

Death to the Orignary Narrative! or, Insurgent Multiculturalism and Teaching Multiethnic Literature

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In *A Different Mirror*, Ronald Takaki recounts an incident with a taxi driver as he heads to a conference on multiculturalism in Norfolk, Virginia. In a drawling accent, the taxi driver compliments Takaki on his English and asks him how long he had been in the country. After informing the driver that his family had been in the United States for over a hundred years, Takaki muses over the significance of the encounter. "Somehow," he writes, "I did not look 'American' to him; my eyes and complexion looked foreign" (1). And, more to the point, he adds: "I can understand why he couldn't see me as American. He had a narrow but widely shared sense of the past—a history that has viewed American as European in ancestry" (2). Takaki's anecdote holds much import for those of us who teach from a multicultural perspective. It clearly illustrates the dogged Eurocentricity that informs perceptions of national identity and culture in the United States. Moreover, it shows that these ideas are not simply abstractions, but that they have an impact on the daily lives of US citizens, especially those who happen to be people of color.

As educators, Takaki's anecdote tells us that we still have a long way to go before the thinking behind such incidents is erased from personal and collective memory. Part of the struggle remains to rewrite excluded people back into the national and cultural narrative. As Takaki rightly affirms, "America has been racially

diverse since our very beginning. . . and this reality is increasingly becoming visible and ubiquitous" (2). Teachers and scholars of multiethnic literature are also involved in that battle as we raise canonical issues and proceed with the crucial project of recovering neglected writers and situating them in the canon. In what most people consider "American literature," there has also been the type of ethnocentrism exhibited by Takaki's taxi driver. The intellectual and literary version of this type of ideological construction is exemplified by what Nina Baym calls "the Originary Narrative." For teachers of multiethnic literature, the struggles to eliminate racist euro- and anglocentricity from all facets of our lives cannot be disassociated from the dislodging of this literary narrative from theory and pedagogical practice. But, as Baym demonstrates, it is a "story" as deeply entrenched as its more popular counterpart.

Baym traces the origins of "American literary history," as a field, to the cultural agenda of the American Whigs during the post-revolutionary period.¹ The Whigs were promoting, along with the early literary historians, a national type based on what they perceived as the superior Puritan qualities and values of self-reliance, self-control, and, most importantly, acceptance of hierarchy.² With increasing immigration, the Whigs and similarly minded educators wanted to shape citizens along Anglo-Saxon, Puritan lines and they envisioned the study of literature as an efficient way to do it. Between 1882-1912, publishers, the most prominent being Houghton-Mifflin, cranked out "extracts in compilations" for the public school curriculum that

enunciated patriotic, moral, and Christian sentiments, and in true Whig fashion attributed the enlightened, prosperous, independent, intelligent, Christian, honest, hardworking, sober and moral American character—along with the republican institutions that such a character had created—to New England Puritan origins. (82)

That this narrative of the nation's literary development has origins in a nation-building project is not surprising, nor is the evidence that Baym provides for the persistence and entrenchment of this uncritical New England bias within the academy and its institutions.

However, we must take notice of Baym's concluding assumptions and claims that present this Orinary Narrative as an insurmountable barrier for literary historians, scholars, and educators. At the end of her essay, Baym states that there exists a "supposition that American authors necessarily articulate a New England vision" along with "the still functioning preference that they actually *be* of New England descent" (101, her emphasis). Baym seems to imply that these ideas, inculcated and ingrained into American minds everywhere, especially those teaching the "national literature," and more specifically those in the supposedly "foundational" area of "early American literature," are too strong to overcome. These claims can only appear odd to scholars and teachers of multiethnic literature. Who among multiethnic literary scholars and teachers would claim that ethnic writers "necessarily" articulate a New England vision? The increasing popularity of multiethnic writers—and the national and international recognition they are receiving—belies the claim that in the United States a New England hegemony *completely* dictates reading tastes. How critics and scholars respond to the narrative is another matter. More than anything, her insightful observations show how mostly white male literary historians have traditionally shared ideology that accommodates and glorifies their own subject positions, and that the entrenchment of these ideas speak more to the continuing exclusivity and power of the hermeneutic circle of critics that has influenced and shaped the field of "American" literature.

