

## Chapter 5

### GRIEVANCES

“What is the obligation of white intellectuals to *their* people?”

Hortense J. Spillers

How did Native American criticism enter the academy? In telling that story, the editors of the volume Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective (2008) begin with a series of historical coincidences: “From the late 1960s to the end of the 1980s, more federal legislation affecting Indian country was passed than during any comparable period in U.S. history. Within that same period literary studies were in an upheaval over the question as to what constitutes literature, which books should be considered the proper objects of study, how they should be read, and the very ability of language itself to effectively name the world” (3).<sup>1</sup> Two pages later, the introduction again juxtaposes legislation affecting Native Americans with innovation in criticism: “In 1978, the same year French philosopher Michael Foucault’s landmark study, The History of Sexuality, is published in the United States in its English translation, American Indians are granted religious freedom ... when Congress passes the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), which promises to ‘protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express and exercise their traditional religions’” (5). “In the same year as Foucault’s study is published and AIRFA becomes law,” the editors go on, “Congress passes the Indian Child Welfare Act, which gives tribal courts jurisdiction over Native

children living on reservations. Now the tribes will make the decisions as to whether the children will be removed from their families” (5).

What should be made of these coincidences? Between the late 1960s and the end of the 1980s, big things were happening in literary criticism, and big things were also happening in Indian affairs. But how were these things connected to each other, if indeed they were? How much did the political self-assertion of Native Americans, inspired in part by the civil rights movement, have to do with Foucault, the history of sexuality, and the upheaval in literary studies?

From the perspective of literary studies, one place where the two trajectories clearly converged was on the question of “which books should be considered the proper objects of study”—in a more loaded vocabulary, what cultural heritage is worth preserving. Variants of this question have been asked for as long as books have been studied, and most if not all of the answers could certainly be considered political in at least some sense of that word. But in this period the politics is right up front. A new set of answers arrives (in Native American studies, for example, the proposition that the community’s oral traditions as well as recent Native American authors should be taught). That new set of texts arrives, in general, by way of direct political action, and action on the part of a new set of political agents: activists representing women and minorities. But the new discipline of Native American studies is not established without difficulty. From academia’s perspective, the difficulty is not hard to understand: politics, including politics of the sort that gets bills passed, was seen by many academics as trespassing where it emphatically did not belong. As laid out in the plan for "Native American Studies as an Academic Discipline" at the First Convocation of American Indian Scholars in March 1970 at Princeton University, the aims of the incipient discipline included defending indigenous

control of their lands and indigenous rights and ultimately reforming US Indian policy.<sup>2</sup> These aims might well seem threatening in themselves, but they also collided with the assumption, held by a considerable proportion of faculty members, that the kinds and standards of knowledge produced in the university should be decided by the university alone. Any outside influence counted as a violation of the university's autonomy. The sense of threat would be more immediate for legislators and university trustees who benefit materially from ownership or control of what had been indigenous lands and resources.

In 1966, when members of the as yet unnamed American Indian Movement, which in 1973 would go on to participate in the armed stand-off at Wounded Knee, submitted a report requesting that the University of Minnesota reach out to the surrounding Native American community, they found that they could not get a satisfactory hearing until they had that community vociferously behind them. According to the university's own website, "University administrators did not lend their support for the report until political pressures forced them to respond to the demands of a growing American Indian student population and the radical activism of the Twin Cities' American Indian community."<sup>3</sup> It was only thanks to "political pressures," in other words, that the nation's first department of American Indian Studies was brought into being in 1969.

Versions of this story were repeated around the country. There were petitions and demonstrations in the streets. Thanks in large part to this agitation, new programs and departments came into being, and with them different kinds of attention to more inclusive sets of texts. Teachers in old departments, often newly exposed to and charmed by those texts, freely chose to make adjustments to their reading lists and research agendas. Multiply the breakthrough at the University of Minnesota by the many organizations of women and minorities that were

simultaneously pushing for greater academic representation, whether in ethnic studies programs or women's studies programs or within traditional departments, and you get a snapshot of a nation-wide struggle that would go on for decades, always available for use by controversy-seeking journalists. The so-called canon wars would pit those holding fast to the great tradition, or the core curriculum, or E.D. Hirsch's cultural literacy, each seen as neutral and universal (or *national* and universal, as paradoxically proposed by Hirsch), against rebels clamoring for the inclusion of culture produced by women and minorities and insisting that the canon itself, which largely excluded them, has never not been the product of "political pressures."<sup>4</sup> There is no need here to dwell on the specifics. Though the hostilities never officially ended, this is now ancient history. And by now it should be obvious who won. Take down from the shelf a random stack of recent volumes of the Publication of the Modern Language Association (PMLA) and skim each table of contents, and what will you find in the discipline's flagship journal, fifty years later? A nine-essay section devoted to There There, the debut novel of the Native American writer Tommy Orange (May 2020), another nine-essay special section devoted to disability in Jennifer Egan's Manhattan Beach (March 2019), as well as pieces on the Nobel-Prize-winning indigenous activist Rigoberta Menchu (March 2020), on the troubled translation of indigenous languages into Spanish (March 2019), on the relatability of queer poet Frank O'Hara (October 2019), on "reading Jewish" (January 2019), and on the slogan "Black Lives Matter" (January 2020). None of these essays could be presumptively classified, to use the Old Guard's indignant terminology, as "grievance studies." (Their relation to grievance depends not on the materials chosen, but on what the authors do with those materials and how you feel about what they do.) But there is no doubt that groups with a grievance are now much better represented in the

discipline than they were a half century ago. To be more precise, they are participating in the university's governance. What began as a rebellion is now an administration.<sup>5</sup>

To return, then, to our initial question: what does criticism's new small-d democratic administration have to do with the fate of American democracy in general? This is not the place for a full discussion of the consequences for society as a whole of what happens inside the university. That would require a separate book. But to address what has happened in criticism is to take at least a baby step in that direction. Assuming that it was indeed "political pressures," intruding on the academy, that put criticism's new government in power, do the critics so empowered retain a special relationship with the constituencies that empowered them? Do they offer anything in return? Do these constituencies render the authority of their representatives, such as it is, more legitimate? Or is there reason to doubt whether they do in fact continue to represent those who made possible their entry into the academy? What do they *do* in the academy other than what the academy wants them to do, whatever that may be? Would they be better described, to use a 60s phrase, as coopted?<sup>6</sup>

