

One of these things (is and) is not like the others: Comparative Australian-American Studies and “Enchanted” Pedagogy

AUSTIN, TX—University of Texas professor Thom Windham once again furthered the cause of human inquiry in a class lecture Monday, as he continued his longtime practice of finding connections between things and other things, pointing out these parallels, and then elaborating on them in detail, campus sources reported.

"By drawing parallels between things and other, entirely different things, I not only further my own studies, but also encourage young minds to develop this comparative methodology in their own work," said Windham, holding his left hand up to represent one thing, then holding his right hand up to represent a separate thing, then bringing his hands together in simulation of a hypothetical synthesis of the two things. "It's not just similarities that are important, though—the differences between things are also worth exploring at length."

Fifteen years ago, Windham was awarded tenure for doing this.

~ “Professor Sees Parallel Between Things, Other Things” *The Onion* May 16, 2007.

The brief *Onion* article above recently made the rounds on a colleague’s Facebook page with the deadpan caption: “Wow. It’s like *The Onion* was in my class today.” Garnering a sizeable number of “likes,” the caption drew some further sardonic recognition—“Damn, that’s the argument of the book I’m working on”—as well as gleeful academic witticism: “thing theory!” I reproduce it here because *The Onion*’s satire of academic practice in the Humanities, and even more so the mock-rueful response it generated, speaks to a number of the anxieties that currently besiege scholars of literary or area studies. Most obviously, the item plays on the popular perception that what we do is vague to the point of meaninglessness, but it also, with excruciating accuracy, reminds us as academic insiders that done badly, the work that we do risks pointlessness or irrelevance. We all know that comparative work must entail something more than an identification of similarities and differences—there must be something at *stake* in comparison. It is in relation to this question of “what is at stake?” that this *Onion* article from six years ago continues to touch a nerve.

For some time now, and, in fact, arguably since its inception as a field, scholars of American Studies have both asked and questioned what it is we do when we “do” American Studies. This question was taken up most recently in the first volume of *J19*—the newly established journal of the (equally youthful) C19: The Society of Nineteenth Century Americanists. Both C19 and *J19* have an explicit commitment to the development, dissemination, and debate of methodologies for reading American literature and culture of the long nineteenth century. The journal thus offers readings of texts, but is equally concerned with providing forums dedicated to thinking through the ways scholars approach the genres, periods, and spaces that make up the field. In the Forum entitled “Critique as Enchantment” a number of researchers took up the question generated by Bruno Latour’s 2004 provocation, “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?” in order first to turn this question in on itself—“*has* critique run out of steam?” (Bentley 147) and then to explore and expound alternatives to the processes of speaking truth to power that academics in the Humanities know as “critique.” The contributors to the forum responded with a series of interventions that I want to rehearse here at some length (for reasons that will become clear) before putting to them the question of what these meditations might mean for our pedagogy: how do we enact a critique of critique in the classroom when the kinds of critical revelations deemed redundant in a world in

which “the ruses of power no longer seem to require veiling” (Dillon 173) are precisely the revelations we seek from our students? Can we be pedagogically “post-critical” (the term is Hal Foster’s) when imparting critique’s logic and practices is what drives our teaching not only from semester to semester but usually across a student’s entire degree programme? And most significantly given the parameters of this Special Issue, how does a transpacific orientation vis-à-vis the Atlantic one that underscores the J19 Forum allow for the invigoration of our pedagogy in the light of critiques of critique?

Pointing to the isomorphism between conspiracy theory and critique Latour proposes (even as he acknowledges the problematic elitism of such a proposal) that the use of the tools of critique by the Right and by populist movements is evidence of the way that critique as a mode of demystification has eaten itself in the way that “a revolution swallows its progeny” (230). Even as in our classrooms

good...kids are learning the hard way that facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, that we are always prisoners of language, that we always speak from a particular standpoint, and so on,...dangerous extremists are using the very same argument of social construction to destroy hard-won evidence [of global warming] that could save our lives (227).

For Latour, critique therefore requires re-invigoration. Deploying the military wisdom (or lack thereof) that one is only prepared for the war most recently fought, he calls for the development of a new arsenal for critique, one that would not move “away from facts but closer to them” (231)—tools that do not debunk or “crack open” but “assemble.” “The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naïve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather” (246).