Nowhere in her essay does Baym use the available criticism on multiethnic writers to show how it could fall victim to the allure of the Orinary Narrative. However, if we consider Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, published three years later, it appears that even multiethnic critics cannot resist having to respond to the Orinary Narrative even if in opposition.³ Thus, the Orinary Narrative becomes the centerpiece of American literary study and intellectual thought because it is either being affirmed or subverted but never neglected. More to the point, I believe, is Baym's comment that behind the "tenacity" of the Orinary Narrative lies such "human matters as inertia and vested interest," and the sobering thought that "whether or not it is a true account of the origins of American literature, certainly [the Orinary Narrative]

represents the origins of 'American literature,' the field of study" and to "escape it" would require the dismantling of the field itself (101).

These remarks serve as a challenge for scholars and teachers of multiethnic literature who still believe that praxis can make a difference in transforming society. From our perspective, it is easier to hope that the *Originary Narrative* will fade into oblivion, but Baym's analysis does show the lingering presence that it has within the critical corpus and the construction of literary history. Unfortunately, that presence also translates into and extends to other issues within the academy, ranging from curriculum and hiring decisions to practices in teaching and scholarship. The teaching of multiethnic literature and the promotion of multiculturalism in general, whether in primary grades or at the university level, are clearly undermined by prevailing vestiges of monoculturalism and national cultural identity typified in ideological constructs such as the *Originary Narrative*. As multiethnic literature scholars and teachers, we have always worked with the understanding that a principal goal of dismantling the field could very well be supplanting the *Originary Narrative*, which, in turn, would contribute to the wider objective of re-conceptualizing "national identity and culture" from within a more inclusive, multicultural perspective. Baym argues that such a replacement would retain the "didactic and rhetorical aims" set by the Whigs precisely because "we are teachers as well as scholars" (101). In this regard, I believe that Baym is correct. Although the type of pedagogical agenda of multiculturalists obviously differs from that of the Whigs, it is still based on the premise that education has a significant reciprocal relationship to culture. Like the Whigs, contemporary progressive advocates of multiculturalism are following politics of change still informed by liberal thought.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to produce an alternative literary history of the United States that can challenge the *Originary Narrative*. In the prevailing postmodernist and poststructuralist critical environment, some would even question the purpose behind such a project. But postmodernism does not invalidate the value of literary history. In their essay "Rethinking Literary History—Comparatively," Mario J. Valdes and Linda Hutcheon

argue that "the problematizing challenges that new methodological paradigms have raised" actually open up "new concrete possibilities" (1). These two literary scholars show that a current version of literary history can be produced by incorporating postmodernist ideas. For the reasons mentioned above, challenging and replacing the Originary Narrative remains a significant project for multiethnic literary scholars to undertake. A multicultural literary history of the United States would push to the foreground, in a more concrete way, the present debates over how we should view what constitutes a "national literature." Such a volume, and similar others following suit, would directly challenge the still lingering vestiges of the Originary Narrative, would give it its *coup de grace*.⁴ Without such an alternative history, our pedagogy stands isolated in fending off the center. As teachers, we must subscribe to a guerilla-type offensive, sneaking from the shadowy margins in continual ambushes while hoping to dismantle the hegemonic stronghold. Until a brave critic and scholar takes the charge and writes that alternative literary history, our teaching practices will be informed by the realization that "A literary history of the dominant white and male culture will only in limited degree be a useful account of the development of the varied literary cultures of the United States" (Lauter, *Canons* 53).

Where does that leave teachers of multiethnic literature? How do we proceed to theorize and teach without the type of direction that even a "contingent," well-articulated alternative narrative of multicultural US literature could offer? Ultimately, we probably infuse the strategies and methods that would otherwise inform an alternative literary history into the courses we design and the practices we employ in the classroom. No doubt, the urgent demands to teach a reconstructed canon "drive us toward reconstructed classrooms" (Lauter, "Afterword" 942), but I wonder if this rush to the pedagogy may not lead us to hasty and uncritical praxis. We may presume to circumvent postmodernist paralysis by fast-forwarding to agency through a proactive pedagogy that, in essence, attempts to dismantle the field of "American literature" as we know it. However, we still need to be aware of potential dangers lurking in a theoretical world that undermines and destabi-

lizes concepts and signifiers—such as nation-state—that continue to contain power and affect people's lives.