Those who have observed that class was never as high on 60s agendas as race, gender, and sexuality will also have noticed that, during this push toward greater equality of representation, economic inequality increased massively. Seen from this angle, the institutionalization of the 60s movements is likely to count as a pyrrhic victory, if it counts as a victory at all. One outlook on the canon wars, which we have already encountered, would maintain accordingly that the only truly important measure of progress would have been the achieving by the economically disadvantaged of something that thus far they have been unequivocally denied: greater access to the socially-valued credentials that higher education bestows, however the content of those credentials is defined. The implication is that the content

of the canon is politically irrelevant and that in demanding curricular representation, women and minorities have been misled, distracted from their real interests, most likely by an over-investment in matters of social symbolism that are finally inconsequential. If one steps back from a university-based perspective to take in the full social landscape, curricular victories certainly do not seem worth gloating over even if economic equality is not one's sole concern. As Elizabeth Cook-Lynn notes in introducing the issue of Wicazo Sa Review in which her history of Native American Studies, cited above, appears, "The assault by white America upon Native Indians goes forward, it seems, which is not good news for those who want to believe that racism is declining in our good land" (5).

Responses come to mind, but they are not very satisfying. Yes, the juxtaposition by the Native Critics Collective of better representation in the academy with better representation at the level of federal policy hints that significant democratic processes are operating in both domains, and perhaps conjointly, even if there has been more success in one than in the other and something less than decisive triumph in either. The legislative achievements referred to above—there are more than I listed, including a federally-funded mandate for instruction in indigenous languages—have had practical effects for Native American life. The same holds for academic achievements. It is certain that their effects are never felt *only* in the academy. And even if the situation of Native Americans in the US today is no cause for celebration, those achievements demand to be given their due—all the more so, perhaps, in that the "real" politics in the name of which the merely "cultural" politics of those decades has been disparaged (for example, by Richard Rorty in Achieving Our Country) was defined, precisely, as the unmet challenge of passing legislation.<sup>7</sup> Yet it remains hard to know how much *is* due.

## EDWARD SAID AND THE ORGANIC INTELLECTUAL

I have referred above to the journalist-driven narrative which presents the channeling of the political energies of the 1960s into the university as something between a betrayal and a bad joke. This narrative has its adherents within the university, but for insiders the more frequent response to a yoking of their present academic employment to the 60s movements would probably be expressions of suspicion (is this really the case?) and (assuming it *is* the case) a pained signaling of unease and ambivalence. One prime site of ambivalence is the concept of the organic intellectual. As applied to academics, who might not otherwise seem to deserve the honor of being called intellectuals at all, Gramsci's term has suggested that in this instance the honor is in fact deserved because of the academic's bonds with a constituency outside the academy-- presumably one of a multiethnic, multigender, and non-heteronormative collection of constituencies which (like the working class for Gramsci) are supposed to be in the process of overcoming entrenched hostility and fighting their way upward or inward, and which could therefore be helped in their progress by the cultural work of those who emerged from or attached themselves to those constituencies. The suggestion is by no means self-evident. In "Romancing the Organic Intellectual," Aimee Carillo Rowe hesitates to affirm it, and the reason she gives is the confusion that comes of inhabiting multiple identities. She describes herself as a "middle-class Chicana; indigenous-identified Xicana; queer, single mother, living in a multigenerational home; teacher, student, scholar; post-structuralist U.S. third world feminist." Her relation to the concept of the organic intellectual has therefore been a "romance," but a "vexed" romance" (800-801).<sup>8</sup>

While Gramsci productively signals the ideological force our “connection” to home communities exerts over knowledge production, his account doesn’t provide an intersectional lens to untangle how multiple, cross-cutting connectivities become vexed through our labor as intellectuals. On the one hand, academics who seek to hold themselves accountable to colonized and marginalized groups often find themselves ... inhabiting “alien (if not hostile) territory.” Not only do our radical (be)longings become vexed vis-à-vis the academy, but the production of our labor as intellectuals may also alienate us from home communities: rising class status, assimilation, and institutionalization often strain those ties. The organic intellectual is forged not only through belonging to a social class but also through the thick-hot-molten force—the push-pull, in-out, here-there dance—of a radical in-betweenness that arises through our affective ties to multiple and often contradictory sites of power (800).

A similar set of reservations leads Hortense Spillers, writing in response to invocations of the organic intellectual by Cornel West, to break up with “organicity” once and for all.<sup>9</sup> In a classic essay, Spillers sets herself the task of comparing the situation of African Americans in the mid-90s with their situation in the mid-60s, when Harold Cruse was writing his Crisis of the Negro Intellectual (1967). What has happened since then? She begins: “Although African American intellectuals as a class have gained greater access to organs of public opinion and dissemination...” There follows a sequence of more “although” clauses (“although we can boast today a considerably larger black middle and upper-middle class”). The sequence goes on; and

by allowing it to go on, Spillers almost seems to be indulging the idea that there has in fact been significant progress since the 60s. But her list of middle-class Black achievements since the 60s, inside the academy and out, bumps down hard at the same spot where Cook-Lynn does: “the news concerning the African American life-world generally is quite grim” (68-69). Is this conclusion an unavoidable acknowledgment of grim social facts? Does it chiefly express, in excess of those facts, Spillers’ personal modesty? Perhaps it also reflects a *disciplinary* modesty, a collective tilt toward self-castigation. Spillers mentions “guilt over one’s relative success” next to “profound delusion about one’s capacity to lead the masses (of which, one supposes, it is certain that she is not herself one!”) (73). But what is most objectively disabling about the concept in her view is its fictitious idea of “the community” to which the organic intellectual supposedly remains or should remain bound. For Cruse, this community is a putative African American nation. Spillers doubts that such a nation has ever existed. “The ‘organic intellectual’ that we have imagined after Antonio Gramsci locates a romantic, liberated figure ... who never really fructified and who remains a symptom of nostalgic yearning, looking back on a childhood perfected through the lens of distance and distortion” (92). The community to which you imagine yourself linked is really just your idealized memory of your past, to which you *cannot* be bound in a way that has anything practical to do with the achievement of social justice in the changed circumstances of the present.