Perhaps because they have been offered an arena in which to gather, those scholars participating in the J19 Forum seem less concerned that everyone’s doing critique but doing it badly than with the question of whether it even still needs to be done. Nancy Bentley frames this question via an observation of American Studies scholarship’s change in “mood.” While “the notion that critique has run its course is belied by vital and ongoing political projects of many stripes,” she notes that “it is hard to miss a change in the tenor of recent discussions,” a loss of the “exhilaration” that in the past attended those revelations that came about as a result of heeding Jameson’s call to “always historicize!” (147-148). This new mood might itself be described as a disenchantment with the idea of critique as disenchantment—critique as a demystification of history that dissolves commonplace pieties and exposes their “underlying operations of power” (148). Understandably crystalizing around the way scholars treat the past (given the journal’s nineteenth-century focus) Bentley’s response to this perceived inadequacy or irrelevance of critique is to draw attention to the ways in which the retraction of the injunction to historicize! has opened up new configurations of our relationship to the past. Taking Susan Buck-Morss’s *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* as an object lesson in “unhistorical history,” Bentley argues that the critical practice on display in this work allows us to seek out and build fragile and hesitant connections to the past that may ultimately become robust claims for new identifications of “forms of belonging and mutual recognition capable of reaching across differences in language, time and culture” (149). The example Bentley offers from Buck-Morss’s book is the way that the study of Haitian Freemasonry and vodou as two instantiations of the idea of a “society of equals” that cuts across class, cultural, and

racial affiliations, makes visible the connections between “nodes as different as Founding Fathers, Haitian *marronage*, and African Muslims” (149).

Haiti has, of course, been for some time a rich testing ground for many academic understandings of the Atlantic world and its cultural history. As a site of Enlightenment revolution that cast into doubt the egalitarian premise of the United States’ own revolution, and indeed, as the site of the most (if not only) successful slave rebellion in history, it is unsurprising that the debt the United States owed to Haiti was subject to disavowal, repression, and negation well into the twentieth century.ⁱ As a result of work by Buck-Morss and numerous others, Haiti has now been recuperated to stand at the centre of numerous scholars’ accounts of the politics and aesthetics of American modernity. One such scholar is Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, whose “Obi, Assemblage, Enchantment” makes up the final intervention in the J19 Forum. Re-reading an anecdote from *Black Jacobins* in which a slave resists his master’s accusation that he has stolen some potatoes with the claim that the devil has transformed stones into potatoes, Dillon posits that this anecdote is not simply a trickster story, but rather is illustrative of “an alternative regime of being or ontology—one in which there is a plasticity between and among objects” (173). Returning to Latour (in this case Actor Network Theory) she draws out his destabilisation of the distinctions between subjects and objects—there are only “actants...whose agency is produced within a network of relations”—in order to re-read the nineteenth-century Atlantic world system as one in which objects frequently had more mobility, if not agency, than what she calls “sub-agential subjects,” namely, enslaved peoples (175-176). By transforming themselves into objects in ways more literal even than slavery’s monetisation of bodies did (Dillon offers the example of Henry “Box” Brown) or by transforming abject objects (grave dirt, rusty nails, animal parts) into agents, slaves produced a world in which “liberatory possibilities emerge as allied with dramatic ontological reconfiguration and distributed (not recuperated) agency” (177).

For Dillon, then, what practices like Obeah in its assemblage of objects that had no significance for European observers can make manifest then, are alternative modes of relation that offer these “liberatory possibilities” not only to sub-agential subjects but to us as scholars. This is not to equate the academic worker in the neo-liberal university with the “sub-agential subject” (that’s a topic for another essay), but rather to draw upon Jane Bennett’s call for an “ethics of enchantment” to structure our working lives. Over and against reading for exposure Bennett advocates reading for enchantment, for those extraordinary and surprising phenomena that exist “amid the familiar and the everyday” (Bennett in Dillon 177). If the practice of critique has lost its “heroism” as the process of critical exposure has increasingly failed to lead to the vanquishing of injustice or inequality in the political arena, surprise and delight at the “relations between and among people and things” can move into this ethical void (Dillon 172-173, 177).