Maria Koundoura, for example, would alert us to the lessons of history as we promote multiculturalism. For Koundoura, social dramas such as *The Cultural and Canon Wars* have precedents.⁵ They represent crises of political recognition that usually have galvanized proponents of the hegemonic culture against a perceived threat to that culture, or they manage the crisis by commodifying minority cultures and containing them under an official multicultural policy (Bennett 69).⁶ Koundoura describes a similar situation in the United Kingdom that both J.S. Mill and Matthew Arnold analyzed in their respective influential works, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1882) and *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). In response to workers' demand for the franchise, both Mill and Arnold came to view education as a solution to the crisis. They both argued that workers (male in this case) had to be educated in order to function responsibly within a democracy. Influenced by these two thinkers, the English government sought, as did the Whigs earlier in the United States, to implement the teaching of English literature as a way to instill proper values in the masses. Koundoura writes that the first of a series of reports on education in Britain (the Newbolt Report of 1921) emphasized "the socializing function of the school rather than a straightforward instruction in knowledge" (70).

The lesson learned from Arnold's and Mill's intervention in this crisis was that "politics lost out to aesthetics" (70). Both men advocated an educational program based on elitist values and beliefs that ultimately disavowed capitalist political objectives. Koundoura sees this resolution of class crisis as being repeated in present-day multicultural objectives and programs. If these programs do not disengage themselves from the liberalist tendencies derived from Arnold and Mill, she claims, they are bound to "unwittingly maintain the very structures that they seek to dismantle: the idea of a single yet diverse nation, a nation made up of particularities which none the less compose a totality" (70). According to Koundoura, this emphasis on the liberal idea of one common culture still informing much of multicultural thought tends to operate at the aesthetic level at the expense of the politi-

cal,⁷ thus “calls for a democratic culture run the risk of becoming another transformation of liberal democracy’s crisis-management of representation” (70).

Koundoura’s main concern is for scholars and teachers interested in promoting the political agenda of cultural diversity to question the image of the nation and not be trapped “by the single-nation building project” which renders the politics ineffective (71). She proposes a theory of “multinationalism” as a substitute for “multiculturalism” to avoid these tendencies. The theory calls for a critique that extricates the text or subject of study from the containment of “one nation,” with all its accompanying ideological constructions and their attached values, and situates it within a field of “nations” and “a simultaneity of histories” (83). However, such a critical strategy does not necessarily eliminate the impulse to totalize or generalize (consider her own example of Jameson’s characterization of ‘Third World Literature’ as “necessarily allegorical” (87). A bigger problem, however, is that foregrounding the global and pan-historical may prove hermeneutically useful, but it tends to distance praxis and theory from national and cultural politics, and, as Henry Giroux reminds us, “the act of theorizing cannot be abstracted from the conditions we inherit or from the problems that emerge in the face of specific historical conditions” (*Pedagogy* 254). This emphasis on globalization also minimizes the importance of counter-memory as pedagogical and political practice.⁸

Moreover, nationalism, as Koundoura herself asserts, is not dead and, without any viable alternative to the “nation-state,” it seems likely that the world’s societies will continue to live under governments operating under nation-states for an indeterminable period. This means that in the United States progressives will have to contend with struggles over the national imaginary. If social change is their goal, then they must offer ideas of nation, national identity, national literature, and so forth that can replace those already lodged in the various cultural spheres. Eschewing such agency will not only allow for present conservative and reactionary ideology to thrive but, unopposed, may develop into more virulent forms. Multi-nationalism may, in fact, ultimately lead to the ineffectual politics that Koundoura is trying to resist.