To this Spillers adds, in a characteristically explosive footnote, a series of questions as to why the Gramscian model should be permitted to lay a responsibility on African American academics from which white academics are somehow exempt: “What is the obligation of white intellectuals to *their* people? And why is the question never posed in that way, linking the white intellectual subject to ‘race’/ethnicity, since there seems to be incredible need for someone to

tend this field? Or did 1968 take care of that?” (101 n 31). These questions sound like they don’t expect answers. But they do not defy all possible rejoinders. My hypothesis here is that an effort to answer the first—that is, to affirm that non-Black intellectuals too have an obligation to “*their* people,” and to specify the logic behind this obligation and clarify the possible expansiveness of “*their*”—might point toward a reconciliation of sorts with the Gramscian model, considered as an aspirational account of what teachers of the humanities might want to accomplish, and feel capable of accomplishing, not as citizens but (unfairly) merely in the course of their professional duties. Pushing harder, as Spillers urges, on the question of what the ferment in the university might have been organic *to*, and insisting very properly that we cannot be content to posit either a singular, delimited African American community or any version of community that places no responsibility on whites (or straight white males), we might find ourselves taking the revised, post-60s notion of the organic intellectual away from an exclusive or primary identification with identity and placing it on firmer ground.

The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism (2001), a much-visited monument to the institutionalization of the 60s and one possible bookend to Bate’s Criticism: The Major Texts, thirty years earlier, makes the organic intellectual an emblem of that institutionalization.<sup>10</sup> In the introduction to its Gramsci section, the Norton editors describe the concept as follows: “organic intellectuals rise out of membership in social groups (or classes) that have an antagonistic relationship to established institutions and official power. They ‘articulate’ those groups’ needs and aspirations, which have frequently gone unexpressed. The organic intellectual does not simply parrot preexisting group beliefs or demands but brings to the level of public speech what has not been officially recognized. While a given group does have certain tendencies, the process of articulation itself will shape it” (1136). In a characteristic post-60s move, class is here

relativized; it is assumed that the organic intellectual can also be organic to collectivities other than classes.<sup>11</sup> What the organic intellectual does for and to those other collectivities, however, corresponds perfectly to the class-formative role that John Guillory observes, as we have seen, in his account of the critic/journalists of the eighteenth century: not merely reflecting or broadcasting the group's preexisting claims and values, but actively helping to articulate the group's consciousness, adapting that consciousness to the forces and opportunities it is facing, teaching it to exert and not merely contest power. The term comes up again in the Norton's selection from Stuart Hall (1932-2014), to whom the Norton might have offered some of the credit for this relativizing and to whom the term organic intellectual could plausibly be applied. But the only example of the organic intellectual the anthology offers, according to the index, is Edward W. Said (1935-2003). "In some sense," the editors write, "Edward Said fulfills the definition of an 'organic intellectual'—to use the phrase of the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, one of Said's intellectual heroes—developing his criticism of Western representations of Arab culture and his advocacy for the rights of Palestinians out of his personal roots" (1987).

The problem here is the "personal roots." Personal roots were an attractive and perhaps inevitable way of putting Said's then-audacious-seeming positions across to a reading public that was and is especially timid in those areas, like US policy in the Middle East, where Said was most passionately engaged. For that public, Said's criticism of Western representations of Arab culture and his advocacy for the rights of his fellow Palestinians will perhaps make the most sense, or incur the least hostility, if seen through the mollifying lens of his familial and geographical background. After all, your identity is something you are stuck with, not something you choose. It is what it is. Yet to suggest that his roots offer a satisfactory explanation of Said's

commitments, as the Norton does, is to give a very misleading idea of what it means to call him, or anyone, an organic intellectual. Roots talk makes it seem impossible to maintain that critics as such, most of whom had very different roots and many of whom did not “have” roots at all in the sense of being unmistakably and pejoratively marked, might also be considered organic. The implication is that, once the category is expanded, race and ethnicity are substitutes for class—in other words, you had to be a Palestinian, or the equivalent thereof. You did not qualify unless you belonged by birth to an embattled or disadvantaged racial or ethnic minority. This is much too simple.

“As he remarked in an interview,” the editors add, qualifying their heavy reliance on Said’s identity, “he has always experienced his identity as complicated...” (1987). True, but the complications mentioned—for example, the fact that Said was trained “as a Western scholar educated in the British tradition” (1987)-- did not pertain merely to Said as an individual, or indeed to his personal attachment to the British literary tradition. They are a natural consequence of the multiplicity of identities that defined the 60s movements. And if they make the “romance” with the organic intellectual so “vexed,” as Carillo Rowe puts it, they also keep the romance alive. They do so by being irreducible to any one identity, any one set of injustices and disadvantages. Consider how Carillo Rowe makes the term organic intellectual intersect with the word “intersectional.” Carillo Rowe’s list of identities includes being middle class and being educated. It includes being educated in the US, and being educated in post-structuralism, which presumably stands in here for the paradox that the most advanced, obscure, and prestigious ideas the imperial metropolis has to offer are also the most subversive of the metropolis’s authority. She is very clear about this when she speaks of “affective ties to multiple and often contradictory sites of power.” The term intersectionality is sometimes understood to imply adding further

forms of oppression to an existing set of oppressions, the point being that an increase in quantity turns into a new and distinct quality of oppressiveness. But that is not what Carillo Rowe seems to mean by it, and it is certainly not what she is doing when she juxtaposes, for example, her indigeneity with her status as an educated member of the middle class. She is also adding forms of privilege. And whether she explicitly presents them as such or not, we should understand these forms of privilege as informing as well as complicating her “radical (be)longings.” The parenthetical neologism makes a useful point. Longings, however radical they may be, cannot be separated off entirely from the comforts or the empoweredness of belonging.