While I am not ready to give up on the efficacy and necessity of critique as exposure—I agree with Bentley that there continues a robust and practicable political strain in American Studies—surprise as a powerful harbinger of such critical revelation has for a long time been central to my teaching practice. In what follows, therefore, I want to translate two aspects of the idea of critique as an “enchanted” mode of recognising the relations among hitherto unrelated or incommensurate things into a mode of teaching: enchanted pedagogy. The first is to take up the language of assemblage that suffuses

Latour, Buck-Morss, and Dillon's engagements with critique and history and argue that in its requirement of us to think of different ways of placing things next to one another both temporally and geographically (a call also sounded by the transnational turn and in more recent polemics "against periodization")ⁱⁱ it allows us to think of the classroom as an iteration of the Latour-ian "gathering": "that is, a thing, an issue, inside a Thing, an arena, [which] can be very sturdy, too, on the condition that the number of its participants, its ingredients, nonhumans as well as humans, not be limited an advance" (246). The classroom is a realm *par excellence* that enables the coming together of subjects and objects—humans, technologies, texts—in ways that regularly astonish, shake, destabilise, delight both students and teachers.ⁱⁱⁱ The very fact that we agonize about "reductive" teaching (these things are the same and they are also different) illustrates that they are spaces, to use Latour's terms again, of multiplication, not subtraction.

The second aspect I want to explore is to ask what "enchanted pedagogy" looks like in practice via a case study drawn from the undergraduate course I offer in comparative U.S. and Australian Literature. To relate this to both the J19 Forum with which I have been concerned and to the purposes of this Special Issue, we might say that this practice involves the substitution of Australia for Haiti as not simply another alternate and surrogate self of the United States but as a way of reading. If the case of Haiti brings about a radical reconception of Enlightenment ontology and affiliation, and triangulates America between Old World colonialism on the one hand and claims to sovereignty by the formerly enslaved on the other, what does the introduction of Australia to American Studies enable by allowing the assemblage of new sets of subjects and objects (and sub-agential subjects) that have hitherto been seen as unrelated? In asking this question as though it is a new one my intention is not to disavow the rich and growing body of transnational work in U.S.-Australian Studies (Lisa Ford's *Settler Sovereignty*, Cassandra Pybus's *Black Founders*, Rob Dixon and Nicholas Birns' *Reading Across the Pacific*, the Comparative Wests Project, and Paul Giles' *Antipodean America* are just some of the projects that have founded and defined the field) but to acknowledge that while the shift in orientation they occasion is a profound one, the strategies and knowledges generated by this scholarship have yet to make their way visibly into our teaching.

Assembling the Antipodean

The questions of reading for exposure engaged by the J19 Forum have already been explored in relation to pedagogy in Eve Sedgwick's now canonical essay, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or You're So Paranoid You Probably Think this Essay is About You" (and indeed, Sedgwick is referenced in Dillon's response). For Sedgwick, the dominant mode of critical reading—the "paranoid" position in which the critic unveils "hidden traces of oppression and persecution" may be contested and displaced by "reparative reading" which is "additive and accretive" and whose energising affects, not unlike Bennett's ethics of enchantment, are *hope* and *surprise* (141, 149, 146). Paranoid reading (or, to use Ricoeur's term, the "hermeneutics of suspicion") has a rigid relation to temporality both because paranoia cannot allow for surprise and because of its close connection to Jameson's imperative to historicize! (125, 130). Reparative reading, then, mobilises hope in order to open for the reader imaginative possibilities not only for an alternative future but for a different past (146). In its assemblage of texts of diverse temporalities and geographies a syllabus can similarly contest rigid temporalities by seeking patterns across time and space.^{iv} While it is still very much a

work in process (I have not yet taught the same version of this syllabus twice) my syllabus for *Rival Siblings? U.S. and Australian Literatures*, a second-year course or “module” at the University of East Anglia, spans the long twentieth century and engages writing by North American and Australian authors including Americans writing in and about Europe (Henry James) and Australians writing in and about the United States (Peter Carey and Kirsten Tranter). Structurally, each Australian text is paired with an American text, but chronologies and geographies do not follow a set pattern in order to avoid assumptions of priority and preference between texts.^v While particular themes are worked through in each pair of texts, by the end of the semester students must also make connections between texts that do not appear to bear obvious commonalities. In the most recent iteration of the module, on which this discussion is based, students read Henry James’ *Portrait of a Lady* (1908) alongside Kirsten Tranter’s *The Legacy* (2010); Katherine Susannah Prichard’s *Coonardoo* (1929) with Willa Cather’s *Sapphire and the Slave Girl* (1940); Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) with Peter Carey’s *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000); and Vivienne Cleven’s *Her Sister’s Eye* (2003) with Louise Erdrich’s *The Round House* (2013). Before embarking on their primary reading students read essays by John Carlos Rowe and Robert Gross on transnational American Studies and on settler colonialism by Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson. As they move through each pair of texts students build upon these core approaches through further secondary reading that explore the challenge to transatlantic thinking mounted by the antipodean and the transpacific; engage critical whiteness theory; and consider the relationships among trauma, memory, history, and literature. Different configurations of these approaches coalesce into frameworks by which students mobilise Australia to read America (and vice versa).

