subsumed under the specialists of Europe. Thus, American literature was taught as a subset of English literature; American history and philosophy as subsets of their European counterparts. There was thus no place in the academy for a study of the uniqueness of American culture. Secondly, the very nature of specialization itself was disturbing to many who desired to see a more general education. American Studies programs were thus created in order to provide exactly such a general education; students would study things from across the various disciplines with a focus on American culture, while their professors would work to create this same sort of integration in their research.²¹

Some cohesion was brought to these earliest American Studies programs by a course or set of courses that would explicitly draw the connections between the disciplines. These programs were, in other words, teaching the nature of the American Mind, which came to “its most coherent expression in the country’s leading thinkers—Williams, Edwards, Franklin, Cooper, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Twain, Dewey, Niebuhr, et al. Hence, early American Studies programs offered courses on the ‘Great Books’—often required—which introduced students to the field through the culture’s most elevated minds.”²²

In short, American Studies was a forerunner of the rash of “inter-disciplinary studies” programs that are so prevalent in the modern academy. The programs were under widespread attack in their early years because they were too unrelated to *European* civilization. In what can be seen with the benefit of hindsight as a real miscalculation, these early proponents of American Studies programs dismissed such criticism by arguing that European civilization is so “overwhelmingly represented” in the curriculum, that American Studies courses need not make such connections explicit, but instead, could focus on the uniqueness of America. There is something quite quaint about the claims of these early proponents: “[T]he area studied [America] is synonymous with a culture and does not contain more than one culture within the area. . . . American culture by its astonishing standardization of thought and uniformity of

values in relation to size and population, permits us to make generalizations which would be far more difficult—perhaps impossible—to formulate for many other countries in Western Civilization.”²³

It is impossible to conceive of a statement like Huber’s being made in an American Studies conference today. Where is the field now? Or as Stephen Sumida asks in the title to his 2002 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, “Where in the World is American Studies?” The question was prompted for Sumida by an international colleague who noted “that scholars of American studies abroad are uncertain of what the name of the field means any more, when it seems that in the United States we concern ourselves mainly with a ‘discussion of identity politics variously represented as universalism, multiculturalism, nationalism, postnationalism, American Studies, New American Studies, globalism, localism.’”²⁴ Sumida’s answer to his international colleague is to note with pleasure the creation of a standing committee on Ethnic Studies, whose “fundamental project . . . is to make evident that ethnic studies is American studies and American studies is ethnic studies.”²⁵ The field of American Studies has, in other words, seen the triumph of what Denning called the “practice of American cultural history as a form of radical cultural critique.”²⁶

How much the field of American Studies has changed from its origins is perhaps most evident in Mary Kelley’s 1999 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association. Titled “Taking Stands: American Studies at Century’s End,” Kelley’s address leaves no doubt as to where she believes American Studies should position itself. For Kelley, the *academic field* of American Studies needs first and foremost to take its stand as a political movement. The enemy is, naturally enough, “the Right” exemplified by Dinesh D’Souza, Lynne Cheney, Rush Limbaugh, Christina Hoff Summers, and William Bennett.

The text of the address reads like an old-fashioned morality play, in which the forces of Evil must be stopped by the good members of the American Studies Association. The most telling part of Kelley’s speech is without a doubt what is missing from it: there is not even the semblance of the idea that anybody, *anybody*, listening to her speech might have agreed with any of the people on her list of “the Right.” The text simply assumes that it is obvious to everyone in the American Studies Association that the “Right’s soldiers have set today’s standard for false and malicious slander, . . . they have gone into battle armed with powerful institutional and financial support, and . . . their campaign has profited from the more conservative policies of the last couple of decades.”²⁷ This rhetoric, this call to arms, would seem strangely out of place if one considered the American Studies Association to be a *scholarly* society.