Intersectionality is a direct legacy of the long 1960s. The term was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, but as Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor observes, it was the Combahee River Collective, formed in 1974, that articulated “the analysis that animates the meaning of intersectionality, the idea that multiple oppressions reinforce each other to create new categories of suffering” (4).<sup>12</sup> As noted above, the idea “the multiple oppressions reinforce each other” is one major way in which the word is used. It also seems to be what Barbara Smith, one of the CRC’s members, has in mind, looking back: “What we were saying is that we have a right as people who are not just female, who are not solely Black, who are not just lesbians, who are not just working class, or workers—that we are people who embody all of these identities, and we have a right to build and define political theory and practice based upon that reality” (61). But the crucial twist, which gives emotional substance to the abstract phrase “political theory and practice,” comes almost as an afterthought. “We didn’t mean that if you’re not like us, you’re nothing. We were not saying that we didn’t care about anybody who wasn’t exactly like us... it would be really boring only to do political work with people who are exactly like me” (61). The list of identities is most interesting and most useful, in other words, if it’s seen as an invitation to

do political work with people who are not exactly like oneself—people whose lists of politically pertinent identifying factors might well be shorter or just wildly different. From this perspective, the listing of multiple identities is not a way of accumulating further points so that the most legitimate political agent becomes the one who scores highest in an oppression derby. It can involve subtraction as well as addition: for example, the way the privilege of having benefitted from higher education might take something away from the total quantity of oppression carried by person X in spite of person X being, say, Black and female. Other additions and subtractions are of course possible, but the general rule is not a matter of arithmetic: no one form of oppression, no one form of identity, can be granted absolute political authority. There are no winners; there is no oppression derby. Properly understood, intersectionality would therefore involve both a mobilizing of oppression and a *relativizing* of oppression. And in the concept's post-60s articulation, the same is true for the organicity of the organic intellectual. The formula is not solidarity with the suffering of one's own.

Edward Said is not usually thought of as a 60s person. The student protests at Columbia in 1968 and 1969 were not formative experiences for him; by then he was already in his mid-thirties and a faculty member. In 1968, as it happens, when antiwar protests broke out and students occupied Columbia's administration buildings, he was on a research fellowship in Illinois. When he got back to New York, according to biographer Timothy Brennan, he "was one of only a handful of professors ... to support the national student strike, sponsored by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), against the elections that year, agreeing not to hold classes on campus in solidarity. His take on the college Left, however, was complicated" (124).<sup>13</sup>

Expressing various "gripes with the student protesters" (125), Said defended the autonomy of the

university. “He took the position of many other faculty that despite the obvious justice of the students’ demands, intellectual life should not be disrupted.”<sup>14</sup>

As noted above, two of the things Said valued most highly in Jonathan Swift, the subject of a book he planned (the plan got him the fellowship to the University of Illinois) but never completed, were Swift’s willingness to expend his combative energies on the controversies of his moment without worrying about what posterity would or would not understand of his writings once his enemies were dead and the battles forgotten, and his horror at organized violence, a consistent and politically inconvenient antimilitarism. Both appreciations encourage us to place Said’s criticism in the combative context of the 1960s. If the 1960s were the period of “theory,” of which Said was an early advocate, they were also the period of outrage against American militarism in Vietnam and elsewhere. Said was “transfixed,” the biography tells us, by Noam Chomsky’s essay “The Responsibility of Intellectuals,” a passionate protest against American foreign aggression that came out in The New York Review of Books in 1967 (140). Said’s enthusiasm for that essay led to personal friendship as well as political solidarity between the two men; Chomsky was the first person to read the initial draft of Orientalism. Chomsky’s essay, which has been described as the period’s most influential piece of anti-war writing, offered a theory of the intellectual that emerged from, and commented on, the protest movements of the 60s.<sup>15</sup> Public opinion on those movements, Chomsky writes, was puzzled by the question of what motivated them, “what has made students and junior faculty ‘go left’ ... amid general prosperity and under liberal, welfare state administrations.... Since these young people are well off, have good futures, etc.,” Chomsky says, paraphrasing Irving Kristol, “their protest must be irrational. It must be the result of boredom, of too much security, or something of this sort” (Chomsky 49). In short, the protesters are privileged. Chomsky ignores the question of their motivation, but he

does not ignore or deny the privilege. On the contrary, he makes their privileges definitive of who they are and—more important—he makes them intrinsic to their responsibilities.

“Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyze actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions. In the Western world at least, they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression. For a privileged minority, Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities, and the training to seek the truth.” The responsibility of the intellectual is a direct function of “the unique privileges that intellectuals enjoy” (39-40).

The “unique privileges that intellectuals enjoy” come from being “in position,” as Chomsky puts it, or from a certain mode of belonging—to the West, to the US, to the university, all entities that possess power and pass it on to their members. Belonging was antithetical to Said’s own theory of the intellectual. For Said, the intellectual was supposed to speak unwelcome truths to power, not to share in power. Belonging anywhere was a symptom of fatal compromise with empowered institutions. In his theoretical statements, Said championed, instead, the detached and unhoused exile, the heroically independent outsider, the oppositional voice of unceasing and unsparing scrutiny. In Representations of the Intellectual (1994), he mentions Gramsci’s concept of the organic intellectual, but he presents it, misleadingly, as a critical diagnosis of how intellectuals sell out to powerful institutions: “groups of individuals are aligned with institutions and derive power and authority from those institutions. As the institutions either rise or fall in ascendancy, so too do their organic intellectuals, to use Antonio Gramsci’s serviceable phrase for them” (67). This is a very partial interpretation. Positive ideas of serving, being accountable to, and helping to shape a constituency, ideas which correspond to the lesson Gramsci is usually understood to be deriving from the experience of other classes and

offering as a model to aspiring intellectuals of the working class, have no place in Said's theory. Said cites Chomsky's essay of protest against the Vietnam War twenty-five years earlier, but when he does so he celebrates his friend as an amateur bravely taking on the credentialed, sold-out experts. This is not wrong. But nothing is said about how, for Chomsky, the intellectuals' privileges are bestowed by their institutional belonging and their responsibilities follow from their privileges.