But before students can deploy Australia as a way of reading, they first need to be able to read Australia. Yunte Huang opens *Transpacific Imaginations* (2008) with an anecdote invoking the number of times he has had to correct his American colleagues regarding the geography of *Moby Dick*. Their assumption that its action takes place in the Atlantic Ocean rather than the Pacific is, he argues, less symptomatic of gaps in their geographical knowledge, than it is evidence of the ways in which early and now canonical allegorical readings of the novel have obscured its geopolitics (1).^{vi} In teaching comparative U.S.-Australian literatures to American Studies students in the UK I have encountered a similar elision of certain types of geopolitics by students’ entrenched strategies of reading borne of their familiarity with both British and American tropes and images. The majority of the students taking the class are enrolled in joint degree programmes in American and English Literature, with varying emphasis on the “English” and the “American.” All these students come to the class having completed survey courses in American and British literature and the few students enrolled on the American Studies degree arrive having completed the survey in American Literature only. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Henry James is one of the only writers to make it onto the core curriculum for all three of these programmes, claimed both by the School of Literature and by the School of American Studies. Students are thus prepared for James’ Britishness in ways they are not prepared for what they see as Tranter’s. Unlike the case of Huang’s colleagues, my students’ misreadings have everything to do with a lack of geographical knowledge, but they also highlight the ways in which their inability to read Australian landscape contributes to their inability to recognise colonial politics.

An anecdote of my own: on asking my class what they thought of Tranter's novel *The Legacy*, a contemporary rewriting of Henry James' *Portrait*, I was met with awkward silence. After a few moments pause, a student ventured that she was disappointed by the novel (the first Australian novel any of the students had ever knowingly read) because: "she thought Australia would be more different [from the UK]." She was joined by an assenting chorus as the other students chimed in with their surprise that Sydney's streets were named after London's (Oxford Street, Queen St) and that university and even family life seemed very similar to that in the UK. This act of familiarisation of what should have been an unfamiliar context was an immediately "teachable moment" about post/colonial relations between Australia and Britain—the streets are named after London streets because the colony of New South Wales was founded as an outpost of Empire—but as we talked about the novel further it became clear to me that the students' reading of Sydney as a version of London had as much to do with the fact that the students had no imaginative access to a visual archive of Australian landscape—whether urban or natural—as it did with the legacies of nineteenth-century colonial impositions and imitations (including the issue of "cultural cringe").

An image such as the following description of a harbourside mansion was received therefore as something akin to an English stately home:

The big old mansion stood on the north shore of the harbour and had a rambling garden filled with frangipani trees, poinsettias, and climbing jasmine. It was solid and squarish and beautiful with a red tiled roof and walls painted a dirty peach colour that had faded over time and showed through a little more brightly in little patches under the window sills (34).

What to me was a riot of colour and movement—purple jacarandas and fragrant frangipanis possibly alive with rainbow lorikeets and crimson rosellas, standing on a lush green lawn cascading down to a working harbour—was imagined by students with the neo-Classical gravitas of a Pemberley. What I realised in that moment, then, was that we'd been existing in a Rumsfeldian universe in which I didn't know what they didn't know (and they didn't either). Being of the generation of Australians dogged by the popularity of *Neighbours* and *Home and Away* in the UK, it had never occurred to me that these students simply didn't know what Australia looked like, beyond images of beaches and exotic and faintly ridiculous animals. That is, this is not to say that they had no access at all to a discursive and symbolic field signifying "Australia," but that the images that they did have access to were inadequate to the task of postcolonial reading.