Agency, especially on the part of the teacher, is crucial to Henry Giroux's concept of border pedagogy. Giroux does not want progressives to concede the imaginary terrain to conservatives. Much of his current work is a response to the crisis initiated by the changing modernist perceptions of the nation-state and their related concepts. If Koundoura would have us learn from the lessons of history, Giroux warns against the pitfalls involved in theorizing within the globalized, multinational capitalism that has precipitated the aforementioned changes. In almost direct response to Koundoura's arguments, and similar ones derived from current "post" theorizations, Giroux writes, quoting Judith Squires, that it is crucial for educators "'to locate our theorizing in the grounded sites of cultural and political resistance within the US' and. . . to guard against the tendency 'to over-generalize the global current of so-called nomadic, fragmented and deterritorialized subjectivity'" ("Politics" 179). As important as the discourse of globalization might be, he argues, "it cannot be used to overlook how national identity reasserts itself within new discourses and sites of learning. . . progressives need to address how the politics of difference and identity are being constructed around new right-wing discourses and policies" (179).

Although Giroux de-emphasizes postmodernist ideas on globalization, he still adapts many postmodernist critical strategies to formulate a border pedagogy that "offers the opportunity for students to engage the multiple references that constitute different cultural codes, experiences and languages" (*Pedagogy* 147). Using what he calls a "postmodernism of resistance," Giroux has his students cross borders to enable them to use knowledge in the margins or peripheries of the dominant culture to not only question the center but also to construct new ways of seeing and thinking. In this classroom, difference is not only affirmed and appreciated but is used to understand the social, political, and historical factors that work to construct them. Unlike Koundoura, Giroux believes that a multicultural program can have a "moral imperative" and that it need not drop its "project of democracy." The postmodern challenge to modernity does not represent the abandonment of its emancipatory values so much as it opens them up to a plurality of contexts and an indeterminacy that "redefines them in an unre-

dictable way" (*Pedagogy* 151). Border pedagogy is praxis driven by what he calls "radical democracy": "the effort to expand the possibility for social justice, freedom, and egalitarian social relations in the educational, economic, political, and cultural domains that locate men, women and children in everyday life" (*Pedagogy* ix). If this seems utopian to some, Giroux counters with Linda Alcoff's admonition that "you cannot mobilize a movement that is only and always against: you must have a positive alternative, a vision of a better future that can motivate people to sacrifice their time and energy towards its realization" (*Pedagogy* 153).

At a time when postmodernist thought has undermined the concept of nation-state, the paradox for progressives in the United States is precisely how to formulate pedagogy toward building a more just and egalitarian nation. Giroux and other similar critics believe there are strategies within postmodernism itself to move towards that goal. Border pedagogy represents such a theorization of praxis that, I am sure, resonates with the practices of colleagues teaching multiethnic literature. What seems crucial to me is the comprehension of the political—some would say subversive—nature of such praxis. Multiethnic literature cannot be taught only to "celebrate" diversity or to finally give minorities a "voice." Lest we forget, the field of multiethnic literature received its impetus with the struggles for social justice during the 1960s and 1970s. Those political movements raised valid questions concerning the functioning of social structures and institutions including the academy. Many of the young activists in the forefront of those battles, some who benefited directly from the opening up of the university, would later form the cadre of educators demanding the formation of departments and programs dedicated to ethnic studies. The literary scholars and teachers among them would lead the way towards interrogating curricula, the canon, and the institutionalization of practices that excluded the voices of underrepresented Americans. The founding of MELUS itself, in 1973, was partly a consequence of the political stirrings of the period. These accomplishments did not come easy and without an eventual backlash from conservatives and reactionaries. Despite those attacks, progressive scholars and teachers made some strides in promoting multiculturalism and the teaching of multiethnic literatures. Yet,

we should understand “that the old walls will not crumble because we march around them blowing the trumpets of Hurston and LeSueur” (Lauter, *Canons* 9). We would fool ourselves to think that minor victories, which represent only a glimmer of the expectations for a possible society, are guaranteed to survive through the next two decades.