It is Chomsky's implicit theory of the intellectual, however-- his linking of the antiwar protests of the 1960s to the relative prosperity of the US in that moment and to an insider's epistemological privileges in a time of war-- that better fits Said's own extraordinary practice as an intellectual and the example it continues to set. With his privileged perch at Columbia, not to speak of his comfortable family background, his classical tastes in music, and his high-end Anglophile clothing, it was inevitable that Said would be charged with elitism. From Chomsky's perspective, which is to say from the perspective of the Vietnam War and the protests against it, this charge loses much of its sting. What is referred to as elitism would have to be seen rather as pre-conditions of intellectual responsibility: on the one hand, epistemological privilege, on the other a necessary acceptance of the limits of democracy in the presence of military aggression. After all, what authority could democracy claim over the bombing in Southeast Asia? Those on whom the bombs were falling had not been consulted; they had not been offered an opportunity to vote on whether or not they should be bombed. Then as now, the relevant unit of democracy did not extend beyond the borders of the aggressor nation. But in order for democracy to be entitled to pronounce authoritatively on the subject, the potential victims of the bombing would have to enjoy full voting rights. Within the aggressor nation, military violence against distant others might well have received overwhelming electoral endorsement. But what was that

endorsement worth? As mentioned above, the commitment to antimilitarism, coming out of Said's early indignation at war in Vietnam and renewed periodically by new American bombings and invasions in the Middle East and elsewhere, was nourished throughout Said's life by American military, economic, and diplomatic support for Israeli aggression against the Palestinians. *None of this military violence was unpopular in the United States.* None of it could be described, within the framework of American democracy, as undemocratic. In resisting American or Israeli militarism, Said could not depend on support from an upswelling of Orwellian "decency" on the part of the "common man"—this is surely one reason why Said had no time for Orwell. (And why he did make time for a strong appreciation of Swift, despite Swift's conservative politics.) Nor could he depend on the American working class, however unjustly and disproportionately that class was called upon to put itself in harm's way.

The legitimation of literary studies, now concentrating its energies on collectivities both smaller and larger than the nation, may eventually depend on stretching the public's understanding of democracy so that those other forms of belonging begin to be seen as legitimate—as legitimate and as natural as the culture of the nation once seemed.

Chomsky does not quite say that you don't get antimilitarism, or solidarity with U.S. militarism's remote Third World victims, without a certain degree of education and prosperity—that is, without a certain privilege. But that is the implication. The uncomfortable idea can be entertained without pretending that the antiwar left or the draft-age students who were its foot soldiers were somehow definitive of the 60s protest movements. They weren't. The antiwar movement was merely one movement among others. Equally distorting, however, would be any account of 60s protest that, excluding antimilitarism (or the anticolonial and environmental movements), would present the identity constituencies (race, gender, sexuality, disability, and so

on) as representative. Such a picture would be distorting in particular with regard to the concept of the organic intellectual. If that concept takes for granted, in the Norton anthology's words, an "antagonistic relationship to established institutions," it cannot be rescued for the post-60s era merely by demanding, say, that whiteness, straightness, and maleness should also be considered marked constituencies. Those categories have lost some of their privileged unmarkedness, and that's a good thing. But whiteness, straightness, and maleness don't explain antagonism to established institutions, and without that antagonism the concept is blind. Identity is not enough to give it proper vision. In Said's case, as I have described it, the antagonism—which of course is shared by many who are not male or straight or white—has to do with military aggression. In other cases, it might be provoked by the destruction of the environment and the complicity of established institutions with that destruction. If the concept of the organic intellectual can maintain its usefulness, it's by extending its reach beyond matters of identity. To return to Hortense Spillers: it must be assumed that responsibility does not fall exclusively on Black intellectuals to concern themselves with the interests of a Black constituency. There are enough interests to go around, many of them overlapping different identity classifications and "their" peoples. As Said, Chomsky, and the Vietnam-era protests suggest, organic intellectuals don't require a personal relation to a specifiable identity. The concept of the organic intellectual can flourish, well past its Gramscian heyday, without identity serving as a sole, definitive post-60s replacement for class.

## **GRIEVANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

Said's well-to-do background and high-end training were sometimes taken to explain his loyalty to the Western canon. But as Brennan suggests, class background works just as well as an

explanation for the opposite position: the puzzling anti-Westernism expressed by many of the postcolonial critics who followed in Orientalism's wake. Non-European scholars "from South Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East," Brennan says, many of whom "migrated to the metropolitan university in part because of the openings Said had created" in the new field of postcolonial studies, were "often from well-to-do families with political connections" (299). Though this was also Said's socio-economic profile, he did not share in the postcolonial elite's "general loathing for a Western entity dubbed 'modernity'" (300).<sup>16</sup> Rather than asking why Said did not share that loathing, it seems more interesting to ask: why so much loathing in the first place? By making a blanket condemnation of the West (where most had been trained) or the Enlightenment (which provided most of their intellectual tools, including a critique of colonialism), Third World elites distracted attention from their materially privileged, quasi-aristocratic status in their countries of origin. This enabled them to stake a claim to represent those countries as undivided wholes. Divisions between landowners (often their own families) and the peasants who worked their lands, for example, could be conveniently forgotten, as if the nation's rich and poor were somehow magically united against the West by virtue of a national essence. The implication was that the rich too had a grievance, and an equal grievance. Third-World elites also strengthened their claim to represent anti-colonial resistance by assuming (just as deceptively) that this resistance was otherwise entirely absent from the (white) metropolis. Thus the metropolis needed people like them; it had no anti-colonial critics of its own.<sup>17</sup> Such claims would look flagrantly absurd, or worse, if much attention was paid to the claimants' class or caste origins back home, or for that matter if their subaltern countrymen back home were asked how they might feel about obtaining, say, human rights or modern plumbing or welfare safety-nets or other benefits, however precarious, of the loathed Western modernity. This

diagnosis of elite non-Western identity politics is already there in the “Pitfalls of National Consciousness” chapter of Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth (1961).<sup>18</sup> One thing Said was telling the anti-modernity critics, when like Fanon he gave his qualified approval to the term humanism, was that they were much less representative than they claimed to be.

If the legacy of the 60s is understood first and foremost as identity politics, Brennan’s analysis of postcolonial criticism, which takes identity politics as a function of class position, becomes a backhanded swipe at the 60s. Grounds of complaint exist. The charge of elitism is not unfounded. The argument I make above comes uncomfortably close to a version of *noblesse oblige*. Yet that charge would not discredit the legacy of the 60s, even in a time of ruination when to many the ebullience of that decade must seem almost incomprehensible. It’s true that class was not at the top of the 60s agenda. (When Spillers asks whether 1968 “took care” of the question of what obligation white intellectuals have to their own people, she seems to be hinting that this question came off the agenda because the movements of that year alienated the white working class. Whatever the answer, Spillers gives an accurate sense of how the social landscape looked.) Nor was class central to the founding texts of postcolonial criticism. By the third decade of the twenty-first century, however, class is very much on the agenda of postcolonial critics. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who since the 1980s has been heroically highlighting the non-European critic’s class and caste privilege, is no longer so isolated in that indispensable enterprise. The need to work an interrogation of systemic inequality into the routine of cultural interpretation may not be universally acknowledged, but it *is* acknowledged; such interpretation has become a highly valued practice among those who deal with non-European texts, a solid part of the discipline’s common sense. According to Google Ngram, references to B.R. Ambedkar, fearless critic of the Indian caste system and champion of the so-called untouchables (Dalits), did

not take off until more than a decade after his death in 1956, and the most dramatic spike in citations occurred after 2010. This is not hard proof, but it is certainly suggestive of what impressionistically seems to be in the air: as academic interest in the world outside Europe moves beyond its formative focus on European colonialism, highly-educated critics from countries outside Europe and North America are coming to pay serious attention to the system that makes those critics themselves *unrepresentative* of their countries of origin.<sup>19</sup>