The immediate remedy for this issue was a Google image search yielding a handful of images of Australian flora, architecture, and landscape that showed the students the extremities of colour and light that Australians take for granted. In the longer term, it has forced me to re-think aspects of my pedagogical practice in order to foreground students' startling or surprising encounters with Englishness in Australia alongside what I assumed would already be surprising similarities between Australian and American novels. The strategy I have developed for doing so starts to make use of the classroom as a Latour-ian gathering by asking groups of students to prepare a short "scholarly introduction" to the text each week that highlights what they think an uninitiated reader needs to know to understand the novel more fully. While the human participants in the classroom-as-gathering are for the most part limited in advance by their enrolment on the course, the non-human participants—the kinds of texts and media (most often images, anecdotes, and histories)—that students bring to bear on the

primary reading are not. Allowing these marginal textual practices (I'm thinking of anecdote in particular here) to erupt briefly into the classroom in a way that reveals students' starting positions on assigned texts, both enables students to set certain aspects of their own learning agenda and tells me immediately what they don't know and what they wish they did.^{vii} What does the revelation that the role of Ned Kelly has been played by both Mick Jagger and Heath Ledger tell us about the operations of irony in Peter Carey's seemingly hagiographical account of the same man? How does knowledge of Australian currency (its coins displaying an echidna, a lyre bird, a platypus, kangaroos, and "an aboriginal elder") reveal an ongoing Australian symbolic logic of the contiguity of indigenous fauna and indigenous peoples?

While the process of making unknown unknowns known entails its own share of surprises, then, it is the work of assemblage—of then placing these "knowns" next to one another—that performs the most radical acts of defamiliarisation. Putting Katherine Susannah Prichard's *Coonardoo* next to Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* reveals not only the "manifest domesticity" (to use Amy Kaplan's famous phrase) that went into maintaining whiteness on the Australian frontier, but also highlights the structural similarities between a slave-owning household and one that relied on unpaid indigenous labour. Both Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* are works of historiographical metafiction but with the help of Emma Christopher's essay drawing attention to the practical and philosophical ties between the slave trade and transportation, "The Slave Trade is Merciful Compared to This," students can read these two practices as not exactly isomorphic, but as intimately intertwined strands of colonial enterprise. Reading Australia and the United States alongside one another, thus makes Empire visible through acts of reading that are simultaneously acts of recognition and acts of alienation: this structure or image that I recognise turns out not to be what I think it is, but in (mis)recognising it I am exposed to further understanding of it. In recognising both Britain *and* America in Australia, Britain is re-introduced to the original transatlantic learning transaction these students of American Studies have embarked upon in ways that both defamiliarise students' position on their own national history (challenging the idea that those things that are bad, like slavery, happened only outside Britain, over there in America) and reinstate America's post/colonial positionality (the United States inherited and sustained practices that were also inherited and sustained in other, more recognisably British colonial outposts). The relation between Australia and America then, in this scene of triangulation is less "transpacific" than what Giles has designated "antipodean" ("Antipodean American Literature" 23).

Antipodean reading builds upon Giles' earlier work that both acknowledged the hegemony of Anglophone exchange in transnational American studies and argued against the idea that all cultures of the Anglo World can be conflated into a monolithic discourse (*Virtual Americas* 15). His more recent work posits Australia as a third term disrupting and triangulating the US-UK dyad. In two essays invoking the idea of an "Antipodean America" he argues that from the establishment of the colony in New Holland at Botany Bay in large part as a response to the loss of the colony of Georgia as a penal colony, Australia has existed for America as a kind of specular double each simultaneously both reflecting and inverting the other's history.^{viii} To think of the antipodean rather than the "trans," then, is to invoke less a logic of exchange or traffic, and rather offer one in its place of inversion and reversal—of a world turned upside

down. To put this another way, to look across the basin of the Pacific is to see oneself as in the bowl of a spoon: reflected but upside down. Antipodean assemblage as I have sought to teach it and to lay out here is a space of reflection both in the sense of thought and in the sense of mirroring, but it is one that allows for the surprising reorientation of familiar objects of study.

“Love and Theft”: Antipodean Adaptation in Kirsten Tranter’s *The Legacy*.