We are living in a very conservative, reactionary period in which monocultural ideology still holds favor while multiculturalism is generally viewed as anathema.⁹ To cite one example, in 1998 a “Core Curriculum” emphasizing American History and Western Civilization was approved by the Trustees of the State University of New York, the largest comprehensive public university system in the nation. For those who may remember, this is only a decade after the memorable Stanford decision to replace their Western Culture curriculum with a more multicultural one. Although the curriculum allows for a course in “Non-Western Civilization,” this project was formulated without much faculty input and essentially it is a top-down mandate (without the necessary funding and resources to make it work properly, by the way). The Core Curriculum does not directly address any issues related to race, gender, or class. The faculty has the responsibility to design the courses for the curriculum, but one must wonder what success will a progressively-based content have of approval within the climate established by these Trustees? Consider another example: the SUNY Trustee who spearheaded the new curriculum changes has spoken out against black studies programs, claiming that they have an “anti-American bias” and lack of “rigor.”¹⁰ She wants to “mainstream” these programs into traditional departments. We see this type of aggressive conservative politics everywhere in the country’s public forums and institutions: curriculum changes and federal funding that privilege hegemony; reversals of past victories; affirmative action under a concerted, consistent onslaught; and the attacks on multiculturalism not wavering or ceased. Undoubtedly, conservatives fully understand what is at stake and are not hesitant about winning the hearts and minds of the citizenry.

The teaching of multiethnic literature cannot be separated from the wider context of multiculturalism. To avoid having multicul-

turalism become another “crisis management” solution in the United States, we need what Giroux calls, in *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, an “insurgent multiculturalism.” Such an educational philosophy requires new ways of speaking about diversity and cultural differences, making this discourse central to democratic life and activity. An insurgent multiculturalism would not only focus on ethnicity and issues associated with people of color, it would also evaluate and critique “whiteness” as a concept that organizes dominant institutions. From this perspective, Giroux argues, it is necessary to develop “a unity-in-difference” position “that will enable new forms of democratic representation, participation and citizenship to provide a forum for creating unity without denying the particular and the multiple” (“Politics” 192). Reading literature in a class guided by this pedagogy becomes primarily, although not exclusively, an exercise in developing social awareness and agency.

Bhikhu Parekh views multiculturalism as neither political doctrine nor a philosophical school but “as a perspective on or a way of viewing human life” (1). Still, educational policies and programs developed along multiculturalist perspectives have distinct roots in liberalism (Dhillon and Halstead 150). This is not the “liberal education” in the Platonic sense of the disinterested search for knowledge serving as the basis of “human good.” Certainly, that thought still sneaks into arguments and current debates on education. It is easy for some professors to assume that position, given the traditional sense of the profession—until, of course, they have to pay the mortgage. Some would actually attack this view of education as paternalistic, elitist, and even anti-liberal (Callan and White 96-97). Present-day education debates draw much of their ideas from a philosophical tradition concerned with the individual and his or her place in the community, and the attendant issue of the role of education in that consideration. Arguments marshaled by opposing sides in most educational debates, including those over multiculturalism, tend to revolve around the larger debate concerning “the comparative strengths and weaknesses of liberal and communitarian theory” (Callan and White 103) which, in turn, goes further back to the seminal polemic between Kant’s ideas on individual sovereignty and Hegel’s critique of it. One could add

that the multicultural perspective also raises questions concerning the signification of "individual" and "community."¹¹ Following in Hegel's steps, communitarians seek to restore the importance of community in people's lives without de-limiting individual rights and freedom. Liberals concerned with autonomy worry about how a community can restrict individual rights.

Both liberal and communitarian positions strive to theorize the proper conditions for attaining a balance between autonomy and a life of well-being, in which "among other things, one's basic biological needs are met and one's major goals in life are broadly achieved" (Callan and White 99). That autonomy and well-being are not mutually exclusive is an idea that some critics want to pursue. They argue that if autonomy is an ideal it seems to make sense to raise children with an interest in promoting "other people's self-directedness as well as their own" (Callan and White 101). Similarly, "can a concern for one's own well-being be conceived in total abstraction from a concern with the well-being of other people?" (Callan and White 101). Multiculturalists tend to view this balance as significant and formulate educational theory with it in mind.