It is tempting to conclude, therefore, that the most pertinent legacy of the 60s movements in the university is not the content of those movements, but rather a dynamic of democratic inclusiveness that has transcended the limits of those movements (including their relative hostility to the white working class) and gradually forced class onto criticism's to-do list.<sup>20</sup> Whether this is the logic that resuscitated class or not—other explanations are possible, including financial crises and the devastating collapse of the academic job market-- it raises the same question raised by the rumblings of change within postcolonial studies as it threatens to mutate into world literature or into a field as yet unnamed: the question of the interests and purposes of the university, considered not as a passive recipient of outsider grievances but as an active agent.

Let us assume that the true legacy of the 1960s is not, after all, the university's surrender to the demands of formerly marginalized constituencies for greater representation. Let us assume further that, like Said, those constituencies did not demand the blowing up of a Western tradition seen as fatally sexist, racist, and so on. It would seem to follow that what criticism inherits from the 60s movements is a series of unresolved debates and, to the extent that those debates have been resolved, creative compromises in which both grieving identities and the discipline's own practices have been, and continue to be, reinvented. The reinventions would include the discipline's recent recovery of interest in class. The extent to which this process is a model for

similar processes outside the university is hard to estimate; what seems undeniable is that it is a part of those wider processes and, based on the publicity these issues receive, is recognized as such. And it is certain that the university must be considered an active agent in those processes.

The academy's choices have never been limited to surrendering to outside political pressures or else defending its institutional autonomy. To think of the university as ever entirely self-sufficient or self-governing is to idealize a much more checkered history. The founding of institutions like Stanford University or the University of Chicago did not rely on the world's cleanest money. With regard to the humanities at least, it would seem more accurate to propose that the university is a site where contesting claims to representation are adjudicated and contesting versions of collectivity are fashioned, scrutinized, and tested out. By its participation in this activity, moreover, the university would be laying an implicit claim for its own significance to the society around it. This proposition would explain one sense in which academics can legitimately be thought of as doing what Gramsci expected of organic intellectuals: they do not merely convey or reflect the values of their constituencies, but actively help to shape them in relation to the values and constituencies around them. If Gramsci remains relevant in this context, we could say that yes, this is part of the larger and longer process by which a new constellation of constituencies and movements learns how to cohere so as eventually (one hopes) to govern, and govern differently. A process that of course can't yet be verified, as it obviously remains very unfinished.

Does it sound absurdly idealistic to maintain that, rather than merely reflecting passively the values of the society around it, the university also works to shape those values by bringing them to fuller articulation? If so, the same point can be made in much less idealistic terms. It seems obvious enough that teaching the imperial history of Rome, once upon a time, and asking

students to imitate the rhetorical tropes and strategies of the Roman governing class, served to teach the future officers of the British Empire useful lessons about how to rule. (As I argue above, this is a strong counter-argument against the Bourdieu-inspired position that the contents of education are arbitrary and that all that really matters is the credentials conferred and the restricting of the numbers of those who receive them.) But if we have no trouble at all seeing the apparatus of education as a tool of the ruling class, it should not be so very hard to see that same apparatus as an object whose usage might at certain moments be disputed between those who rule and those who aspire to replace them. Even if those who might seem most motivated to replace them do not tend to recognize themselves in that aspiration.

In 1970, the claim of the humanities to social significance still rested mainly on the function of preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of the nation or the West. (Then as now, the West was not always clearly distinguished from the nation.) This function is both literally and metaphorically conservative. Gramsci assigns it to the traditional intellectuals, not the organic intellectuals. When it begins to be widely accepted (partly because of the academy's new demographics) that the West systematically maligned and mistreated the peoples of the non-West, as argued in Said's Orientalism (1978), that claim to social significance comes to look unreliable. One might have expected, then, that the goal of preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage would be thrown out and replaced. That didn't happen. Why not? For one thing, it is unclear what might have replaced that claim to social significance. It could hardly be replaced by, say, a chorus of complaints about the West's bad behavior. However justified and important such complaints might be, no quantity of them would add up to another, better claim to social significance, especially in the society they were complaining about. For another thing, work in postcolonial studies fell with shocking ease into a familiar scenario: it too was all about

the preservation and transmission of culture, if now a collection of different cultures. For postcolonial scholars trained within literary studies, it was hard *not* to assume that a (native) culture has been violated (by European colonialism) and is thereby threatened with extinction. This scenario duplicates the already existing, exclusively Western narrative on which literature departments were largely founded, the narrative according to which history is in the process of destroying the European cultural heritage, which unless rescued will disappear without a trace, leaving modern citizens wandering in a consumerist, value-deprived, tech-obsessed wasteland. What better rationale for the existence of a cadre of intellectuals charged with preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage than this view of the linear, destructive power of history? Substituting “colonialism” or “the West” for “history” in general (not a difficult substitution), the same rationale works equally well for non-European intellectuals. And for scholars of ethnic studies, of course. They too have cultural heritages to rescue or protect, whether from the mainstream’s neglect and marginalization or on the contrary from absorption and obliteration. They too have an obligation to preserve and transmit.

But what exactly were they supposed to preserve and transmit?