The antipodal is thus something other than the “virtual” by which Giles sought to draw out some of the reversals and mirrorings of transatlantic exchange. The virtual, he argued, “can simulate a scene without any reference to an anterior event” (17). It is that which does not require any originary image. On my reading of this concept, however, the antipodean relies on referents, even as they are potentially endlessly deferred—reflections of reflections. If for Giles the politics of antipodean reading for America revealed the United States’ “fraught postcolonial condition” (34) and its aesthetic was the recursive modality of satire, reading Australia against America reveals a similarly triangulated politics that crystallises around divided loyalties and anxieties of influence whose aesthetic is the *mis en abyme*. My subtitle here “Love and Theft” thus has very little to do with either Eric Lott or Bob Dylan, but I chose it for the way it performs the kind of triadic act of referentiality—a reference to a reference to a reference—that I want to argue is central to an antipodean account of Anglo-American literary relations. Indeed, acts of love and theft (and loving theft) are central to the form and the content of Tranter’s novel so it seemed like an apt act of appropriation. In the final section of this essay I therefore offer a reading of *The Legacy* that foregrounds the triadic reflections that structure the novel. In particular, I focus on the reversals and refractions of temporality that occur when the New World is looked at by a New-er World.

The Legacy presents as a fairly straightforward act of adaptation and reappropriation in line with James’ own revisions and rewritings of Hawthorne and Eliot remarked on in a number of critical readings of *Portrait*. But what is actually at stake is a series of reversals and displacements that reveal the complexity of the triangulated relations between the US, UK, and Australia and which stages James’ rewriting of Eliot as an act of violence with an ongoingly and irresolvably traumatic afterlife. Tranter has said of the genesis of her novel that she’d wanted to rewrite it

ever since I read it as an undergraduate at Sydney Uni. It was presented to me by my eccentric and brilliant tutor at the time as a cruel revision of George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*. ...It is such a compelling, and yet a horrendous story. I hate what happens to Isabel. ...Like many readers, I wanted it to end differently – but I wanted to find a way of revising it that wouldn’t be simplistic, that wouldn’t simply give the Isabel character an easy way out or cheesy happy ending. Instead, I wanted to find a way of retelling the story that investigated that very feeling, that very desire (ambivalent and complicated as it is) to rescue her, to make a different ending for her. (*Readings Interview*)

As Tranter’s words suggest, the novel takes the plot of James’ *Portrait of a Lady* and maps onto it an Australian story of a woman named Ingrid who inherits a vast sum of money from her uncle, which then funds her move to New York. In the cartography of the novel, Perth, a provincial city on the West coast of Australia, which has seen rapid growth in the last few decades due to the mining boom, stands in for Albany, a similarly industrial centre that a century or so ago stood in a similar relationship to cosmopolitan

and metropolitan New York that Perth has historically and rhetorically to Sydney. In Tranter's novel Sydney replaces England as the intermediate and mediating space where new money is made old—a more established culture than that of Perth, a point that Tranter emphasises further by locating Garden Court on the North Shore of the harbour, a signifier of “old” money. It is in Sydney that Ingrid is inspired to visit New York and is given the funds to do so by way of her uncle's bequest. The novel is related by Ingrid's friend Julia, who might be seen as a Henrietta Stackpole type, but who is ultimately drawn from the Chandlerian universe that dominates the second strand of the novel. In this plot arc Julia is despatched by Ingrid's cousin (who is named Ralph in one of the least vexed acts of loving theft in the novel) to source information about her unhappy life and untimely death—finding out, as is so often the case, much more than she bargained for.

The passage below was set as the first close-reading assignment of the course and occurs relatively early in the novel, during Ingrid's time in Sydney, immediately before her receipt of her uncle's legacy. Readers of James will recognise the echo, but also the reinvention of Daniel Touchett in the character of Ingrid's uncle, George.

George had his own ambitions for Ingrid, and it was he who first hatched the idea of her going over to the States to study. He had paid a brief visit to a schoolfriend at Harvard once, years before, and had come away with a lifelong respect for the American Ivy League universities. “They know what they're doing over there,” he'd say. “Energy. New Ideas. Great stuff.” [...] George seemed to see her life itself as a kind of work of art in progress—fascinating, unpredictable, an enthralling performance—and wish a role for himself as enabler or producer. “She'll make something of it,” he said to me once, with a knowing wink. “She'll go far.”