From the multicultural perspective, the school as institution becomes a site of intersection between concerns for autonomy and community. Some multiculturalists argue that an educational philosophy that affirms and teaches respect for difference is not only beneficial for individual development but is also important for the functioning of a democratic society. Although Parekh does not consider multiculturalism as a political or philosophical doctrine, he still argues that monocultural education is "a narrow and impoverished education for children of the majority culture, and that multiculturalism represents an "education of freedom":

If education is concerned to develop such basic human capacities as curiosity, self-criticism, capacity for reflection, ability to form an independent judgement, sensitivity, intellectual humility and respect for others, and to open the pupil's mind to the great achievements of mankind, then it must be multicultural in orientation. (qtd. in Dhillon and Halstead 153)

The attributes of such an education are presumed to be significant not only for a person's pursuit of autonomy, but for social stability and harmony. Educational theories that emphasize democracy as "an ideal way of living in community" demonstrate strong affinities to John Dewey's ideas. Dewey believed that the school was the principal site for the realization of democratic community (Callan and White 104). Modern followers of Dewey, including Giroux, will attest to the limitations of Dewey's educational theory when it comes to issues of race, gender, and class. They want to retain the school as an instrument in shaping democracy and community. However, their theories incorporate the school's role in changing values and beliefs related to those pressing issues that presently loom large in obstructing that "possible" democracy. Thus, for Giroux, there is a need for radical democracy, border pedagogy, and an insurgent multiculturalism.

What does all this mean to the teacher of multiethnic literature? Every teacher must weigh the importance of the ideas discussed here and apply them as he or she sees fit within his or her own pedagogy and praxis, always remembering his or her subject position and teaching situation. I am a Puerto Rican male who teaches US literature and Latino/a literature to mostly white students in a predominantly white institution located in an area where you rarely see a person of color. I cross borders every day. Indeed, being Puerto Rican means being in a perpetual border state. Thus, I feel quite confident guiding my charges through borderlands even as every class represents new challenges in border crossing for me. Giroux's border pedagogy and insurgent multiculturalism represent not only theoretical frameworks for devising very concrete practices, but they also empower me by instilling in my cultural work a much needed sense of value. I choose texts carefully, thinking how they serve the dialogic operations inherent in border crossing. I consider race, gender, and class while choosing texts from a literature that, when it comes to these topics, offers an embarrassment of riches. Knowing that my students' experiences in reading these selected texts can lead to critical thought about their identities and the very real situations that have an impact on all of our lives, I work hard to build a community of responsible learners. I want the texts to burst open

controversial issues, taboos, things unspoken and unsaid—to break through the “paradigm of denial” that not only functions historically (Acosta-Belén and Santiago 33) but within a culture of domination that “necessarily promotes addiction to lying and denial” (hooks 29) to hide the intrinsic flaws of capitalism.

I cannot help thinking how valuable it is to historicize, to have students consider questions of globalization from the type of position that Koundoura suggests. I think about José Martí's concept of *Nuestra America* and how, as Edna Acosta-Belen and Carlos Santiago correctly assert, it is more relevant today than ever before (41). How else can we read Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Junot Diaz's *Drown*, Gomez-Peña's work, or even Graciela Limón's *Searching for Bernabé*? These writers force literature students towards issues seemingly distant from their shores but which, on closer scrutiny, implicate their country and government. They also signal the increasing transnational interests of Latino/a writers. Teaching Latino/a literature necessitates a constant crossing of historical and national borders. The student should see how Spanish imperial projects both contrasted with and resembled those of the British. Writers of Spanish explorations and the colonial period, such as Cabeza de Vaca, Pérez de Villagra, and Fray Matias de Saénz, come into direct conflict with the Originary Narrative. Moreover, through the various Latino/a texts originally written in Spanish, students begin to comprehend the richness of not only cultures but languages other than English in the nation's history.¹² Above all else, I keep in mind bell hooks's wise advice about pleasure in the classroom. Subversive activity need not be grim.