To judge from the anxieties that accompanied the founding of the subfield of Jewish American literature, this question is not as straightforward as it might seem. As Benjamin Schreier shows in *The Rise and Fall of Jewish American Literature: Ethnic Studies and the Challenge of Identity* (2020), observers worried that the successful assimilation of American Jews into the American mainstream in the decades after World War II would mean the impossibility of identifying Jewish American literature as a legitimate field. They had assumed the field would take as its object the culture of Yiddish-speaking, Eastern European immigrants. But as the hardships of the immigrant experience receded from the consciousness of a majority

of American Jews along with an identity primarily derived from the Yiddish language and orthodox Judaism, uncertainty as to what Jewish American literature was supposed to be about became pressing and uncomfortable. Would the field be closed down? Should it be? It would be unwise to assume that only budget-conscious administrators consider the possibility that a field might have lost its rationale. Commenting on Kenneth W. Warren's What Was African American Literature?, Schreier notes a parallel: each field, supposedly erected on the foundation of a firm and self-evident identity, is in fact precarious, and the reason is that the ground beneath it is subject to seismic historical shifts. Warren argues, he says, "that what we now know as 'African American literature' was a postemancipation phenomenon, taking shape in the context of a 'challenge to the enforcement and justification of racial subordination and exploitation represented by Jim Crow,' and that its 'coherence,' since 'the legal demise of Jim Crow,' has 'eroded'" (63). For Warren, appeals to "African traditions or the experience of slavery and the Middle Passage" (Warren, 9) to make up for this missing coherence are mere symptoms of the field's crisis, not a cure for it. He concludes, with some asperity, that "African American literature as a distinct entity would seem to be at an end" (Warren, 8). Once you accept that "African American literature is not a transhistorical entity" (9), the field is, in both senses, without an object.<sup>21</sup>

Schreier is more positive about his field than Warren is about his: "rather than a nihilistic dead end for scholarship," he says, the "critical knowledge" he brings should be seen as "an invitation to imagine an alternative future for Jewish studies liberated from the reactionary restrictions of ethnologic" (64), or liberated from being "about" Jewish Americans. If the field can abandon its commitment to aboutness, it can and should survive. But one is obliged to wonder whether the field *deserves* to survive if it is not doing the socially-valued work of

representation. Does every field, once established, deserve to survive forever? Warren certainly doesn't think so. Why does any object of knowledge deserve a field of its own? Why do certain people and certain objects of interest *get* fields, while others don't? What gives a field the right to exist in the first place? It may seem irresponsible even to pose such questions, given the visible eagerness of the university's money people to seize upon any and all excuses to defund, consolidate, and even dissolve existing humanities fields. And yet we cannot expect to offer a better account of an existing field unless we can speak to the primal question of why *any* field deserves to exist, a question that cannot be properly addressed unless it is assumed that they may *not* deserve to exist. And this is especially true, if also especially treacherous, in the case of those highly precarious, perpetually underfunded fields, as in ethnic studies, that only came into existence in the last half century.

The details of Warren's argument seem open to question. Despite the legal transformation that brought the Jim Crow era to an end, the majority of the African American population continued (and continues) to experience systemic racialized inequality, and this continuity-- mass incarceration, police brutality, unequal monetary incomes, unequal inherited wealth, unequal health outcomes, and so on—arguably overrides the change in legal status, important as that was. If the collective experience is still there, it's too soon to decommission the field. That said, however, Warren's argument remains a valuable guide to ethnic studies in general. If Jewish American literature, say, made sense as a field during the period of immigration (fueled by anti-Semitism) and assimilation (both blocked and shaped by anti-Semitism), and if African American literature made sense during the period of Jim Crow (or, in my view, beyond it), it would seem to follow that the key lies in something that those two periods have in common and that offers, or offered, the two fields a similar means of

legitimation. The most obvious common factor is something like (on this subject it is hard not to speak crudely) the representation of hardship, a collective experience of suffering and injustice. If the threat of (or call for) the field's disappearance comes from the withdrawal of that factor—legalization in the case of African American studies, assimilation in the case of Jewish American literature-- then one can speculate that there is a general principle at work here. The case for the field's existence does not rest, as one might think, merely on collective ethnic experience *as such*. That would make it a specialization for specialization's sake, an empty formality. The case depends on the representation (call it the preservation and transmission) of a collective ethnic experience, but more precisely a collective experience that violates democratic norms or rules, demands to be factored into a democracy's self-understanding, and therefore makes an urgent claim on that democracy's attention. This is more than a case for specialization. It is more than a story of diversity denied and then recognized. To found a field on diversity as such (now the empty slogan of the corporations) is not to give it a firm foundation. A field like Native American Studies does not emerge because of brute political pressure alone, exerted from a certain demographic and surrendered to by the university. The story must be told, from the opposite end, as the university's embrace and application of a principle that the humanities need not disavow: democracy's own imperative to recognize and understand the experience of collective suffering and injustice, an undertaking in which the university has a special role to play.

If the content of the cultural heritage is not a unique ethnic identity but a historical experience of collective suffering and injustice, much of it probably shared with other groups and other fields; if *that* is what keeps the field in the business of cultural preservation and transmission, and if it is the fear of losing that claim to the country's attention that shakes the

field's *raison d'être* to its core, then one conclusion that follows is that the case for the study of the national culture laid out by Bill Readings (discussed in the last chapter) is not dead after all. It survives on at least two and perhaps three different scales. First, each ethnicity functions as a mini-nation, making its own version of the case for the preservation and transmission of a cultural heritage. Aboutness has not been phased out; it still works for subnational collectivities. That case is by no means rendered inoperative by globalization, as Readings suggests; on the contrary, it continues to justify the study of culture in much the same terms as the nation-state did, but on a smaller scale.<sup>22</sup> But this rationale also gets a new lease on life, secondly, at the scale of the nation, as before. The incorporation of ethnic studies offers evidence that the modern nation-state has dealt successfully (or less successfully) with the injustices of its past by welcoming (or not) better representation for its victims. This evidence could of course also strengthen that state and boost the nationalism that goes with it, now reconceived as a proudly multicultural but perhaps no less militarily aggressive project. Aside from the obvious fear that ethnic and racial minorities would see what is distinctive about them absorbed into a larger identity and thus erased or deactivated, there is also the perceived danger that a national policy of multiculturalism will serve the purposes of what Schreier calls "an expansive Americanism" (55). That perception seems to be behind the angry rejection of "liberal" multiculturalism, for example by the would-be founders of another recent subfield, Critical Ethnic Studies.<sup>23</sup> I leave aside for the moment the possibility, alluded to by Schreier, that so-called "pan-ethnicities" might extend this set of concerns from the subnational and the national to an international scale.