Ingrid was already making plans for her honours year and thinking about following that with graduate study. “Harvard! Princeton!” George would exclaim. “Why not!” Ingrid sometimes talked about Oxford or Cambridge, and of these possibilities George was scornful in his cantankerous way. “They'd be lucky to have you. Bloody stuffy old Brits. They'll treat you like a colonial—never anything but that.” The sound of some old injury came through whenever he talked about the snobbery of the English. “But the Americans, they'll love you. You'll knock them dead, my girl” (71).

This passage indexes the novelty of the New World—in contrast to the perceived stodginess and enervation of Oxbridge the Ivy League is a place of vigour and innovation. But in George's presentation of it, Ingrid is something even newer—a force of nature who will extend the cutting edge of New World academic culture even further—or to think of this via an antipodean formulation, in “knock 'em dead” we can envision an upending, a turning upside down. Ingrid's newer than new-ness in George's eyes is compounded by the way in which Ingrid herself is drawn to what she sees as the authority of the Old in America, specifically, in New York. When she enrolls at Columbia University it is as a student of Classics, her object of study is Roman Britain—a layering of prior “great” traditions that almost over-determines the alignment of New York with the established and the “old.” The cultural icon foregrounded in the novel is not MOMA as one might expect, but the Metropolitan Museum of Art (and its Roman collections in particular). Indeed, anything that is new about New York is revealed to be corrupt as the novel progresses—corruption that crystallises around the contemporary art scene in that the big reveal of the novel is that Fleur, Grey's daughter, is not the artistic prodigy as which she has been lucratively marketed, but rather her paintings are

collaborations, if not fabrications, constructed by her father and fellow contemporary art dealer, the Madam Merle character, Maeve. The contemporary cultural scene is at best soulless—a small Turner study given to Ingrid and Grey by Ralph is hung “out of the way, under a staircase” (270) out of place amongst the polished surfaces, the marble and the stainless steel, of their New York apartment—and at worst a scene of plagiarism, theft, and debasement. The failure of the mercenary, name-dropping Gil Grey to recognise the aesthetic worth of the Turner signifies his venality even before we discover he has used the money he received as compensation for Ingrid’s death on 9/11 to fund the “Grey Room” at the Whitney—simultaneously an act of beneficence and self-aggrandisement.

What the presence of Turner here also signals (as did George’s barely repressed resentment of Oxbridge) is that whenever it seems as though *The Legacy* is going to be a straightforward reorientation of James’ novel such that New York plays the part of Rome and an Australian cast has moved into the roles played by Americans, the transpacific relationship gets triangulated by an eruption of the Atlantic world into it. The set of nested triangles that comprise this novel thus move us from content, to form, to symptom of national identity. *The Legacy* is replete with images of theft, imitation, and adaptation and these images coalesce around the literary and artistic allusions scattered throughout the novel, all of which evoke the *mis en abyme*—the work of art within the work of art. The novel cites Robert Browning’s *My Last Duchess*, T.S. Eliot’s *Portrait of a Lady*, a reproduction of John Everett Millais’ *Ophelia* to name just a few of the intertexts that structure its triadic refracted reflections. These allusions to works of art that themselves reference dead women not only foreshadow Ingrid’s fate, but their ubiquity also indexes Tranter’s own triangulated act of adaptation in rewriting James rewriting George Eliot. To put this in (trans)national terms, the final triangle entails an Australian story, seeing enough of itself in an American one (that in turn reflected and refracted a British one) to repeat it with another layer of difference. This sense of being subject to both British and American cultural influences—heir, if you like, to their legacies—is symptomatic of being (white, settler) Australian.

La critique est morte, vive la critique!

I use the term symptomatic here to signal two concluding moves. The first is simply that I use it in order to describe accurately the symbolic logic of Tranter’s novel, which works through the debt owed by Australian letters to other Anglo traditions. Without giving too much away, New York is ultimately offered as a way out of such triangulation, as a redemptive space of cosmopolitanism from which Ingrid can disappear and where émigrés like Julia can tentatively find a home. The second is to reassert the inextricability of critique from the practice of what it is we do in comparative American Studies. Indeed, one might even see critique as inextricable from our reading practices; for all that the field experiments with moving away from “paranoid” or “symptomatic” reading, the strategies we deploy lead us back to revelatory modes of literary and cultural analysis. In the case of Australian-American Studies, especially as taught to students in the UK, the surprising work of comparison highlights shared questions of sovereignty (land claims of aboriginal peoples, the operations of native law) and subjectivity (who achieves personhood in new worlds predicated on unrecompensed labour), as well as the shared aesthetic strategies deployed to these historical questions and others. As the introduction of Haiti to Atlantic Studies did before it, the introduction of Australia to American Studies continues the work of challenging American narratives