It is prudent for any field to be self-reflective—to take stock of itself occasionally, to understand where it is and where it would like to go. Such self-evaluation is necessary to consider new trends in theory and how these might apply to praxis. Given the contemporary national politics, serious thinking about our field seems almost imperative. It becomes increasingly difficult to proceed smoothly with the many plans we may have for multiethnic literature, indeed the very practice of teaching and the scholarship we are pursuing, while feeling embattled and paranoid. In a fog of war, it is hard to find your way. This special issue of *MELUS*—

which features essays on pedagogy, praxis, politics, and their relationship to our subject area—represents an opportunity for discussion on issues related to these topics so crucial to our field of study. The thoughts I have shared with you in this discursive space are meant to contribute to that necessarily ongoing discussion. The issues discussed in this essay are related to the role and limits of literary theory in the development and teaching of multiethnic literature in the United States, especially within the present adverse political atmosphere. If the Origiary Narrative is ever to be supplanted, progressive teachers of multiethnic literature need to further the goals of an insurgent multiculturalism. They need to become adept practitioners of border pedagogy as they keep in mind the exigencies of history and the political and rhetorical nature of their acts.

Notes

1. The first version of Baym's essay appeared in *American Literary History* in 1989. I cite the essay anthologized in the *American Literary History Reader*, a compilation of essays celebrating the journal's fifth anniversary.
2. Both Whigs and their political opponents, the Democrats, stressed puritanical values, but the former were much more willing to be prescriptive and use institutions to impose them. For a sense of the Whig position on education see Biddle, Mann, and Choate.
3. Morrison analyzes works by Poe, Melville, Cather, and Hemingway, who actually do not fit into the first tier of the Origiary Narrative, as Hawthorne does, for example. According to Baym, both Poe and Melville had difficulties entering the canon precisely because they did not have New England credentials. Baym's argument is that literary historians eventually found ways to accommodate these two and other writers (Whitman, for example) into the Origiary Narrative by finding some connection to New England or Puritan culture, thought, or concerns.
4. A good start would be Lauter's essay in *Canons and Contexts*, "The Literatures of America—A Comparative Discipline," which outlines main issues, problems, and strategies towards a method for studying the literature of the US from a multicultural perspective.
5. Most readers have probably read the books central to those debates. In passing, I summarize them for the sake of context. One of the first on the subject is Fiedler and Baker, Jr.'s *Opening Up the Canon* (1981). Von Hallberg's *Canons* (1984) is a collection of essays. The two most controversial books, Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*, were both published in 1987. Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* (1994) is a blatant attempt at re-asserting the "great books." Schlesinger's *The*

Disuniting of America is a broadside against multiculturalism, especially in the schools. Cain and Graff's *Teaching the Conflicts* (1994) focuses on curricular reform.

6. For an analysis of such a project in Australia, see pages 79-81 of Koudoura's essay. In the same volume, see Stratton and Ang.

7. A fate that befalls Gloria Anzaldúa and Henry Louis Gates, Jr, according to Koundoura. Anzaldúa, she claims, in emphasizing the "borderlands" as metaphor, "loses its particular national socio-political relevance and turns it into a universal cultural symbol that hides the acts of nation that construct it," acts which include immigration and national economic and cultural policies (72). Koundoura argues that in trying to justify "black arts of interpretation," Gates ultimately privileges the very "tragic lure of white power" that he criticizes. Gates wants to formulate a criticism based on the black idiom, independent from theory, but must rely on that very theory to sustain this move.

8. Giroux adapts Foucault's notion of counter-memory to his concept of border pedagogy to enable students to mediate between the past and present and provide "the grounds for self-representation." See "Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism" in *Pedagogy* (147-63).

9. For an assessment and analysis of the effects of neoconservatism on culture and politics, see Giroux's "Public Intellectuals and the Culture of Reaganism" in *Pedagogy and Politics of Hope* (254-71). Also see "Democracy and Difference Under Siege," for Giroux's analysis of the conservative America 2000 educational reform proposal (*Living Dangerously* 125-53).

10. See McGrath on SUNY Trustee Candace De Russy. For the conservative position on the controversy, see Kurtz. See De Russy, for a sense of her politics.

11. Bhabha argues that minority discourse often signifies the individual from a communal position. Demands for recognition are never articulated in defense of 'autonomy' or 'sovereignty' for the individual as traditionally signified. See also Bennett and Bhaba.

12. For an excellent anthology on the many languages of US literature, see Sollors, particularly Sollors's Introduction and Cagidemetrio's essay.

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