The American Studies Association, however, seems not to consider itself a scholarly society. The September 2000 ASA newsletter published its Affirmative Action Resolutions which commend the “commitment of American Studies Association leadership to social justice as a *defining feature* of the organization’s heritage and its future.”²⁸ Similarly, in the November 2002 an-

nouncement of the aforementioned standing committee on ethnic studies, the National Council weighs in on the political issues of the day, noting how “living as we do in an era of heightened racialized and civic nationalism, we find ourselves in a particularly critical moment as the United States turns toward what we might call ‘imperialist nationalisms.’”²⁹

The politicization of the American Studies Association does not stop with statements by its “leadership,” of course. Politics filters into the research, with titles like “Anything Goes: Gender and Knowledge in the Comic Popular Culture of the 1930’s,” or “Rethinking Betty Friedan and The Feminine Mystique: Labor Union Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America,” typifying the books, dissertations, and articles to which the American Studies Association awards its annual prizes.³⁰

So, from a program designed to read the great books of American civilization, the American Studies movement has become nothing more than an extension of the politicization of the university itself. This complete transformation occurred in the 1960s. As Robert Sklar, former vice president of the American Studies Association put it, “The vitality, ferment, and conflict of the 1960s have had a salutary effect on American Studies.”³¹ A *salutary* effect: American Studies was sick back in the old days and the events of the 1960s brought it to health. No longer would American Studies be mired in the illness of looking for what was common to the American experience. Rather, the discipline of American Studies would now undertake a healthy study of the *failings* of America, a healthy examination of ethnicity and gender.

This change of focus in the 1960s is a reason for celebration within the American Studies community. On the occasion of its thirtieth anniversary, *American Quarterly* published a retrospective issue edited by Gene Wise, who provided a cultural history of the American Studies “Movement.” He takes as paradigmatic of the change Robert Merideth’s introductory seminar in the 1960s at Miami University.³² It is worth quoting Wise at length on this change:

Robert Merideth was not satisfied merely to discover what American culture is, What the culture is is obvious, he felt; it is all around people, threatening to envelop them, and bent on corrupting their naturally humane impulses. Hence the teacher in American Studies must assume an adversary role against the culture. He must try to save himself from the culture’s poison tentacles, and in the classroom he is obligated to help save others too, or help them save themselves. His only humane option, under the circumstances, is to serve as a cultural radical.

‘The primary purpose of the radical as teacher,’ Merideth insisted, ‘is to subvert a corrupt culture as it is internalized in his students.’ Culture study—academic analysis of what America is—should be subordinated to culture therapy—the larger-than-academic, radically human act of healing wounds caused by the culture’s corrupting influence. Hence Robert Merideth in the late 1960s would direct people in the movement away from publishing scholarship, a distinguishing trait of American Studies the decade before, to become more involved in radical action—radical teaching, community organizing, consciousness-raising.³³

The result of all these changes is that conversations are taking place in American Studies conferences and seminar rooms that are rather amusing to conservative intellectuals. In these conversations, an American Studies professor will present the “radical” idea that the “marginalized” groups of Americans (e.g., those marginalized by their race, gender, class, sexual orientation, or other approved social status) need to be further read and studied in order to illuminate the critiques they raise about the “hegemonic” mainstream American society. The amusing part is that nobody, *nobody*, in the room disagrees with this “radical” proposal. It is all simply preaching to the choir. To be a real radical at an American Studies conference, one would need to stand up and argue that the Religious Right in America brought some benefits to American society or say a kind word for capitalism and “Big Business.” It is ideas of this type that are rarely heard in American Studies circles.

The problem for American Studies is not understanding the “marginalized” groups; because of their near unanimity of opinion, the real problem for American Studies is understanding the rest of America. As Sumida put it in his presidential address, “In American ethnic studies it is not only quite usual, though by no means exclusively, that the ‘object’ of our studies is ourselves, perhaps in ways both dangerously and happily analogous to how American scholars of American studies are ourselves part of the construction that is the object of our studies (*sic*).”³⁴ Having defined themselves as being in opposition to the culture at large, and having defined their field of study to be themselves, it is no wonder that there are large sections of American thought that are completely alien to the American Studies community.

I should also add that I am not as pessimistic about the state of the American academy as the above may sound. While the professoriate does lack much intellectual diversity, the students are not paying much attention to the professors. Talk to an American academic about modern students and it will not be long before you hear the complaint that students today are apathetic—less willing to man the barricades in social protest. The students of today quickly figure out the bent of the university, do what they need to do to graduate, and then depart for investment banks or Big Business. They listen politely to their professors and then go off to join the Other America.

Notes

1. Tom Wolfe, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1987), 56–57.
2. *Ibid.*, 60.
3. Michael Lewis, *Liar’s Poker: Rising Through the Wreckage on Wall Street* (New York: Norton, 1989).
4. Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: Harcourt: Brace & World, 1922), 34.
5. H. L. Mencken, “On Babbitts,” *The Baltimore Evening Sun*, 21 December 1925, reprinted in *The Impossible H. L. Mencken: A Selection of His Best Newspaper Stories*, ed. Elizabeth Rogers Marion (New York: Doubleday, 1925 [1991]), 212–215.
6. Wolfe, *Bonfire of the Vanities*, 58–59.

7. Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Banister, Jr.," *Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Library of America, 1785 [1984]), 838–839.
8. Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982).
9. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1904–05 [1977]).
10. Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Peter Carr," *Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Library of America, 1814 [1984]), 1349.
11. Wolfe, *Bonfire of the Vanities*, 75.
12. Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 67.
13. William F. Buckley, Jr., *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom"* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1951).
14. See, for instance, Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); or Sidney Hook, *Out of Step—An Unquiet Life in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper, 1987).
15. Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Higher Education* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990).
16. Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, seventh edition (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1986).
17. George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 1996).
18. Tremaine McDowell, *American Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), 26.
19. *Ibid.*, 39–40.
20. *Ibid.*, 40.
21. Richard M. Huber, "Contending Viewpoints: Rethinking American Cultural Studies," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures*, volume 24, numbers 3 & 4 (2001): 37–42; McDowell, *American Studies*; William Randel, "The Case for American Studies: An Appeal for Recognition and Support," *The Journal of Higher Education*, volume 30, number 2 (1959): 73–76; Robert H. Walker, *American Studies in the United States: A Survey of College Programs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958).
22. Gene Wise, "Paradigm Dramas in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement," *American Quarterly*, volume 31, number 3 (1979), 306.
23. Richard M. Huber, "A Theory of American Studies," *Social Education*, volume 18 (October 1954), 269.
24. Stephen H. Sumida, "Where in the World is American Studies? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association," *American Quarterly*, Volume 55, Number 3 (2003): 334–335.
25. *Ibid.*, 348.
26. Michael Denning, "'The Special American Conditions': Marxism and American Studies," *American Quarterly*, volume 38, number 3 (1986): 358.
27. Mary Kelley, "Taking Stands: American Studies at Century's End: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 29, 1999," *American Quarterly*, volume 52, number 1 (2000): 12.
28. American Studies Association "Affirmative Action Resolution," *ASA Newsletter* (September 2000), <http://www.georgetown.edu/crossroads/AmericanStudiesAssn/newsletter/archive/newsarchive/resolution.html> (emphasis added).
29. American Studies Association "Establishment of a Standing Committee on Ethnic Studies," *ASA Newsletter* (March 2003), <http://www.georgetown.edu/crossroads/AmericanStudiesAssn/newsletter/archive/newsarchive/ethnic03.htm>.
30. <http://www.georgetown.edu/crossroads/AmericanStudiesAssn/about/prizes.htm> provides a more comprehensive listing of the writings that have taken the John Hope Franklin Publication Prize for the "best published books in American Studies"; the Ralph Henry Gabriel Dissertation Prize for the "best doctoral dissertation in American Studies, American Ethnic Studies or American Women's Studies"; and the Constance M. Rourke

Prize for the "best article published in *American Quarterly*." Reading though the list of award recipients speaks for itself.

31. Robert Sklar, "Cultural History and American Studies: Past, Present and Future," in *American Studies: Topics and Sources*, ed. Robert H. Walker (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 4.
32. Robert Merideth, *Subverting Culture: The Radical as Teacher*, Seminar, New University Conference, Miami University, 1969, 1.
33. Gene Wise, "Paradigm Dramas in American Studies," 312-313.
34. Sumida, "Where in the World is American Studies?" 345.

for reasoned scholarship in a free society

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) is an organization of professors, graduate students, college administrators, independent scholars, and trustees committed to rational discourse as the foundation of academic life in a free and democratic society. The NAS works to enrich the substance and strengthen the integrity of scholarship and teaching, persuaded that only through an informed understanding of the Western intellectual heritage and the realities of the contemporary world, can citizen and scholar be equipped to sustain our civilization's achievements. In light of these objectives, the NAS is deeply concerned about the widening currency within the academy of perspectives that reflexively denigrate the values and institutions of our society. Because such tendencies are often dogmatic in character, and indifferent to both logic and evidence, they also tend to undermine the basis for coherent scholarly dialogue. Recognizing the significance of this problem, the NAS encourages a renewed assertiveness among academics who value reason and an open intellectual life.