of Republican exceptionalism and Enlightenment egalitarianism. In the same way that teaching early American Literature in Australia revealed to those students the violence of the Frontier in both nations and returned indigenous peoples to the empty landscape of *terra nullius* (Emmett), introducing Australian literature to American Studies students requires the interrogation of accounts of their own national history—the sanctity of national identities, the sovereignty of borders, the inalienable rights of citizen—calling into question (as American Studies in many of its transnational iterations does) the tortuous and tautological defining logics of Area Studies.

What I have also sought to draw out here via the proliferating specular double displacements of antipodean American Studies are the ways in which the strategies of enchanted critique—an ethics of surprise and defamiliarisation (Dillon 177), the potentially unlimited assemblage of possible actants (Latour 246, 248), and imaginative temporal reciprocities whereby we meet the past on the level of equality but not identity (Pratt 158-159)—start to look a lot like what we call teaching. By allowing students to make comparisons that we as scholars are wary of making without a gamut of disclaimers about contextual specificity or the expression of anxieties about the flattening out of difference, by welcoming anecdote and affect, even ignorance and bewilderment into our classrooms, all “actants” involved may be “jolted,” “struck,” and “shaken” into a new relation with the familiar and the everyday. Enchanted pedagogy then, is less a practice of research-led teaching than teaching-led research; we need look no further than the classroom as the laboratory of this alchemy of enchantment.

ⁱ The notion of debt here is taken from Michael Drexler’s reading of Henry Adams’ 1889 acknowledgment of Toussaint L’Overture’s influence on early American politics (“Haiti, Modernity, and U. S. Identities”).

ⁱⁱ Most obviously in Eric Hayot’s piece of that name, but also in Caroline Levine’s “Infrastructuralism or the Tempo of Institutions” and Christopher Hager and Cody Marrs’ “Against 1865”.

ⁱⁱⁱ In keeping with Bennett’s note that her research comes into being via “the confederate agency of...memories, intentions, contentions, intestinal bacteria, eyeglasses, and blood sugar, as well as from the plastic computer keyboard, [and] the birdsong from the open window” we might add a potentially endless catalogue to this list (23). Of those cited by Bennett, blood sugar might be the one most salient in a pedagogical context, but I would also add furniture to this list—the comfort of the chairs and the ability to rearrange desks can make or break a classroom experience.

^{iv} The syllabus is thus in some ways an exercise in “surface reading” where “surface [is] the location of patterns that exist within and across texts” as this practice is laid out in “Surface Reading: An Introduction,” Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus’s introduction to the Fall 2009 Special Issue of *Representations, The Way We Read Now* (11-12).

^v In seeking to avoid preferentiality here I take my cue from David Ferris’s reading of the failure of comparison that takes place when the normative or that to which we are “habituated” are automatically preferred or privileged over the unfamiliar (35-40).

^{vi} Huang’s work redresses this elision of geopolitics not only by reading canonical American texts against the history of the United States’ Pacific empire, but via “readings of an array of authors and texts that are not usually read together in any national literary history” (2). His account of the cultural work performed by what he calls the “counterpoetics” of transpacific reading is thus predicated on the placing of unlike things next to one another. What Bentley celebrates in Atlantic studies as the quest for affiliations across “temporal distance and historical rupture” (149) Huang similarly enacts in order to tell a Pacific history in which “marginalized poetic/ historiographical practices” are placed alongside the work of Melville, Adams, and Twain to critique the way in which discursive abstraction has masked and sustained (and in doing so also borne testament to) imperial violence in the Pacific (4).

^{vii} I have taken my cue in part here from Bill Hutchings’ work on “problem” or “enquiry-based” learning in the Humanities. Hutchings’ enquiry-based seminars are founded on the eschewal of assigned reading lists, even of primary material, in favour of student-led reading assignments; my own experimentation with this learning strategy is a little more modest (Hutchings in Ramsden 167-168).

viii See both “Antipodean American Literature: Franklin, Twain, and the Sphere of Subalternity” and “Antipodean America: Charles Brockden Brown, New Holland, and the Constitution of American Literature.”

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