The point here is not to decide whether ethnic studies as a collective enterprise is too patriotic or on the contrary not patriotic enough. The point is that in staging this controversy, the discipline as a whole has been asking socially useful questions. Socially useful to existing

democracy, for those who think existing democracy can be reformed. And socially useful to those who identify with ethnic studies, whose participation in the controversy can be translated, in Gramscian terms, as preparation for the future role of governing a democracy that might well be quite different from the one we have.

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<sup>1</sup> Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective, edited by Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> See Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “Who Stole Native American Studies?” in Wicazo Sa Review (Spring 1997), 12 (1), 9-28. For a global overview, see “Study on how the knowledge, history and contemporary social circumstances of indigenous peoples are embedded in the curricula of education systems. Note by the secretariat,” United Nations Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Twelfth Session, New York, 20-31 May, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> <https://cla.umn.edu/ais/about/history>. Accessed April 26, 2021

<sup>4</sup> Exemplary defenders of the canon are Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987) and E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). On the other side, Paul Lauter points out that “of things Latino Hirsch includes little more than señor, señora, señorita, wetback, ‘La Cucaracha (song),’ and Zapata; but that he excludes Cesar Chavez, migrant worker, barrio, and La Raza” (264). Hirsch did not object to expanding his list but added that “if items had been left out, that reflected their relative *unimportance* to what [he] describes as the ‘national; culture’” (264). Paul Lauter, Canons and Contexts (NY: Oxford UP, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Of course, not everything has changed. This is hardly surprising, given how rare it was for anyone to call for the burning down of the Western tradition in its entirety, as Amiri Baraka did when the Department of English tried to hire him at Rutgers New Brunswick in the mid 1980s. As one Baraka-supporter observed, his lecture had to be understood, in the context of his writing career, as an example of the theater of cruelty.

<sup>6</sup> According to Google Ngram, “coopted” began a precipitous climb in 1960 and reached a peak in 2000. It then fell almost as precipitously, and has only recently begun to rise again. For a sharp examination of the issues it raises, written in the midst of the term’s ascent, see Gerald Graff, “Co-optation” in H. Aram Veenser, ed., The New Historicism NY and London: Routledge, 1989, 168-181.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Rorty, Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America. Cambridge. Harvard University Press, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Aimee Carrillo Rowe, “Romancing the Organic Intellectual: On the Queerness of Academic Activism,” American Quarterly (2012), 799-803.

<sup>9</sup> Hortense J. Spillers, “The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Post-Date,” boundary 2 21:3 (Fall 1994), 65-119. Spillers accuses Cornel West of appealing to “the two most powerful (and predictable motifs of African American cultural life: ‘the black Christian tradition of preaching and the black musical tradition of performance’ (83 n12). And this because West’s idea of the black intellectual is so “firmly rooted in the romantic ground of organicity” (83n12).

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<sup>10</sup> The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism, Vincent B. Leitch, General Editor. WW Norton and Company, NY and London, 2001. Placing the Norton next to Walter Jackson Bate's Criticism: The Major Texts (1970), thirty years earlier, the first thing that leaps into view is that, while preserving Plato and Aristotle and most of the other landmarks of the classical tradition, the Norton also makes room for a great number of critics and theorists, not all of them recent, who are women and people of color. There is even one indigenous woman: the poet Paula Gunn Allen (1939-2008). I am grateful to one of the press's anonymous readers for suggesting the juxtaposition with Bate's anthology.

<sup>11</sup> For the record, class is also relativized, at least in appearance, in Gramsci's prison notebooks themselves, where it is replaced by "social group" and "fundamental social group" (5). Gramsci's editors maintain that this was to avoid censorship.

<sup>12</sup> Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, ed., How We Got Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Brennan, Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> At Columbia, according to Ellen Schrecker, "only 5 percent [of the faculty] supported [the student] takeover of the campus" (75). Ellen Schrecker, "The Roots of the Right-Wing Attack on Higher Education," Thought and Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal Vol 26, Fall 2010, 71-82.

<sup>15</sup> Noam Chomsky, The Responsibility of Intellectuals: Reflections by Noam Chomsky and Others after 50 Years, eds. Nicholas Alliot, Chris Knight, and Neil Smith. London: UCL Press, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Said himself refused to play the identity game, stoutly opposing the idea that what you are capable of knowing depends on where you are from. This fact does not imply, of course, that he embodies the deeper truth of the 60s legacy. It suggests only that that legacy is divided, has been contested at every step, and is still up for grabs.

<sup>17</sup> Such claims would look a good deal weaker if there was recognition of the small but heroic tradition of anticolonial voices that came from within the metropolis, like Bartolomé de las Casas. See my work-in-progress on the literary history of atrocity.

<sup>18</sup> Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre. NY: Grove Press, 1963. See also James Ferguson (cited in Jennifer Wenzel and Lauren Goodlad).

<sup>19</sup> For a particularly eloquent statement, see Olúfemi O. Táíwò, "Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference," The Philosopher, 108:4 (Year?)

<sup>20</sup> The pressure of democratic inclusiveness can get out of hand. It is arguably that pressure, and not genuine concern for the state of the planet or its live inhabitants, that has led to some advocacy of the "post-human," including expressions of admiration for the agential force and concern for the moral value of inanimate objects, including stones.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Warren, What Was African American Literature? Cambridge. Harvard University Press, 2011. Warren does not seem displeased that the "conditions" that produced African American literature as a field "no longer obtain" (9). This saves African American critics from "the temptation to shore up a specialized intellectual undertaking by insisting on its efficacy as a contribution to the race as a whole" (139-140). In other words, he embraces intellectual specialization and autonomy at the expense of shouldering the "burden of political responsibility" (141). This burden would perhaps seem lighter, and thus more worth shouldering, if it were not placed disproportionately on the shoulders of African American scholars.

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<sup>22</sup> The theoretical difficulty is a different thing, as Guillory points out in Cultural Capital: “the temptation to regress to a theoretical position which construes valuing within local communities as ‘in effect’ universalizing and exclusive by virtue of the homogeneity of experiences, beliefs, or ‘values’ attributed to such communities, a problem she [Barbara Herrnstein Smith] identifies with good reason in Richard Rorty’s appeal to community as the only basis of a consistent pragmatism” (277).

<sup>23</sup> See Critical Ethnic Studies: A Reader, eds. Nada Elia, David Hernandez, Jodi Kim, Shana I. Redmond, Dylan Rodriguez, and Sarita Echavez See. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016.